

Rural Health Research Gateway: State Audience Needs Study Report

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www.ruralhealthresearch.org

The Rural Health Research Gateway is a project of the University of North Dakota Center for Rural Health, in conjunction with the RUPRI Health Panel, with funding from HRSA's federal Office of Rural Health Policy.

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Executive Summary

The *Rural Health Research Gateway: State Audience Needs Study*, funded by the Office of Rural Health Policy, was designed to: 1) examine the information needs of a diverse state audience for rural health research products, and 2) determine effective approaches for disseminating research findings. A group comprised of representatives from several state organizations with interests in rural health was convened to provide input regarding products and dissemination strategies used by the federally funded Rural Health Research Centers (RHRCs). Discussion centered on an evaluation of each type of dissemination product/approach and the group participants' utilization of research findings.

Key findings include:

- Participants serve as “information brokers” to their audiences and they frequently repackage information on rural health research to meet the specific needs of their audiences.
- State audiences do not find long research documents useful, instead preferring briefs, summaries and bullet points of information.
- The primary resource for information on rural health research for the State Issue Group is the Internet. Participants like to access information quickly and will often utilize search engines such as Google, or go directly to familiar Web sites to get information.
- Many participants utilize journal articles for data and other resources; however, in most cases they do not forward journal articles to their audiences. Audiences want quick, at-a-glance summaries, so journal articles are often only for their reference, or provided via Web links.
- RHRC information should be disseminated beyond the typical rural health research arena to reach a broader audience of state organizations that are likely to have some interest in and need for rural health research findings.

The full report includes specific recommendations about several products including working papers/reports, fact sheets/policy briefs, press releases, Web sites and the recently developed Rural Health Research Alerts. To obtain a copy of the full report, please visit

www.ruralhealthresearch.org.

Introduction

Health services research is an important tool used to inform a range of decisions about structure, financing, quality and access to health care. Underscoring this point, the Coalition for Health Services Research notes that “Health services research when appropriately funded, coordinated and disseminated plays a critical role in addressing problems related to the nations’ health care system” (Academy of Health, 2005, p.1). Specific to rural health care, there is a growing body of knowledge generated by researchers that explicitly focuses on better understanding challenges facing rural health care delivery. To maximize the contribution of this body of knowledge, a toolkit of useful approaches is needed that can be used to inform a range of important audiences, from local rural hospital administrators to federal policy makers. This project focuses on the development of such a toolkit that may be used by rural health researchers to extend the reach and impact of important findings. This includes examining innovative strategies and tools for designing interventions to reach different target audiences and to promote knowledge-driven rural health policies and programs. Connoting this function, this initiative is titled the Rural Health Research Gateway and has the following objectives:

1. Optimize the impact of research data from the Rural Health Research Centers (RHRCs) (and, as feasible, other ORHP grantees) on policies, programs and practice.
2. Optimize communication between RHRCs and target audiences.
3. Measure the impact of project efforts on objectives 1 and 2.

Research indicates that multiple communication channels should be used to reach specific audience segments with information and that communication campaigns benefit from rigorous formative research and evaluation of outcomes (Healthy People 2010). This approach to maximize communication of rural health research incorporates some of the key elements

advocated in the Healthy People 2010 report. For example, through audience testing (i.e., working with “Issues Groups” representing national, state and local audiences), the Rural Health Research Gateway is obtaining information in order to develop and disseminate effective communication strategies. Additionally, the Rural Health Research Gateway uses the Healthy People 2010 strategy of creating databases to catalog research studies and partner with existing dissemination networks to make data publicly available.

Another initiative that informs the structure of the Rural Health Research Gateway is the Framework for Knowledge Transfer (FKT) developed by Carpenter et al (2005). This framework recognizes that the dissemination and implementation of research findings are complex processes requiring multiple methods and tools. The framework includes three major processes; knowledge creation and distillation, mass diffusion and targeted dissemination, and organizational adaptation and use. The plan embedded in the FKT and adapted for the Rural Health Research Gateway includes six major elements: 1) research findings and products, 2) end users, 3) dissemination partners, 4) communication, 5) evaluation, and 6) dissemination work plan. Consistent with the FKT, the purpose of the Gateway toolkit is to guide researchers to plan for dissemination as a key component of initial research designs, culminating in the application of findings by end users. It is also designed to establish direct links with diverse target audiences.

Needs Study Method

This study is designed to examine the needs of representatives of a state audience for rural health research products and approaches for disseminating information. The State Issue Group, comprised of representatives from various state organizations, was selected with input from the Office of Rural Health Policy. The group provided input regarding products and dissemination strategies used by the federally funded RHRCs (see Appendix A for a list of the

State Issue Group members). Each RHRC provided project staff with two examples of research dissemination products (brochures, fact sheets, working papers/reports, policy briefs, press releases, web sites, and other products). Project staff then selected a sample of each product for the State Issue Group with an emphasis on those products containing state-specific information. Three compilation documents were also selected: the Rural Health Research Gateway Web site, the 2007 Rural Health Research Centers flyer, and the Rural Health Research Alerts (see Appendix B). These three documents reflect activities of all eight RHRCs. State Issue Group participants were sent electronic links to the sample documents prior to the meeting along with the agenda (see Appendix C) and were asked to examine the documents prior to the meeting.

The State Issue Group met twice via teleconference, on March 4, 2008, and March 12, 2008. The meeting was tape-recorded in order to assist in reporting results and was also focused on a set of questions. Discussion centered on an evaluation of each type of dissemination product/approach and participants' utilization of research findings. Following the meeting, participants were also queried for additional feedback via E-mail.

