

Per Ostmo: Hello everyone. Good morning and good afternoon. My name is Per Ostmo, and I am the outreach specialist at the Rural Health Research Gateway, also referred to as Gateway. Today, Gateway will be hosting a webinar entitled Using Rural Health Research to Inform Health Policy. This webinar serves as a primer for the National Rural Health Association's 32nd annual Rural Health Policy Institute. Following today's presentation, the webinar will be posted on the Gateway website. Consider subscribing to Gateway alerts to receive periodic email updates when new publications become available, including the archive of today's webinar. Also follow us on Twitter or like our page on Facebook to receive daily notifications on rural health research.

We have muted all lines, but I encourage you to use the chat box at the bottom of your screen to type any questions you may have. The chat function allows you to choose who can read your comments. If you'd like everyone in attendance to read your comments, please select everyone from the drop box. We have two presenters today, Carrie Cochran-McClain with the National Rural Health Association and Dr. Shawnda Schroeder with the Rural Health Research Gateway. Carrie, would you please tell us a little about yourself and your role at NRHA.

Carrie Cochran-McClain: Of course. And good morning and good afternoon to everyone. I am Carrie Cochran-McClain. I am the vice president of government affairs and policy with the National Rural Health Association. I've been with NRHA about, actually today's my three-month anniversary. So I am thrilled to be a new member on the team. Prior to joining NRHA, I was with the Health Resources and Services Administration for almost 15 years and spent half that time in the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. So I am delighted to be back in the rural health space and talking with you all today. Next up I will have Shawnda introduce herself.

Shawnda Schroeder: Perfect. Thank you. Hi everybody. I am Shawnda Schroeder. I am the principal investigator for the Rural Health Research Gateway funded by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. I am located at the Center for Rural Health at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences. And I have been working here for now nearly a decade, and I'm really looking forward to speaking to you all today about how you can use Gateway and how you can actually work to disseminate information and rural health research. We will kick today off with Carrie leading us in about advocacy, and then I will tell you so much more about Gateway and how it can be utilized. Oh, Carrie, I think you're on mute.

Carrie Cochran-McClain: I double muted. So to start us off today. I wanted to just spend a minute talking about what exactly advocacy is. I think sometimes we think about going to talk to our members of Congress or going to talk to federal officials and using the terms advocacy, or in my case lobbying, sound somehow big and scary. But really advocacy is a critical tool that we as citizens use to talk to our elected officials about how to make improvements to government. It is part of our

constitutional right, and it is all about educating those members of Congress or your state legislature, or your state, federal, or even local and community citizen about what's important to you, what your story is, and kind of what changes you want them to make based on what you're seeing on the ground. For some reason I'm having a hard time changing slides. Hold on. Hold on, sorry.

Per, I might have you take control back because it's not letting me. There I go. OK. So why you? Why is it important that you're advocating? Why do you need to advocate? It's because you all are leaders in your community, you are experts in whatever area of rural health or health care or social services or community-based care that you are working in. And you have exactly the kind of knowledge and expertise that members of Congress and their staff want and need in order to make policymaking. So, what you're dealing with and experiencing day-to-day, especially in the case of emerging issues like COVID-19 or other kinds of pandemics or as we're seeing new trends or policy changes take place, it's important.

You know, we here in Washington, D.C., can do what we think is the right thing in terms of policymaking. But unless folks are hearing from what I when I was a fed used to call real people, it's all kind of for not. And so we want to spend just a minute today talking about kind of how to do that advocacy, how to frame your message and what kind of resources are important as you do that. So as you're going in to talk to your member of Congress or other kind of government official, it's really important that you lay out your case or explain your position both in terms of what you're seeing with the problem or the issue in your community and what you think some of the solutions might be. And as you're doing that, it's important to think about kind of the high level context or picture of whatever the issue is and talking about trends or any data that you have that can help to express or explain your case.

Two to three critical data points sometimes is all you need. And Shawnda's going to talk a little bit about how you guys can find those. When you're using data, if you can tie it to whatever their governmental district is, it's important. So if it's your senator, it's a state level. If you're talking to a representative, it's their district. Same with at your state and local level. And as you're framing it and using data, and I know we all know this, but the great thing about data is it can tell you any story you want to tell depending on how you frame it. But it's always important that as you're working with these members and their staff that you are being truthful, that you are telling both sides of the story, both the good and bad because as you develop your relationship with these individuals, your credibility both as an expert in your field and the information you're giving them is going to be one of your most important assets.

