

2008 MRHA Policy Priorities



The Minnesota Rural Health Association brings together diverse interests to address rural health issues and advocate for and with rural Minnesotans.

1. MRHA promotes a Rural Opportunity Assessment (ROA), and supports initiatives that foster a new rural economy.

Whereas there has been a demographic shift in Minnesota; and
Whereas this shift has resulted in declining populations in many rural communities and a decline in economic and social capital in these areas; and

Whereas, this shift has also resulted in urban congestion and related problems;

Be it therefore resolved that a Rural Opportunity Assessment be promoted to assess opportunity to locate jobs and support new economy entrepreneurs in rural communities.

(MRHA resolution adopted in 2005 and modified in 2006 and 2007)

2. MRHA encourages health care reform that will improve the health and well being of rural people and communities across Minnesota.

As health care reform initiatives are considered, MRHA encourages policy makers to seek out and listen to the “rural voice.” Rural Minnesota is different from urban in many ways as noted by the Rural Health Advisory Committee Work Group on Rural Health Reform in their October 2007 report: *Health care Reform: Addressing the Needs of Rural Minnesota*. Changing demographics, disparities in income and insurance coverage, stressors on the health care delivery system, work force issues, and access to technology are among the rural issues of special concern. Initiatives to provide universal coverage are encouraged, along with proposals to ensure access to growing numbers of non-English-speaking rural residents, and efforts to expand telehealth.

3. MRHA encourages more attention to the crisis in long term care in many rural communities.

Long-term care facilities are critically important to the rural communities where they are located. Beyond the economic benefit, these facilities typically are the best choice for people left with limited choice—the best choice for the person needing care, and the best policy choice. MRHA encourages policy makers to consider establishing criteria to identify facilities that simply cannot be allowed to fail, designating them as “Essential Access Long-Term Care facilities.” Once designated, these facilities need assistance to ensure a viable future, including attention to unresolved reimbursement issues. MRHA encourages community, legislative and statewide discussions to seek ways to promote “healthy aging” communities.

4. MRHA supports preventive health and safety initiatives, especially those that address rural health issues.

When compared to the rest of the State, there are more traffic accident fatalities, more obese children, and more elderly people, per capita in rural Minnesota. Rural people use seat belts less and drive on two-lane roads more. This generation of children is predicted to have a shorter life span than their parents along with an increase in the early onset of diabetes. The declining and aging of the population is causing problems of crisis proportion for many rural communities. And, there are fewer prevention programs and strategies in rural areas.