Preliminary Findings

The overarching theme in comments from the State Issue Group was that the participants serve as "information brokers" to their respective audiences and they repackage information on rural health research to meet the specific needs of their constituents (e.g. organization membership). In one participant's words, "What they've said is, 'when we get something from you, we know that you've looked at it and think that it is important for us to look at as well,'".

Participants indicated their end users do not find long research documents useful, instead preferring briefs, summaries and bullet points of information. Participants noted that there is an ongoing need for information. The primary resource for information on rural health research for

the State Issue Group is the Internet. Participants cite sources such as the Rural Assistance Center (RAC), the Office of Rural Health Policy, Kaiser Family Foundation, the Commonwealth Fund, and other national association Web sites as places they go to find useful information. Participants also mentioned that they often use Web search engines such as Google or Yahoo to quickly find needed information.

Many participants utilize journal articles for data and other resources, but they do not, in most cases, forward journal articles to their end users. They indicated their end users want quick, at-a-glance summaries. Consequently, journal articles are often only for their own reference, or provided via Web links to their constituents.

The group indicated that there is a need to disseminate information from the RHRCs beyond the typical rural health research arena to reach a broader audience of state organizations that are likely to have some interest in and need for rural health research findings. Reaching this broader audience requires a variety of strategies. The group discussed the idea of working in partnership with RHRCs to tailor data to particular organizations that can then be distributed to their members. They also discussed the creation of scenarios that exemplify how people use rural health research and data to include in dissemination efforts. Finally, they recommended placing Web links to the Rural Health Research Gateway site on a variety of related Web sites that would help to target a broader population.

The State Issue Group reviewed seven types of dissemination vehicles: final reports, fact sheets/policy briefs, press releases, RHRC Web sites, the Gateway Web site, the RHRC flyer, and rural health research alerts. The following sections will explain participant reaction to each dissemination vehicle in more detail.

Final Reports

Final reports are longer document which typically include a significant level of detail about the research that was conducted (e.g., hypotheses, data, methods, statistical analysis). Discussion regarding final reports included questions about how the participants might use them, how they would repackage them to make them more useful, and strategies they recommend to disseminate the information to the widest possible state audience. The majority of participants noted they use final reports and find them useful, but they also repackage the information into a brief summary for their audiences. Several participants mentioned they like state specific data and that it is useful for their constituents.

Many participants noted the format of a final report, while helpful to them, is not appropriate for their end users. Consequently, they repackage the information into brief summaries, bullet points, and “takeaway” messages. One participant mentioned final reports are too long for legislators and the information needs to be repackaged. Another participant mentioned combining information with other resources to create a summary report for their end users.

A number of participants mentioned the usefulness of state data, including state-by-state comparisons, especially when they are in at-a-glance charts; individual profiles; and linking document with state specific information to state organization Web sites.

Suggestions include:

- Policy and practice implications should be clear. Readers should not have to search a document to find the relevance of the research findings (i.e. implications should help the reader answer the question “What do we do?”)

- Include a summary report that briefly highlights the takeaway messages of the research.
- Offer the reports and summaries on a Web site so users can easily share the link with their constituencies.

Fact Sheets/Policy Briefs

Typically, fact sheets are one-page documents on a research project that provide basic information in an easy and quick-to-read format. Policy briefs provide readers with relatively short analyses that present policy relevant research. They include context for the research focus, key findings, and are often 4-6 pages in length.

Fact sheets and policy briefs are some of the most useful dissemination tools, according to the State Issue Group. They appreciate the brevity and pointed messages. Acting as information brokers, they find the information easy to include in listservs, e-newsletters and other communications with their end users, without much repackaging. Participants use fact sheets and policy briefs to inform policy makers, populate Web pages on particular topics, and support other documents.

Nearly all participants mentioned the reason they like the fact sheets and policy briefs is because they are short and user-friendly. One participant said, “We’ve been cautioned not to give a legislator or any top policy person more than a one page briefing document; the fact sheets work well to get a lot of information out while still being user-friendly.”

These tools are used the most frequently of all the dissemination tools presented to the State Issue Group. Participants seemed less concerned with packaging and more interested in subject matter.

Several participants mentioned state-specific data and comparison data on fact sheets as being the most useful to them and their constituents. Another useful feature, according to one participant, is the author's contact information to facilitate access to experts for future work on that particular topic.

Suggestions include:

- Put the information into context to help readers understand impact.
- Create more awareness of these products, perhaps by featuring them more prominently on RHRC Web sites or disseminating them to larger groups of end users.

Press Releases

Press releases are one- to two-page documents often used to announce new products. They may target trade and/or general press outlets. Participants were split fairly evenly on the usefulness of press releases—some find them useful and some do not. For those who utilize press releases, they stressed the importance of clarity, brevity, applicability, and a Web link to more information.

Some participants skim press releases for a quick “yes/no” regarding applicability. If the subject is relevant to them, they will read more, link to available information, or make contact with the author. Participants don't republish press releases. If the information is useful to their end users, they will repackage it, usually in the form of brief bullet points or summaries, and forward it on to their constituents.

Suggestions include:

- Keep press releases short, with bulleted information, and include links to the full reports.

- Assist RHRCs with creating a simple template for press releases based on the information in the *Disseminating Research Toolkit for Rural Health Research Centers*.

Rural Health Research Center Web Sites

Rural Health Research Centers use their Web sites to reach a variety of audiences. Web sites feature center staff, projects, and publications.

Three key points were made clear during the discussion on RHRC Web sites. First, people need to be familiar with the Web site in order to use it. It was suggested that the RHRCs may not be as widely known as they ought to be. One participant said, “It is not realistic for anyone to go to these sites unless they have a very strong prior relationship with the entities and reason to believe that the site is where they want to go for reliable information.”

Second, participants often end up on a RHRC Web site because they use search engines such as Yahoo or Google. RHRC Web sites need to be aware of search engines and how they utilize search terms in order to optimize placement in search result lists.