So before you go in to meet with your elected official or member of Congress, it's important to understand, understand not only the issue that you're bringing to them, but a little bit about the background on it. So is this ask or this policy change you're requesting, is it something that has been implemented

somewhere else in the country or in your state? And what's been the success of that or not? Is there precedent for the change you're asking, even if it's not the same necessarily? Maybe you're asking for a change in hospital reimbursement for an inpatient setting, but you've seen a precedent for doing something similar in outpatient. Being able to tie a policy change to a precedent always helps.

A second point to think about is what are your best arguments in favor of your decision? Have one or two of those in your back pocket as well as data, again, to support that. Also, like I said, wanting to know both the pros and cons to whatever you're asking, think about what arguments your opponent or someone who is not in favor of the policy that you're putting forward, how they might approach it. And again, thinking about what data might be there. And to the extent that you can understand that and explain that, that's important as well.

And lastly, when you're asking for a policy change, especially when you're going up to Congress, as we get into the weeds of what I like to call the sausage making of making legislation, at some point, someone's going to ask about cost and the numbers impacted. And that's both important in a quantitative way, but also in the way of thinking about what that impact can mean to individuals in more of a qualitative or anecdotal way. And we'll talk about a little bit more about that in just a second. So I have five rules of advocacy I'm going to run through real quick here and then turn it over to Shawnda.

So the first thing, and this is a lesson I definitely learned as a newbie in Washington, D.C., working in the executive branch, when you get in with a senior official and you want to make a change, always make sure you have an ask. You can come to them with all sorts of issues or problems, and then they're going to turn to you and say, "Okay, what do you want me to do about it?" And be ready with your ask in that situation. So members of Congress and their staff also always love to be able to say yes in addition if they have to say no. I don't know if that makes sense. So maybe you have two asks on hand, maybe have one that's an easy ask and one that you put in front of them for a longer term solution. But make sure you have that ask ready.

And also remember that you, again, are building a relationship with this request. So with your ask, making sure that you have the story and the evidence, and again, the tie to your individual experience to be able to support that. And we'll talk about that again in a minute. I think another important piece is make sure you're talking to the right person and that you're asking the right person for the right thing. When I was in the executive branch, we'd frequently hear from folks who were frustrated by a policy, but it needed a statutory change or it was really something Congress had to be dealing with not the executive branch or the administration.

So make sure that you're talking to the individual or the right committee or, again, the right jurisdiction for what you want to change. Also, it's important to

get to know the staffers that work for your members of Congress, they are a huge asset to you. They may seem young, they are young for the most part. They're willing to work for peanuts to get this fantastic experience, but they are also very bright. And most members rely quite heavily on them. So get to know and build a relationship with your staffer in addition to your member of Congress.

Shawnda Schroeder: Per, I'm no longer seeing the slides, I don't know if you are Carrie.

Carrie Cochran-McClain: Nope.

Shawnda Schroeder: There we go. Thank you.

Carrie Cochran-McClain: Perfect. Oh, and the last thing on talking to the right person, if you can make your request in person or over the phone in addition to following up in writing with whatever your ask is. OK. The other piece here, number three, know who you're lobbying. So again, we've talked about this a little bit, do your homework, know the data, know how your member can help with the issue that you're doing or that you're asking about. Again, know your member, their committee assignments. Think about what they may have done in the past in terms of their legislative work that could be relevant to what your ask is. Understand what tie they may have to rural health, be it where they're from, what their profession is, what their spouse's profession is. Just kind of understand what their connection might be to the issue.

And I do this all the time, you are so focused on whatever your ask is, you go in at a level where you're here, but the person you're talking to is here. And this is especially true in the House where the staff cover a whole slew of issues. So make sure that you're providing some background context in whatever it is. Don't assume that they're an expert off the bat, and make sure that you allow plenty of time for questions and back and forth. The next one here, I'm having a hard time, again, to turn on the slides. Per, can you go to slide number four for me? There we go.

Again, explaining what the importance of the issue is. So how is it important to this member's state or district and your experience as a citizen or resident in that state or district? Again, what do we know in terms of what data is out there and what trends we're seeing? Is this an issue that's unique to Montana? Is this an issue that we're seeing more of in the Southeast? That's going to help the member not only understand how it all fit into the larger body of Congress, but who some of their allies might be in introducing the legislation. And again, personalize it, let them know what this means to you and your facility and you as an employer or a healthcare provider or community-based organization in their community.

