

## Rural Health Network

# CONSULTATIVE SERVICES

### Offer of Assistance

HMS is particularly well positioned to assist rural providers in the development and operation of rural health networks and services. We have worked with 35 networks and know that the “magic bullet” for networks is benefits to their members and communities. Talk to us about your health care services, and the current conditions and challenges in your communities. We can help you minimize rhetoric and focus your energies on products and services.

Call Greg Bonk at (716) 688 - 8448 or toll free at (877) 889 - 6519 or visit us at . . . .



HMS Associates

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### Rural Health Network Philosophy

Rural health networks emerged in the late 1980's. Some grew up from the “grassroots” to pursue projects on behalf of their members; other networks developed with support and promotion from states, the federal government, or foundations, with a goal stabilizing and strengthening fragile rural health care systems. The results have been mixed and the jury is still out on the issue of how and why rural health networks succeed or fail. It is certain, however, that misconceptions about the rural health network experience prevent us from making sound decisions about where to go next with rural health network development initiatives.

HMS Associates has had close involvement with a wide variety of hospital and community based rural health networks over the past decade. *We suggest that people think about rural health networks as voluntary multi-organizational platforms for change.* They offer a vehicle for a new way of doing business designed to help rural communities work together to solve specific problems on the way to stronger, more stable health care services and systems. The network approach to change is based upon voluntary collaboration among health care organizations, rather than mandated participation by organizations, on the one hand, or independent action by organizations, on the other. The network approach works best when benefits warrant involvement and change requires the complementary capacities of autonomous partners.

### Rural Health Network Projects:

- Shared services
- CAH/support hospital relationships and improvements
- Electronic health information networks
- EMS systems
- Coordinated needs assessment and service development
- Financial support - over \$8M
- Preferred provider arrangements
- Centralized administrative & quality improvement services
- Programs for the uninsured

### Relevant Publications:

- New York State Rural Health Network Development: Lessons Learned, Experiences and Strategies, 1995.
- Critical Access Hospital Conversion in New York State, 1997, for the NYS Office of Rural Health through support from HCFA.
- Principles of Rural Health Network Development and Management, 2000, for Agency for Health Services Research and Health Policy, Washington, DC, with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

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## Rural Health Network Consultative Services

# consultative services

### 1. Preparedness Assessments

Providers interested in rural health networks as potential solutions to common problems can benefit from this service. Two types of assessments are offered: A half-day assessment with all interested parties and multiple day assessments with separate sessions for each potential participants. Both assessments cover similar topics: networking concepts and history and participating organizations' views of the problems their community face, the need for a network response, the benefits they expect and potential courses of network action. The half-day session is recommended for providers interested in the networking concept but without specific network objectives. The multiple day session is recommended for providers who have already identified potential network projects but are unsure about levels of interest, potential benefits and courses of action.

*This service is useful for networks during their formative stages of development by providing them with guidance which can help them "jump start" their activities and provide benefits to their members. It can be conducted over a 2 to 6 week period and generally ranges from \$2,900 to \$9,500.*

### 2. Community Health Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning

Rural health networks should undertake community health needs assessment which help them assess current and emerging compelling unmet needs, identify program priorities and select strategic options. Both qualitative and quantitative data is collected, analyzed and integrated which provides network members with potential cross validation of high priority needs and strategies. Data acquisition and analysis address general demographics, health status, health care service utilization levels and patterns of in-migration and out-migration, the impact of neighboring health service providers, community perceptions of key health care issues and provider perceptions of the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. Each type of information provides the network with critical data about its community, its market characteristics, and its health care service system and serves as a base for the selection of long term and short term strategic options.

Assessments can be conducted as an initial network action or during more advanced network development phases, after compelling needs have been successfully addressed, and additional objectives need to be

considered. The process results in a data compendium addressing community, market forces, and provider characteristics.

A series of potential priorities are also culled from the data for consideration by the network for program development. Potential program strategic actions are examined by considering "hard and soft returns and benefits" to members, associated risks, and readiness.

Equally importantly, HMS Associates has assisted networks in developing mission statements, goals and objectives, participant requirements, budgets, letters of agreement, articles or incorporation, operational procedures, corporate structures, staff recruitment, grants management, and revenue prospecting.

*For mature networks, HMS has reviewed and revised mission statements and aligned strategic objectives to current needs and benefits. Plans for network self-sufficiency are also detailed. These services can be conducted in 3 to 9 months and generally range from \$9,500 to \$34,900.*

### 3. Network Management Services

Network management services are geared to your networks' specific needs, especially when programs and resources do not yet require full time network coordination staff. HMS oversees the implementation of network programs until the network needs or can retain employees. Administrative support services include logistics regarding meetings, participation in network meetings, acting as the network's spokesperson or representative, maintenance of records and financial transactions, reports to funding bodies, assuring that the network adheres to its established policies and procedures, and most importantly monitoring progress regarding work plans and making recommendations on changes when indicated. *Networks have found these services of value in that they free-up network members to concentrate their energies on their own unique implementation roles and rely upon HMS to manage the network programs and focus on the attainment of goals and objectives.* Management services contracts last between 6 months to 3 years and cost approximately \$2,400 per month.

HMS also offers ad hoc consultative services to network executives and coordinators on a discounted fee/retainer basis.