Third, several participants noted that they need to repackage the information they find on RHRC Web sites for their particular end users. One participant said, “We serve as a filter of information and as a portal...there is recognition when our label comes across,” that triggers our members.

Rural Health Research Gateway Web Site

The Rural Health Research Gateway Web site provides access to all of the research findings of the ORHP-funded Rural Health Research Centers. The site can be used to find abstracts of both current and completed research projects, publications resulting from these projects, and information about the research centers themselves as well as individual researchers.

The majority of participants like the way the Rural Health Research Gateway Web site is organized and they find it to be user-friendly. One participant indicated the site is simple and easy to navigate. Other participants noted they like to search by topic and by date. The search functions are helpful and the site is an easy place to find resources.

General awareness was mentioned as a challenge for the Web site. Some participants have linked to the Web site from their own Web sites, or in e-newsletters or other documents, but they also suggested that their audiences aren't always familiar with what the Gateway Web site is.

Suggestions include:

- For promotional efforts, use scenarios and stories to show how a particular group uses the tool.
- When listing projects on the Web site, include thumbnail graphics/photos of the report covers next to the project. End users often respond to graphics and photographs more readily than text. The visuals will also aid in creating brand awareness of the Rural Health Research Centers.

Rural Health Research Centers Flyer

This one-page flyer is a stand alone document developed to inform policy audiences about the nature and general contributions of health services research findings from the RHRCs. Participants had varying opinions on the usefulness of the flyer.

Some participants did not find the flyers useful, indicating they would get lost in the information overload of their end users. One participant mentioned his organization doesn't send flyers to people.

Other participants appreciated the flyer and found it useful. It was referred to as easy to hand out, easy to keep up-to-date, short and direct, and perfect for its purpose. A participant noted she “likes the research and impact sections; they make it more meaningful.” Another participant indicated this was the first time she had seen the flyer, but that she would add a link to it from her Web site that day.

Participants noted the flyers are easy to send out to their end users and there are multiple ways to share this information, including links to the document on a Web site, as a printable document, or other methods.

Suggestions include:

- Include the National Public Health Information Coalition (www.nphic.org) and the American Association for Community Colleges (www.aacc.nche.edu) in future dissemination efforts.

Rural Health Research Alerts

Rural Health Research Alerts are the most recent dissemination tool, established in December 2007 to “push out” new research findings from the eight federally-funded rural health research centers. Participants like the format of the research alerts and the frequency of the emails.

Participants found the research alert information easy to share with their end users and a few people indicated they would be sharing the research alert link with their audiences in the near future. A couple of participants were not familiar with the research alerts and had just signed up for the service, indicating that receiving the information would be useful. The research alerts were originally called the “Rural Health Research Gateway Listserv.” Some participants found the name “Listserv” confusing and thought it meant there would be the

opportunity to converse about the research, similar to a message board. That capability does not currently exist.

Suggestions include:

- The name of the service has been changed from “listserv” to “Rural Health Research Alert” to aid in clarity.
- Consider a mechanism for the research alerts and/or Web site to allow for feedback or suggestions on research topics.

Current Hot Topics for State Audiences

The participants discussed topics currently of greatest importance to their audiences. The two most-cited topics were workforce and health information technology; mentioned by over half of the participants. Other topics reported included aging populations, access to health care, emergency medical services and rural training programs.

References

AcademyHealth (2005). *Placement, Coordination, and Funding of Health Services Research within the Federal Government*. <http://www.chsr.org/placementreport.pdf>

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Healthy People 2010: Understanding and Improving Health*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, November 2000.

Appendix A: State Issue Group Participants

Office of Rural Health Policy Staff:

Tom Morris - Acting Associate Administrator

Joan Van Nostrand, DPA – Research Director

Project Staff:

Mary Wakefield, PhD, RN – Gateway Principal Investigator, UND Center for Rural Health

Patricia Moulton, PhD – Gateway Deputy Principal Investigator, UND Center for Rural Health

Naomi Lelm – Gateway Project Coordinator, Rural Assistance Center

Wendy Opsahl, MA – Gateway Communications Coordinator, UND Center for Rural Health

Kristine Sande, MBA – Gateway Project Director, Rural Assistance Center

Participants:

Kathy Apple – Chief Executive Officer, National Council of State Boards of Nursing

Lynette Dickson—President-Elect, National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health

Paul Halverson, DrPH—State Health Officer, Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services

Jeffrey Kafer – Associate Administrator, National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network

Lynn Mitchell--Chief Medical Officer & Medicaid Director, National Association of State Medicaid Directors

Doug Porter – Assistant Secretary, National Association of State Medicaid Directors

Lisa Robin – Senior Vice President, Federation of State Medical Boards

Tim Skinner—Executive Director, National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network

Kris Sparks—Director, Washington State Office of Community and Rural Health

Paula Streib—Communications Director, Association of State and Territorial Health Officers

Laura Tobler--Health Program Director, National Conference of State Legislatures

Alan Weil--Executive Director, National Academy for State Health Policy

Appendix B: State Issue Group Sample Dissemination Products and Approaches

Individual Rural Health Research Center Products

Final Reports

- South Carolina Rural Health Research Center - Overweight and Physical Inactivity among Rural Children Aged 10-17: A National and State Portrait
- North Carolina Rural Health Research and Policy Analysis Center - State Profiles of Medicaid & SCHIP in Rural and Urban Areas

Fact Sheets/Policy Briefs

- RUPRI Center for Rural Health Policy Analysis - Reliance on Independently Owned Pharmacies in Rural America
- Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis - Spontaneous Evacuation Following a Dirty Bomb or Pandemic Influenza: Highlights from a National Survey of Urban Residents' Intended Behavior
- WWAMI Rural Health Research Center - Access to Cancer Services for Rural Colorectal Cancer Patients
- South Carolina Rural Health Research Center - What is the Oral Health Status of South Carolina's Children