And last but not least, be concise and follow up. These folks, like many of all of you, are working under some crazy time constraints. You will probably get at

most a half an hour with an individual, so make sure that you can go in and make your case quickly and get out if something comes up in the middle of your meeting. And just to be understanding of the flexibility they're going to need. Like I said, make sure that you are following up in writing with whatever your ask or your data or information is. And again, keep working on that relationship so that they understand that you may be a resource for this one issue, but also for larger rural health or other areas that they might want to do work in. We have a lot of members in NRHA who are fantastic sources that have very close relationships with their members of Congress and get tapped regularly to understand how a policy might impact them as, for example, a hospital administrator in the state. So Shawnda is going to turn it over to talk a little bit about the Gateway now.

Shawnda Schroeder: Perfect. Thank you so much, Carrie. And this we thought was just a perfect segue and a perfect partnership to work with Carrie and the National Rural Health Association so they can talk to you a little bit about how important it is to use data. And then I can come in and say, "Well, here's where you can find it." Now, the one thing I do want to mention is that while I talk about the Rural Health Research Gateway, almost everything on Gateway is a national lens. There are locations where we have data specific to various states and counties. But for the most part, it's national data looking at a rural health issue in a comprehensive way.

And I know Carrie talked about how important it is to also then drill down and say, well, what are the data saying in my state or in my county or in my neighborhood? And if you can get that information, that's even better. So I'm going to just start with the bigger picture of what's Gateway, and why should you use Gateway? So the Rural Health Research Gateway, it is funded by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. And its sole purpose is to help all of you access all of the research that's being done by our federally funded rural health research centers. So Gateway is an excellent resource for policymakers, it's an excellent resource for students and researchers and healthcare providers, rural health organizations and associations like NRHA. And really anyone who really wants to try to grasp what's being done in research around rural health.

The picture on your screen right now, that is the homepage for Gateway. And I'm going to talk to you a little bit about some of the more specific pieces of Gateway and research that can be valuable to you right now for the purpose of informing and ask, like Carrie mentioned. Because the website itself is deep and has a lot of content. So to start with using Gateway, it's an online resource, and it's meant to connect you to all of the different products that our rural health research centers have developed. This includes our research and policy centers themselves. You can gain access to who the centers are, where they're located, who their directors are. You can get an idea of the type of work that they do. And then you can access their reports and publications, all of their fact sheets and policy briefs.

You can actually access all of the projects that are on Gateway. The projects, meaning these are things that the research centers are currently studying right now. So they might not have a product on the topic, but you can recognize and understand, well this is what's coming, this might be something we need to start focusing on in our health center or in our community, because this is what the researchers are being funded to study. You can also subscribe to email alerts, access webinars like what you're seeing today. And most of our webinars, well, today is more informational about Gateway. Our webinars typically are not about us. The webinars are usually about some pressing topic in rural health. And we try to get you access to the researchers themselves so that you can ask your questions and you can hear about the work that they've done and see the most relevant and recent data.

And then we also connect you to the experts that are out there on various rural health topics. And then finally we have a dissemination toolkit. One thing I am going to mention is I am watching the chat as is Per. And I see some questions coming in for Carrie, and we will answer those questions at the end. But if you have questions in real time as well, feel free to throw them out there. I'm happy to pause and have sort of a one-way conversation with the chat box. So feel free to enter questions there as well.

So one of the ways that I think would be the most useful for all of you is this search by topic. And before I jump into how to access that search by topic, somebody asked about those webinars and if they're recorded. And the answer is yes. So every webinar that we have done with one of our rural health research centers and one of our experts are on our website. The archived recording is there along with the slide deck. I personally as a rural health researcher for the last decade, one of the things that I love the most about those webinars is actually the slide deck because our researchers are so fabulous about creating very accessible figures and tables that illustrate their research. And they are all displayed beautifully in those slide decks. And you can access those all at the Rural Health Research Gateway under the webinars tab.

So to continue on the different topics. So on our webpage, there's a button that you click that is a search by topic, and it's exactly what it says. You get to search all of the different topics on Gateway, and there are a lot. The topics on Gateway change pretty regularly. When I first started, we didn't have a section about electronic health records, and we didn't have an entire section on telemental health. And we absolutely did not have a topic on COVID-19 or pandemic planning. And now we have those topics on our page. So when you're on the page and you click topic, the way that we've organized is that if you pick the topic healthcare access, which is a very popular topic, especially when it comes around the time for the Policy Institute with the National Rural Health Association. If you visit and you want to look at all the research that's been done on Gateway, currently there are 50 research products that you can freely access.

And these are predominantly policy briefs. So they are short, they are to the point, they hit the key findings, and they are visual. There are 15 journal articles on our website right now on that particular topic, five recaps, which I'll talk a little bit more about these one-page recaps coming up. It'll show you that there are eight webinars that have been archived on this topic, 34 projects that are current. So currently, there are 34 different projects happening in this moment studying healthcare access in our rural communities. And then 16 projects that have been completed. Everything on the slide is hyperlinked. So if you do want to share these slides, and when we do share these slides with all of you, if you want to be able to just click through and see these examples, you definitely can.

So the thing I really want to talk about though with regard to Carrie's presentation is that these research centers that Gateway is dedicated to promoting the work around, they are responsive to the changing healthcare landscape. And these are some examples. So funded by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, all of these research centers, they communicate, they work together, they work with the Federal Office and they really have a good pulse on what's happening and what's happening in the healthcare landscape. So, as an example, there are now two research centers that are solely focused on tele-health topics. They also have a rural health research center that is tracking rural hospital closures. This research center has a ton of visual aids on Gateway all dedicated to tracking and enumerating the rural hospital closures as well as the effects of these closures and what they actually mean for patients.

There are more than 30 different products on the topic of health reform specifically. There was an immediate response to COVID-19, and our research centers adjusted their research agendas to start studying topics or to integrate questions specific to the pandemic and what that means for access and healthcare quality. And researchers have oftentimes been contacted and invited to speak to Congress. Federally funded, the intent of these members necessarily speaking to Congress may not be to advocate the way that Carrie has spoken to that all of you are likely to do. But it might be simply to educate, to answer questions, to prepare these individuals to understand what are the actual issues around access. And then immediate release of research without lag time. One of the benefits of Gateway and the reason it was funded is because we know that in research there is commonly a large lag between doing the research, writing a journal publication, and having that journal publication accepted.

This can range anywhere between six weeks from submission to publish if you're lucky, otherwise that can be anywhere between one and two years between finishing a study and it actually being in press, in print, and ready to be read. And so Gateway cuts that lag time, and our researchers are producing a policy brief as soon as their research is done. And when that policy brief is done and ready to go, Gateway immediately releases it in a research alert and uploads it online so that you can access it. Our research centers are still writing journal articles, and they're still producing journal publications. But the purpose is for them to make this research quickly and readily acceptable to everyone

else. And for the most part, that's done through chartbooks and policy briefs. And somebody did ask though about accessing these alerts and this information is whether or not you can subscribe to just a certain topic on Gateway. And actually, you cannot. The way that you receive alerts through our Gateway research alerts, it's you subscribe to the email list.

But the one thing I always like to say when we're at conferences or presenting or exhibiting is that Gateway doesn't actually send frequent emails. We might go three weeks without a single email notification of a new research study. And then there might be a week where we have a lot of research publications. So we might send a single alert notifying you about all of the research that was done this week on a particular topic. And if you do want to actually go where Per just shared in the chat box where you can look at our alerts, what we actually do with you is we share the last five alerts so you can get a taste of what they look like and how often they come. So feel free to click the link in the chat box, look at our research alerts. It doesn't subscribe you right away, it just shows you what our alerts look like and their frequency.

So here's that example. I had just said that they really respond to the changing landscape, and we're responsive to COVID-19. We're sitting here still within one year of having our first response back in March where we had a national shutdown and reaction to the pandemic. And those of you who work in research, you know that to then propose a research study, do the research, review the data, write the report and publish it and share it, that's a long process, especially when many of our researchers are also academics and they're also teaching. And they're also doing other research studies, and they're also parents, and they're also responding to a pandemic. And even in all of that, we have already had several research products and journal articles specifically addressing COVID-19 and what that has meant for our rural healthcare providers and our rural communities. I'm not going to sit here and read the titles of all of those products, but I just really wanted to share what those look like and to really illustrate how there is an immediate response to the changing healthcare landscape.