Press Releases

- Maine Rural Health Research Center - Study Reveals Rural Americans Face Higher Health Care Costs
- North Carolina Rural Health Research and Policy Analysis Center - Closing Rural Hospitals Bad for Local Economy

Compilation of all Rural Health Research Center Activities

- Rural Health Research Gateway Web Site
- Rural Health Research Centers Flyer
- Rural Health Research Alerts Archive of Postings

Appendix C: State Issue Group Agendas

Rural Research to Diverse Audiences Project State Issue Group First Teleconference Meeting Agenda Tuesday, March 4, 2008 1:00 – 3:00 P.M. CST

1:00–1:25

Introductions

Introduction of Participants

- ❖ *Patricia Moulton, PhD, Deputy Principal Investigator*

Welcome from the Office of Rural Health Policy

- ❖ *Tom Morris, MPA, Acting Associate Administrator, Office of Rural Health Policy*

Overview of Rural Health Research Centers Program

- ❖ *Joan Van Nostrand, DPA, Research Director, Office of Rural Health Policy*

Description of the Rural Research to Diverse Audiences Project

- ❖ *Mary Wakefield, PhD, RN, Principal Investigator*

1:25–1:45

Utilization of Rural Health Research

- ❖ *Mary Wakefield, PhD, RN*

This session focuses on obtaining feedback regarding the **information needs** of your organization and your use of information products like those from the eight Rural Health Research Centers. The purpose of identifying information needs is not to prescribe specific agenda items to ORHP. Rather, it is intended to explore potential topics areas and information sources. You will be asked to share your thoughts about the following:

- What **products** do you generally access to meet your information needs (e.g., academic journals, trade press, health meetings/briefings, websites)?
- What **rural health information** would be useful for decision-making within your organization over the next 2 to 5 years?

1:45–3:00

Evaluation of Dissemination Product Examples

- ❖ *Patricia Moulton, PhD*

The Rural Health Research Centers use several different types of products to disseminate their findings. Today we are interested in determining how to maximize the effectiveness of four categories of products with various state organizations. We have linked to the electronic versions of each of the products. Please click on the product and press the

control key to open it on your computer. We will ask each participant to share their ideas about each product including:

- Have you used this type of product?
- How would you repackage this type of product to make it more useful?
- What dissemination approaches do you suggest in order to get this information out to the widest possible state audience?

Product 1: Final Reports

Final Reports typically include a significant level of detail about the research that was conducted (e.g., hypotheses, data, methods, statistical analysis).

Product 2: Fact Sheets/Policy Briefs

Policy and findings briefs provide readers with relatively short analyses that present policy relevant research. They include context for the research focus, key findings and are often 4-6 pages in length. Typically, fact sheets are one-page documents (can be front-to-back) on a research project that provide basic information in an easy and quick-to-read format.

Product 3: Press Releases

News releases are often used to announce new products. They may target trade and/or general press outlets.

Product 4: Individual Center Web sites

Rural Health Research Centers use their Web sites to reach a variety of audiences. Web sites feature center staff, projects, and publications.

Rural Research to Diverse Audiences Project
State Issue Group
Second Teleconference Meeting Agenda
Wednesday, March 12, 2008
12:00 – 2:00 P.M. CST

12:00 – 12:15 Welcome and Introductions of New Participants
❖ *Mary Wakefield, PhD, RN Principal Investigator*

12:15 – 1:15 Evaluation of Dissemination Product Examples Continued
❖ *Patricia Moulton, PhD, Deputy Principal Investigator*

The Rural Health Research Centers use several different types of products to disseminate their findings. Today we are interested in determining how to maximize the effectiveness of three categories of products with various state organizations. We have linked to the electronic versions of each of the products. Please click on the product and press the control key to open it on your computer. We will ask each participant to share their ideas about each product including:

- Have you used this type of product?
- How would you repackage this type of product to make it more useful?
- What dissemination approaches do you suggest in order to get this information out to the widest possible state audience?

Product 5: Rural Health Research Gateway

The Rural Health Research Gateway web site provides access to all of the research findings of the ORHP-funded Rural Health Research Centers. The site can be used to find abstracts of both current and completed research projects, publications resulting from these projects, and information about the research centers themselves as well as individual researchers.

Product 6: Rural Health Research Centers Flyer

This flyer is a printable overview of the research centers, listing each center's web site, director, contact information, and areas of focus.

Product 7: Rural Health Research Listserv

The Rural Health Research Gateway listserv provides periodic updates when new publications become available from the RHRCs.

Appendix D: State Issue Group Notes

Utilization of Rural Health Research

What products do you generally access to meet your information needs (e.g., academic journals, trade press, health meetings/briefings, Web sites)? What rural health information would be useful for decision-making within your organization over the next two to five years?