Someone did ask that, are there rural health focused public use datasets that we might have access to to support rural health research? That's a great question. Gateway is not that source. Gateway will provide you chartbooks, which will give you a really deep, comprehensive, 100-page document walking through all of the current data on a topic. Mortality, for an example. And it will give you the figures and the charts. It will not give you the raw secondary protected data set that you can run and manage yourself. However, I'm going to do a quick plug for the Rural Health Information Hub where you can search things by topic, and they will provide a list of different datasets and data use files that you could probably access to answer some of these questions as well.

And someone did also ask if the research on Gateway is limited to studies produced by our rural health research centers. That is yes. I think that's a pretty

good nuanced question because it tells me they have some good understanding of our rural health research center program. The rural health research centers are funded by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, and they ebb and flow at how many there are because tele-health research centers were added, and there are a rapid response centers. But at any given time, there are around 10 to 12 centers doing research in rural health, and they're doing it at a national lens and publishing work. So I think currently right now, we have probably on average about 35 to 40 new research projects being added to Gateway every year from these research centers.

However, they're not the only individuals in the United States doing really important research on rural health. And we know that and understand that. But Gateway really is meant to be the place to house all of their research so that you as a user are not having to go visit 10 different rural health research centers, see what they're studying and researching, and try to access their products. Gateway is meant to give you just one spot to come and really start exploring that topic and that research. I'm loving the questions. So I'm happy to keep going off on tangents from the slide as those questions keep coming in.

So how can you use Gateway to inform health policy? I'm going to stick with using language like inform and educate and find the data and tell the story. And this is now how I would encourage all of you to go through this process when you're about to possibly go to the Hill or visit with somebody or talk to a member of Congress. First, you need to identify that topic, right? You all have something that you're wanting to address. So go to Gateway, find the topic and see what's already been done. Now, if you're not even really sure what's going on around that topic but you care deeply about it. Let's say you know your community struggling with opioid use. And so you don't know much about the topic, but you know something needs to be done. If you're still a little bit more novice in your understanding of the issue but you know what's important to you, but you're not sure what's been done in rural, first consider visiting the Rural Health Information Hub.

The difference between the information hub and Gateway is that the Rural Health Information Hub, also funded by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, the Rural Health Information Hub is actually just this large resource of any and all information on rural health. Not necessarily research, but basic information about grant opportunities. And what does this topic actually mean? What's actually being done? They have topic guides to explain the issue, and they have toolkits on how communities are responding to that topic. Then once you do know the topic you're interested in, come back to Gateway, look for the research, look at the recent publications under that topic and use the data and the figures and the policy implications that are in these products. The research centers don't want these products to only just inform your understanding, they want you to use them. Please take the figures and the charts and cite the centers and cite the work and use that information to help inform the policy.

You can also look at our current projects on the same topic. And the reason I think this is important is because it lets you know where we're headed. Currently published articles and publications are going to tell you, this is what's been done, this is what we know. But when you look at the current projects, you really get a taste of what's coming and what are these researchers predicting might be happening because they're already starting to study this topic? A good example would be that our research centers were studying opioid use and misuse in our rural communities long before it was declared a public health emergency in the United States. And so there were policy implications before it ever became the popular topic that it is now. And somebody did ask, can we suggest topics? They don't see something on Gateway that they think is important.

Absolutely. And the way that I would recommend doing that is find the research center that's doing work the most similar to your topic and reach out to them and ask them, have you ever considered studying this topic or I would recommend studying this topic. Having been a rural health research center researcher at one point as well, I think it's really great, especially when working with State Offices of Rural Health to ask them, "What are you seeing in your communities? What's actually happening where you're at? And what do you think would be important information to know to help inform your community work? And so if you have topics, feel free to reach out to me, but also feel free to reach out to our research centers.

On Gateway, we have contact information for every single one of our rural health researchers and our research centers. So you can reach out to their director, the deputy director. And all of the research centers when you click on them, they actually list what their topic expertise are. So, if you click on one of our research centers, it might say that their area of expertise is rural minority health care or rural women's health, maternal care, access, or quality measures. And so you can really find a center that maybe it is doing work similar to the topic that you're thinking about, and then you can reach out to them and make a recommendation.

Well, that clicked a little faster than I anticipated, let's go back. OK. So, the other benefit of Gateway is recognizing time as a barrier. I've already talked about how Gateway recognizes the lag in research, and so really works to promote policy briefs and information that's not necessarily a journal publication. However, we also recognize, and this is hard for me to say as a researcher who writes long journal articles and also writes longer policy briefs, which are about six to eight pages, but we recognize that these health aides and these individuals trying to make decisions, and even our hospital administrators, they don't have time to come to Gateway necessarily and to say, what's everything that's recently been done on minority rural health? And then go read the 8 to 10 policy briefs that were published in the last two years on the topic of rural minority health.