- *We use the RAC online webpage a lot to just get an idea of what is out there as far as research on particular issues. Sometimes what we are looking for is very unique because it might be a specific policy issue within a policy issue. We'll do a very broad scope of gathering anything that's been published on the issue, but we also like to interview people that are considered experts.*
- *Our audience is unique in that they care about the research, but they don't want to read it. So when we deliver the information to the audience, we tend to have to repackage it because a Legislator really doesn't want to read a 27 page research report on a particular issue. What they want is the details. They want what were the challenges, what were the findings, what do I need to know that is most important about what this research says. And so a lot of the time, we take what is available out there and we get our information everywhere. We like to look at the brushstroke expert first, then we take all of that and write a memo to a legislator or a synopsis paper that will then either go up on our website or be distributed to all of our members.*
- *We are reactive to our constituents; there isn't a constant source that we check on a daily basis or that we constantly go back to to keep something on the web updated.*
- *We really try to either create an information clearing house on rural health research and then take that research and put it into very easy to read sound bites for legislators.*
- *Often times, we will get a call at four o'clock at night and then they have a committee to report on the bill and they want some background by twelve o'clock so the web resources are often used because they are just available.*
- *We look at journals a lot more. But for those quick reaction, information requests that need to be done within the next five hours that we use a lot of the web resources.*
- *We do subscribe to most of the major journals that relate to issues in health, so we have access to those, but we very rarely used those directly to provide information to constituents. We usually do the synopsis or the summaries for them, and then give them the information based on the research that was in the journals.*
- *Certainly journals, I don't think we make a lot of use of the trade press, we don't pay for those subscriptions and partly they are more of an intermediary for information than a source. We do take advantage of briefs and products written by various organizations that*

have covered topics along the lines of what we do, and some of them do synthetic products as well and put data on their websites, then we do a lot of our own data collection primarily from experts as you heard.

- *When it comes to websites, there are nice briefs on a lot of topics we cover on the National Health Policy Forum. They tend to do the kind of synopsis reports that are similar to ours. A lot of data on sources like the Kaiser site and various advocacy organizations monitor the same kinds of issues. So I would say when we start a project, we tend to look in all of those directions.*
- *We use a lot of website information; We use a lot of stuff from NCSL, , NGA, Kaiser Family Foundation and Center for Healthcare Strategies. You're not going to find a lot of reliance on the peer reviewed journals, we're going to count on the others to be doing that for us. I think probably one of the largest sources of our information is probably peer-to-peer discussion among Medicaid Directors. Through our National Association of State Medicaid Directors, we have a very good line of communication and we'll quickly send out things that would affect any of the 54 Medicaid programs that are out there. Probably peer-to-peer discussion is going to be perhaps at the top of our list.*
- *Some of the services that we provide to our state boards as far as legislative monitoring and assistance with directing policy and commenting on policy.*
- *We go through so many sources, we do a lot of research, we do use resource centers. We have a staff that uses different information sources so when we become aware of them then we utilize their sources.*
- *We use websites, academic journals.... We get the New England Journal. My shop probably uses it less than some of the other areas that are looking at more of the Physician practice issues. Academic Medicine, those type of journals, we just use a broad array of research tools.*
- *I'm probably a little old-fashioned oftentimes I first call people that I know or contact them via email and ask people that are at one of the rural health research centers, where would I go to find this kind of information. I also Google my questions, and sometimes I'm successful with that and sometimes not too successful because it seems like it wasn't quite right. We use more of the things that are web-based.*
- *We get information from RAC, ORHP, and we use much that has already been mentioned.*

Please share any current hot topics for your organization that have a rural background?

- *Work force is huge. Work force access as it relates to work force but also the issue of access to services, transportation, EMS issues, these are all hot issues that we have gotten this session.*
- *Aging population of rural areas.*

- *If I was to pick four of the most important issues that legislators are working on from my end of things, it would be work force, access, aging, and EMS.*
- *This is not an area that we do a lot of work, we tend to direct people more to those who do.*
- *I would put Telemedicine into ours because of our rural nature, a lot of our state is getting lots of telemedicine interest and/or networks and having to make sure that we do that appropriately. Work force issues for sure, and then the whole issue of health information technology*
- *Telemedicine, health information technology. In work force there has been a lot of talk about reimbursement strategies, not only to recruit and retain but also reimbursement strategies related to other programs that are looking at to subsidize insurance for the uninsured and that relates to rural in that the uninsured live in rural areas, so there is a lot of crossover there. So I second that putting Telemedicine and health information technology is a priority that is really important.*
- *Once the legislators kind of get it on their plate, then obviously the vendors get it on their plate and so we are constantly inundated with “pick mine pick mine” kind of thing. So just having some objective information that allows us to make good decisions on behalf of our members and to also show that with our legislators, it really is quite helpful.*
- *Telehealth issues. As well as access, so if a practice changes, that whole electronic exchange of information would be something that we would look for information about that we could share with our members.*
- *Cost and financing issues are an area that having more information on might anticipate some of those questions from people about can we support this rural health system and what are the impacts of critical access hospitals or the clinics or whatever. The other thing that has gotten a lot of interest is how we shift the medical delivery systems to a prevention-model and looking for information about demonstration projects that have been successful in this regard is something that I would add to the list.*
- *Work force, access, and rural training program.*

Evaluation of Dissemination Product Examples

The Rural Health Research Centers use several different types of products to disseminate their findings. Today we are interested in determining how to maximize the effectiveness of four categories of products with various state organizations.

Individual Rural Health Research Center Products

Final Reports

- **Have you used this type of product?**

- **How would you repackage this type of product to make it more useful?**
 - **What dissemination approaches do you suggest in order to get this information out to the widest possible state audience?**
- *We have actually used this quite a bit. The fact that it has the state profiles is great; it is for our constituents, something that we would link to on their pages for staff to look at as a resource. It's definitely something more that we would respond to. Someone would call us with a specific question and we would mind that you answer that question. So as far as repackaging it, I think that's something that we kind of take the information and translate it to match the needs of the calls that we get. But it is the kind of document since it has some specific state information that we would link to our page and direct them to but wouldn't necessarily use as a handout because of its length, but it would be something that we would read.*
 - *This is the type of a product that we would use to gather data to be able to write an issue brief or to write a legislative brief, or to prepare a memo on a particular topic. This isn't something that we would typically send out to our constituents.*
 - *Yes, we find them helpful for our constituency. I don't think that this is a format that is, for the most part, helpful to legislators. I think there are policy-makers in other state departments that are other people's constituents that would find these really helpful, but I don't think that legislators read this stuff. But we find them helpful so it's good for us to know that these reports exist. We'd love to get press releases about these things but I wouldn't recommend that you spend the money to distribute this to legislators without repackaging it.*
 - *The formal reports are definitely valuable to us. Their inputs in to products and projects that we do. When we begin, or are in a project, we are looking at what literature is out there. Reports like that are usually relatively easy to find and they provide a helpful resource. I don't think that the second is particularly useful. Maybe it's partly because we aren't responding to individual folk's requests for the information state-level reports, we've done them very occasionally. In most of the data, part of the problem is that there are lots of state-level reports out there and so it's hard to even keep track of which one has the information in it that you would want to have at that moment. So I would say that we don't make much use of those. Since usually those are reporting data that would gather and is reported somewhere else, we're just more likely to go to the primary source if someone is looking for a single piece of information. That's just a more useful mechanism for us to get that kind of information. We would rarely distribute any of this, again it's just not what our audience is looking for so maybe that gets sort of repackaging questions, we might use and integrate, but we're not going to disseminate even variations on these themes*
 - *If you want to have repackaging to someone who would find this information useful and hopefully incorporate it into programs that they were responsible for, I think it would need to get to the Medical Directors and not the Medicaid Directors.*

- *I would, because I'm a physician, like this kind of information, but if this came to most Medicaid Directors, I don't think that they would take the time to leaf through. What I would do would be to send it on to my Medical Director here.*
- *I use final reports but I use more kind of a summary report, you know, what's going on in that state, things that are cut out by Academy health, I know I got one yesterday either from Academy Health or Commonwealth that did a state-by-state comparison, but it was in a very easily read refer to kind of chart that I could easily say, "Oh, Kansas is doing the same thing we are." Then I could pick up the phone and call the Medicaid Director in Kansas.*
- *If I could have a chart that would show me what's going on in a couple of sentences in the Medicaid program with Telemedicine, I could then look at what issues were up there. What I would typically do would be to email or pick up the phone and call the Medicaid Director in that state.*
- *We would use really all of the final reports as well as the fact sheets and policy briefs. We also on the final report, we do try to provide our State Medical Boards with a lot of information. So a final report on a topic that would be pertinent to what they do. We have a weekly newsletter that we send electronically to all of our boards and we would include a link to that or give a little brief summary of what the report is and that they would find interesting.*
- *I particularly like the state profiles by topic. I think that I couldn't give you any suggestions for repackaging.*
- *Depending on what audience you're trying to distribute to. We are utilized by a lot of organizations within the Federal and state governments as sort of an information conduit to the State Medical Boards because if they can get it to us, then we can try to get it to State Medical Boards and then we're kind of in a unique position to be able to do that. If you're trying to reach a Physician population, Medical Boards are a good way to get information out that gets paid attention to that we've found. That's a suggestion.*
- *The state comparison would be something that I would look at first. The summary didn't have any current implications, but it is supposed to be a portrait, as opposed to an action or something that would lead you to take action necessarily. In terms of giving implications, when I looked at it briefly I thought, "What do we do?". I don't think I would try to repackage it at all.*
- *We use our listserv and disseminate articles and information to the members that way.*
- *We ask them to send it on to organizations within their state. So it's a network that works for us, but the issue obviously is overload. I don't see us sending these long documents out to the members that way*

Fact Sheets/Policy Briefs

- **Have you used this type of product?**
 - **How would you repackage this type of product to make it more useful?**
 - **What dissemination approaches do you suggest in order to get this information out to the widest possible state audience?**
-
- *The fact sheets and policy briefs, I have used those and sent them to constituents. Some of the topic areas may not be a topic that is policy-oriented for the particular priority for that year, so in other words, there are a few on here that I could see that I probably would never ever have to access. But this format, the fact sheets and policy briefs, I have sent these to legislators and legislative staff because they're summaries, and they're easy for lay people to read.*
 - *Some of them with state-specific information are helpful as well. We often look at things from looking over all fifty states and that's kind of the data that we collect so being able to look and have access to a specific state that you could send to a legislator in that state is often helpful because we don't have that kind of detail on hand.*
 - *We also post this kind of publication on our webpage as an easy link to get more information.*
 - *We would use fact sheets if it were something we were working on. If it was a policy issue in a particular state that asked us for help, we would use that fact sheet for information. And also for contact and the author of that fact sheet could then be a resource of expertise for future work on that particular topic. So we use them for a lot of reasons. We may have a webpage that's on that particular topic and we would post that fact sheet up on the webpage. Here's how I think this type of information could be even more useful to our particular audience which like I said is pretty limited, its legislators. What we do with this kind of information is take it and put it into context. I think someone else said 50 state comparison information is very useful. That is primarily what legislators are looking at. They want to see where they fall, where their state falls, what other states have bills, or have activity in that area. So we would take something like a fact sheet that's very specific to one particular issue and we would try to gather 50 state data on that particular issue and put it together to create a comparison of how this particular policy is treated or what the lay of the land is across the country. That's what we would do with that information and then we would distribute it to whatever audience we chose. And it could just be health chairs, or it could just be our listserv.*
 - *We also use a listserv to distribute information and it could be that we would put it in our newsletter; we have various ways of getting that information out to our constituents.*
 - *So why the distinction between the fact sheet and the policy brief, is there a reason that you'd use it more often than the other?*
 - *We do our own policy analysis, and we tend to go to the data for our policy briefs. I'm not saying we wouldn't use the policy brief. And the policy briefs are something that, if they*

were appropriate, we would pass on to a legislator or legislative staff because they may be interested in that kind of publication. Is that helpful?