And we realized that that can be a barrier. So what we've started to do at Gateway is that we create as best as we can a one-pager summarizing all of those policy briefs. So our research centers are committed to working on certain topics, and they might all look at it from a different lens. And an example might be rural hospital closure. Several different rural health research centers did research on rural hospital closures. Some looked at the actual numbers, some looked at the fiscal risk, some looked at the actual quality of care, and others looked at what did this mean for the patient and what were the effects of hospital closure? And so then we did a recap, one page, just the key findings from all of those policy briefs and summarized what's happening in the U.S. on this topic and whatever our research center studied.

And at the end of that one-page recap are the citations that take you directly to the longer briefs should you want to go access them. So it's a way to drive traffic to those briefs that are relevant, but it also gives that one-page summary that even when we were meeting for the National Rural Health Association's Policy Institute, we were hoping that those one-pagers could be a useful tool to take to the Hill to say, here's recent research on a given topic. Per has actually been the individual working on our recaps as of late. And just a visual display, you're not expected to be able to read this, this is just meant for a visual display. This is the idea of the recap.

This is one of our recaps on Rural Ethnic/Racial Disparities: Adverse Health Outcomes. This was just released in November, and it provides a summary of several different policy briefs that you can find on Gateway. And it summarizes it visually and brings it all together. And it cuts out all the things that as a researcher we really love to write about like the methods. But it cuts those pieces out and just gives you the snapshot of what's actually happening, and what are the data telling us? And we have recaps on a lot of topics. So this is my quintessential slide listing all of those recaps. So if somebody were to pull just the slides tomorrow from our website, they could go straight to the hyperlinks for all of our various one-page recaps that we've developed.

We look at our Gateway analytics. And one of the more popular recaps that we've published to date is a little bit older now, but it's Rural Communities: Age, Income, and Health Status. And that was really developed in response to this notion or this perception that rural communities are older and have a higher proportion of individuals that are lower income and have worse health status. And so this was our attempt to say, well, is that what we're seeing in the actual research? And we summarize that in a one-page recap.

So now, I'm going to shift gears a little bit. I told you all where to go to find the data. I told you how to find it, how to mine Gateway, how to start asking the right questions and looking for the data that you need. But a lot of times, you might need to write a product or produce something now and share it with a member of Congress or you might need to share information with a board member or the leadership in your healthcare organization. And so you need to

think about who your audience is and what your ask is and what you're trying to really move. And so, we recognize that it's not always easy to write that product, even if you know what you're trying to do, and you have that information in your head and you now have the research. It's not so easy to just write that product.

So we've developed a rural health research dissemination toolkit. The point of this toolkit is to really help individuals to walk through, what is the right product? When should it be used, and how can you write it? So you need to know your audience, you need to know the topic, and keep it simple. One of the most important things I would encourage you to do is to clarify what you mean by rural. And I say that because all of our states are so different, all of our rural communities are so different. And I cannot even determine who to attribute this quote to any longer, because I've been hearing it and believe it and follow it and share it so often. But if you've been to one rural community, you've been to one rural community. And I know we all hear that so regularly, but it's very true.

When speaking to a group of healthcare journalists they asked, "Well, how do you define rural?" And I shared with them various maps using various definitions of rural illustrating how rural America really is. One map is fully lit and the next map has only a few counties lit. And it just really depends on the federal definition that you're utilizing. And I had one individual actually share and say, "Well, rural for me is if you can go into the grocery store and come back out and have vegetables in your backseat because somebody dropped them off and recognized your car." That's rural. And so it is important in whatever product you write, you define what you mean by rural. And when you look at the research, think of that as well. It's very important that you look at how did they define rural? Is it by county? Is it by frontier and remote? Does it accidentally and unintentionally rope in suburban America?

And these are really important questions just to help you understand the data and to make a really good argument when you're trying to inform others about a topic. You need to make sure your audience receives the product and that you involve the audience when writing it if possible. And I know that last bullet of involving them if possible is not always really easy. But when I'm doing a particular research, if there's an audience I know I'm wanting to reach, I like to contact them and say, "How best would you like this information? Do you prefer slides? Is it a chartbook? Is it a policy brief? Do you want policy implications?" And to really get an idea of what's useful for that audience so that all of our time is not wasted.