- *This is a format that we are very comfortable with; it's certainly one that we like. I think the challenge is a way of figuring out how to be aware that there is one of these when it comes time to look at the issues, and it serves a particular function. We also have made an effort to do shorter products that we think could reach a broader audience. So these are I think really effective when you want to go beyond the core group that really is most interested in your topic. I don't think we rely on these very much in our work because products like this don't tend to speak in the language of our constituency. But I think they are a very effective dissemination tool.*
- *We are going to try to do more short summaries of products that might look like this, but those are to go to the broader audience for the people who are really working on the topics that we work on, they want to go into more detail.*
- *Both of these formats we would find very useful and utilize this kind of information frequently and also share it with our policy makers from the standpoint of when we are at our own state capitals we would take information such as this and be able to share that with our legislators as well.*
- *The packaging won't matter so much to me, it will be the subject matter*
- *Both formats are very useful. The only thing that I would say is that if I knew that it existed and that's the only thing. The packaging works for our purposes.*
- *I like them because they are short. The policy brief give a tremendous amount of information in a short format and in my office we've used the fact sheet approach to get information out and put it on our website to share it with legislators. So I think we've been cautioned not to give a legislator or any top policy person more than a one page briefing document so the fact sheets work well to get a lot of information while being a pretty user-friendly approach.*
- *This isn't something we really use much.*

Press Releases

- **Have you used this type of product?**
- **How would you repackage this type of product to make it more useful?**
- **What dissemination approaches do you suggest in order to get this information out to the widest possible state audience?**
- *We use press releases and rely on them for notification of things that should be brought to the attention of policy makers, especially for inclusion in our newsletter.. Also, for us to highlight on our news webpage. We have a highlight that changes very frequently, and we'll profile things that we picked up in press releases*
- *We do not either receive nor have any outlets for passing along this information so this is not an area that we either use or could I offer any advice on how to use it.*

- *I haven't seen these either to the best of my knowledge and I think these would be the least useful as far as we are concerned. We put out our own press releases, but as far as incorporating this into anything that we would pass on, I can't think there would be much utility there.*
- *Yes, we do use press releases from other organizations and will often use those to pass on to our membership so I think it keeps us up to date and will trigger thoughts and encourage greater use of press releases.*
- *For a press release I would prefer the shorter version and then the ability to go to the full report or go to get more information.*
- *I find them useful, it depends on the topic and how timely it is for whatever issues we may be dealing with at the time. I would also echo that the shorter the better and that the information is topically timely then it is probably obviously more important than something that nobody is interested in at the time.*
- *I should clarify, we wouldn't put this press release in the newsletter but we would use the press release to skim interesting things that are happening. So the press releases that we would find most useful would relate to, oh there's a study that concluded this in, you know, three sentences because press releases are more effective if they are short. We would then look into it, because it just alerts us to the fact that this is going on. Press releases about who the new executive director is, and we do get a lot of those as well, are less helpful. I would echo that the shorter and the more to the point, and a press release that contains important information about where to get the full report or the full amount of information is the most useful.*
- *Unlikely to use the press release in total, but you pick out certain things not just from the press release but then going to the article or the research itself that gives you that kernel of information and how it relates or applies to what's happening in my state.*
- *We use press releases. Brevity and topic are certainly critical to us and then the linkage to additional information and then we disseminate it through our listserv as well.*

Individual Center Web sites

- **Have you used this type of product?**
- **How would you repackage this type of product to make it more useful?**
- **What dissemination approaches do you suggest in order to get this information out to the widest possible state audience?**
- *We use the webpages as needed. For individual information requests, we might use the websites on a daily basis just to answer a quick question. But I think what our big thing is that we have to package all of the information that we send to our constituents sort of in a format that they are used to from us. So oftentimes we will pull information from a lot of different sources for those and then for the individual information requests that we might get*

from a specific legislator that is just really topic dependent and really depends what is happening in the state at the time.

- *In focus groups and in surveys of legislators, what we've found is that they are inundated by information and they have to prioritize what they are even going to look at and what they said to us is that "if you have information from another source, if you could then package it with your name on it, because we open stuff that comes from you, we'll open those emails or we'll open that envelope". What they've said is that, "when we get something from you, we know that you've looked at it and think that it is something important for us to look at as well". So there is sort of that layer of editing that comes from our organization that helps them to manage their inboxes. I know that it doesn't always work that way, but that is one of the services that we provide our constituents. I don't know if that helps you with your work that you're doing, but I know it helps us with what our role is when we talk about disseminating information.*
- *It was helpful to hear your conversation because it's the first time it's been put into play here. Maybe it's especially unique to you, but the fact that you can serve as a filter of information and as a portal almost and that there is recognition when your label comes across that tends to trigger with your members a reactivity to the information that might not otherwise exist.*
- *We would not likely use this unless it turned up in a Google search. It is simply not realistic for anyone, I think, to go site to site unless they have a very strong prior relationship with the entities and reason to believe that that is where they want to go for information. What ends up happening is you do sort of these broad based searches for information and they will often take you to places that you've heard of and the fact that you know of them makes you more likely to follow through on the link and try to see what's on the other end.*
- *Specifically, to go out to a website, I typically have to have a relationship with the people behind that website or know that that website pretty well.*
- *I use websites if I was researching a particular topic and it came up. Other than that, I think we would have limited use for our membership. We oftentimes serve as a filter of information and we'll repackaging something and get it to the boards that they will pay attention to.*
- *One thing that I think is helpful in finding more people to be reminded of is the gateway that you've created to the search centers by topic so you don't have to know where to go to look for that particular set of work or know that there is an Upper Midwest Research Center or something like that. Again, that's getting people to think about or be aware of that gateway to all of the research centers I think is important.*
- *Just one thing is that when we are working on a particular issue or topic we do go to the website and have found it helpful and then link that to our members. So it is a resource that we've used.*

Compilation Rural Health Research Center Products

Rural Health Research Gateway Web site

- **Have you used this type of product?**
 - **How would you repackage this type of product to make it more useful?**
 - **What dissemination approaches do you suggest in order to get this information out to the widest possible state audience?**
- *Needs to post link on their website. With turnover, some state offices of rural health send out a link to his members annually or twice a year to remind people that the gateway is here. Likes the ability to search. Easy way to find resources. Likes the way it's set up.*
 - *Set up nice, easy to search, easy to look at, happy to link to it from her website. May be something they want to embed in their newsletters. Nice and simple, wouldn't change much. Not heavily layered.*
 - *Useful website, seems friendly and something she'd utilize. Problem with Medicaid directors and staff they're not familiar with it, that's it's out there. Recommends utilizing their professional groups to cite it as something they use, then own staff is more likely to use it.*
 - *I like the search ability. Disseminating: display at annual NOSORH meeting. Encourage each SO to put it in their publication. Target market: better use if you can find a scenario to show how a particular group used this tool to show how to use it*
 - *Well organized, clearly navigated, likes browsing by topic, plans to send a link to all of her executive officers in boards of nursing, and her research department. RWJ Foundation, tap into them, they've RWJ Digest—periodically send out about all things nursing. American Academy of Nursing is another resource to push things out. Website is great to have, but you have to always remember to go to it.*
 - *Like to search by date. Constituents don't use it that often, but she finds it useful.*
 - *Love the Gateway and how it's set up. Maybe could improve by providing thumbnails.*

Rural Health Research Centers Flyer

- **Have you used this type of product?**
 - **How would you repackage this type of product to make it more useful?**
 - **What dissemination approaches do you suggest in order to get this information out to the widest possible state audience?**
- *We forget this kind of resource. They can send it out on the listserv and encourage them to share it with people in their states.*
 - *National Public Health Information Coalition: www.npic.org. It's PIO's from all state health departments and many local health departments. Excellent resource. We don't send fliers to people.*

- *It would get lost if you sent it directly to Medicaid directors. She'd go to her office of rural health if she wanted to get that type of information.*
- *Great—2 pages, everything that she needs. Distributing them through NOSORH, American Association for Community Colleges—might be a new group to disseminate to because of their work in workforce. Depends on who it's coming from—multiple ways of disseminating is critical. Likes the research and impact section-makes it more meaningful on the front page*
- *Short and direct, perfect for its purpose. Print version. There is still a place for printed materials*
- *First time she's seen this document. Haven't used it before but may use it in the future. Will add a link to their website later today.*
- *Flyer is fine, easy to hand out and keep up to date.*

Rural Health Research Listserv

- **Have you used this type of product?**
- **How would you repackage this type of product to make it more useful?**
- **What dissemination approaches do you suggest in order to get this information out to the widest possible state audience?**
- *Wasn't familiar with it so he signed himself up. Leery of listservs because he gets inundated with too many things. Likes that this doesn't go out all the time. Can certainly send to his members. Need to send reminders, not just send it and forget about it. Likes layout, likes to find the researchers. Thanks for increasing his awareness of it.*
- *One way communication? Might want to call it something different because some people use listservs to communicate and talk back & forth. Might want to call it an e-newsletter.*
- *Contact state Medicaid agencies and see who the appropriate person in there agency is to add to the listserv. Best bet to get in to each of the state Medicaid agencies.*
- *Likes that it comes out sporadically. Likes the date on top. Dissemination: NOSORH, consider doing webinars on some of these products to walk people through all of the good things on it. NOSORH uses webinars fairly frequently.*
- *Will add all 3 products to their widest nursing audience. Research dept is interested to see what we're doing. Listserv as we've designed it, we're pushing out. Knows a lot of people who are interested in this type of information. If someone is thinking about a research topic, how do they get their information to us?*
- *Comment got her thinking about ways they can provide links for people to share their research ideas*

- *Change the name to something like newsletter. Great stuff, she just signed up. Love to have a way to share information back to us.*
- *We'll send out our email listserv sign-up and encourage you to pass it along to your constituents*
- *Likes the technology, but wasn't sure if he saw everything.*

What dissemination approaches do you suggest in order to get this information out to the widest possible state audience?

- *Workforce workshop in Phoenix—extensive list of organizations, some would be very helpful to connect with. They represent professional groups. Send out a policy brief of research updates like NRHA does, those always get his attention and he always looks at them.*
- *How do you get it into people's hands so they realize its worth? Work with their director's organization. It's an issue of product recognition and name recognition. She goes to what she knows, where she can get quality information. If you could somehow make (like the Kaiser has made Medicaid and the uninsured) she knows that they'll address the population she serves.*
- *Again, use scenarios—what the research is and what they did with it, to promote to a particular agency to get people to look deeper and become one of their favorites. Show people what they can do with the research that the centers are doing. Here's a couple things you could use and how, with a link and one-pager.*
- *Tailor the push to the receiving organization.*
- *State legislatures, National Governor's Association, NCSL, Counsel of State Governance. How do you know if you're being successful? Formal evaluation.*
- *They do repackage a lot. They package to staff and legislators differently. Staff wants listserv, releases, etc. Legislators want the research and repackaged. Want links that stay the same and don't get changed; they use links in some of their documents and doesn't like when they get outdated.*
- *It seems to me that we need a mechanism that would allow some of the brief ideas and would also allow us to talk to the head of that committee when its report comes out so that there might be some possibility of looking at the transition to practice for new graduates. So we are going to have to think about ways and approaches to handle that but I think that's great because it can really provide not only a lot of ideas, but just kind of back and forth can help sharpen the research so that we can stretch our ability to provide information that people might use and would be looking for.*