This is what the toolkit looks like. The toolkit is actually interactive online, but there's also a PDF version of it that is available for you. We have a lot of copies in-person that we share when we're at conferences. But in this virtual world, you can go online and access the toolkit. Per has also shared the link to it in the chat box. And on the website, you can either open the PDF or you can do the interactive toolkit. In the print version, what's really valuable is we tried to keep

our tips and guides for you to a single page. So if you're wanting to see how to write a fact sheet, you'll get one page that tells you how to write a fact sheet, and then you'll get a one-page example. Same with policy briefs and infographics and promotional materials, and even modes of dissemination related to how to use social media well.

Let's see. Looks like I'm being asked to add captioning. There we go, let's go back to the toolkit. So here's what the screen page looks like on the website when it's interactive. So here you can see policy briefs, fact sheets, chartbooks. And you can interact by clicking each of these. And when you click them, it'll open up the tool that you're wanting to learn about. And then it'll actually, over on the right hand side, give you an example. And our toolkit is also available if you know that you do better with print and you would like us to send you or mail you some copies of the toolkit. Please reach out to myself or to Per so that we can make sure that those arrive.

And now, finally, my last plug about Gateway. There are just so many ways that you can connect with us. And by us, I mean Gateway. But when you connect with Gateway, you are connecting with all of our rural health research centers. And the different ways that you can connect with us are to first and foremost subscribe to our alerts. I know I've said it before, but I'll say it again, our alerts do not come out daily or weekly. They come out only when there's a new rural health research product, so when we have a new policy brief, when we have a new chartbook, or when we have a free webinar to announce, that's when we'll send the alerts out to all of you. So consider subscribing if you don't already. You can also follow us on Twitter and follow us on Facebook as well.

Per does a really great job of always highlighting the work of our rural health research centers on Twitter. And several of our rural health research centers also have a presence on social media, and you can interact with them and share the work that they have. And we really do try to share as many visuals as we can through social media, so figures and charts and data points that can be really useful to you all. Not that I want to scare any of you if you are a researcher, but one of the things that we have found out is that there was a survey done a few years back asking health aides how they best received information, or how do they most readily access new research on healthcare. And their answer, their number one way of accessing new information or seeing what was happening was through Twitter. So that is the main reason we work so hard to have a social media presence is because if those health aides are going on Twitter to get their information, we want to make sure they find it.

And finally, when I told you about our alerts and that you could go to the page and see how often we send them or when our most recent alerts were, I shared that screenshot with you here on this slide. And I know we've been answering questions in real time, but I am going to ask Carrie to join me again so that we can answer any and all questions you might have. And Carrie, I know there were

some questions specific for you earlier in the chat box that we can maybe scroll back to and have you answer.

Carrie Cochran-McClain: I would be happy to do that. I don't know, Per, if I might be going rogue here. But if I could share my screen, and I'm not sure if that's possible or not. I am happy to walk through how you can find a member's voting record because there was a question about that. I'm going to give this a whirl. Let's see. I don't know if I'm going to be able to, doesn't look like I can show screen. I'll just walk you through if you go to congress.gov, that is the website I think most folks use. It's a nonpartisan, just strictly factual government-based website of what's happening in Congress. And if you go to the main page, there's a search bar on the top where you can just type in your member of Congress.

I'm going to say Jon Tester because I'm from Montana. And when that search comes up, you'll have a limit the search option where you can um, OK, so Per if you go there and just type Jon Tester or Tester. If you go to the limit your search on the left hand there and do the uncheck to limit it just to the member. And then click on the member option, and you should be able to, yep, there you get the senator right there. If you click on his picture and you scroll down, you can learn all about that individual as well as legislation sponsored or co-sponsored by that individual. You can sort by time period. And I'm pretty sure that you can get their, yeah, you can see their Congressional work, remarks, their committee assignments, all sorts of good information.

So this is one place like if you cared a lot about mental health and you wanted to see if your senator or representative had done anything on that, you could check this source on the site. And you can do an advanced search that would allow you to do it by the member and by the topic. So that's probably your best source for that question. The other question was around just some of the challenges when CMS is making policy, not having access to all of the same datasets that they do their analysis with. And, yes, that is always a challenge. I think one of the things that the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy and the Gateway and others do a really good job at is trying to make sure that the research that the rural health research centers are doing is on topics that are really relevant and can be used in policymaking.

I can't remember what the topic of that question was, if it was wage index or something along that line. I think that's a great conversation to have with the team at the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy and see if you can get it on their research priorities, both long-term research, but also some of their quick turn around. They can then work with the rural health research centers that already have access to that Medicare claims data or whatever dataset that you need to be able to do the analysis without having to go through the process of requesting it from CMS. But yes, I recognize that that is a challenge, that commenter's question.

Other questions, comments? While you're all thinking, I would love to do a plug for our upcoming Policy Institute that Per mentioned at the beginning of the session. That is occurring via Zoom. Normally, I would say in Washington, D.C., but via Zoom February 9th through the 11th. We are having two days of speakers. The first day is members of the executive branch. We have some new officials. We actually just confirmed Dr. Nunez-Smith, who is a co-chair for the White House council on a COVID-19 response, so we are thrilled to have her. But we have a number of high-profile officials in the executive branch and then some very powerful members of Congress as well as new members who are joining us on day two.

And then day two afternoon is the rural health disparity summit where we'll be talking a lot about what rural health looks like across the country, what are some policy solutions we all should be advocating for and thinking about? We'll have a conversation around coverage. And we have a private payer who is going to be with us talking about their work in the space and how the private sector can be involved in rural health transformation. So it's going to be an exciting day. So please feel free to join us. Per, thank you for pulling out the link on our website. And I will do a little break, turn it back over to Shawnda.

Shawnda Schroeder: No, I'll jump on top of what you just said, Carrie, and mention that for disparities, I will be in attendance at that that conversation. And for Gateway, we love to live tweet during national conferences when we're in attendance like the National Rural Health Association's annual meeting or the Policy Institute. And we will be doing that again this year. But knowing that that was going to be a topic, that's really why we did focus two of our latest recaps specifically on disparities. One on a summary of all the recent research on Rural Ethnic/ Racial Disparities: Adverse Health Outcomes, and then another on the Social and Systemic Inequities. And Per is sharing those with you right now. The one thing I will mention about both of these is that there's also a rural health research center really focused in on minority health, and they released several new fact sheets in just the last year. And I'd encourage you if you're planning to attend that, do a quick glance at some of those resources and recent research so you can really engage in the conversation in a meaningful way.

And I did see one comment about the NRHA fellows. And, yes, I serve on the NRHA health and research and education committee, and we talk about that all the time. And I do present to the fellows every year, but I get to follow, I'm usually at the Policy Institute, and I present after Brock. And those of you who know Brock, he has a lot to say in a short window of time always. So we share, but we share in about 5 minutes is usually the agenda time or maybe 10. But there's talk now that so much of it is virtual that we could do something specifically like this for the rural health fellows each year for Gateway.

And for those of you who don't know about the rural health fellows program, I'd encourage you to learn more about it. Are there any other questions or even comments or stories or lessons learned anyone else wants to share in the chat

box? If not, I'm going to, oh, it looks like, charge for the conference. We shared the link to the conference. You can actually go and find all of the different price points because I think it varies based on whether or not you're a member.

Carrie Cochran-McClain: We have a student rate. I wanted to stop myself to confirm that, but I'm pretty sure we do. I think I'll put my email again in the chat. You are more than welcome to reach out to me, and I can help answer any questions on that front or anything else about the meeting.

Shawnda Schroeder: Great. Thanks, Carrie. And Per did pull up the screen, so you can see a little bit of it now. But also feel free to visit the site and see what you can register for. OK. And then to answer the last question, I knew it was coming, thank you for asking it. I just saw it in our all panelists chat, but I knew this question was coming. Today's webinar, the recording, the slides, and the transcript will all be on our Gateway website within the week. Actually, right this very minute, the slides are already up there. So if you'd like to go and pull the slides, you can. I'll have Per share the link one more time where our webinars are at in the chat box. And you can just go straight to it. Perfect, thank you, Per. The slide deck is already up there, and we will have the recording and transcripts coming in the next week.

And my email is actually on that same website. So if you're looking to contact me, you can actually see it a little bit on the screen right now. But it's just Shawnda.schroeder@und.edu. And Per can share that in the chat box as well. Thank you everyone for joining us today. And as always, we've shared our contact information a couple of times. Do please reach out to either of us if you have more questions.