

Rural Expertise and Programs

Stratis Health is a Minnesota-based nonprofit that has improved health care quality and safety for over half a century in Minnesota and nationwide.

Rural health quality has been an organizational priority for more than 25 years, and Stratis Health is recognized as a national leader in rural health transformation and improvement. We offer a comprehensive portfolio of initiatives across the continuum of care. Funders include federal and state agencies, foundations, universities, health care networks, and rural hospitals and clinics.

Collectively, Stratis Health's initiatives demonstrate strong alignment with the [CMS Rural Health Transformation Program](#) by:

- **Strengthening rural workforce capacity and retention** through scalable learning models
- **Supporting innovative, technology-enabled care delivery**
- **Improving system sustainability** across hospitals, clinics, correctional facilities, and community networks
- **Delivering measurable outcomes** that improve access and quality, and reduce health disparities in rural communities
- **Advancing behavioral health and [OUD treatment](#)** as foundational components of rural health transformation

Stratis Health leads rural health initiatives in Minnesota and nationally.

A sampling of current rural initiatives includes:

- **Rural Health Value:** Facilitates the transition of rural health care organizations, payers, and communities from volume-based to value-based health care and payment, including direct support of rural hospitals as they adopt an all-payer model. (A national program, co-led with the University of Iowa RUPRI Center since 2012)
- **Flex and SHIP Quality Improvement:** Advances quality improvement and population health in state-based Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Programs (Flex) and Small Hospital Improvement Programs (SHIP) through readiness assessments, learning collaboratives, training, and technical assistance for small rural and critical access hospitals. (Currently active in 10 states)
- **National Rural Age-Friendly Initiative:** In partnership with the National Rural Health Association, identifies opportunities to strengthen age-friendly care by fostering awareness and alignment between rural health care organizations and community partners by highlighting strategies such as leveraging the new Age-Friendly Hospital measure and aligning state rural transformation plans with age-friendly strategies (Currently in our second year of national programming)
- **Rural Palliative Care Initiative:** Assists communities in developing programs and building skills to improve advance care planning, symptom management, communication, coordination, and the delivery of care, thereby improving the quality of life and care for those with chronic diseases or life-limiting illness via a state-based trainer-the-trainer approach. (Launched in 2008, currently implementing in a fifth state)
- **Practicing Primary Care Wisely:** Improves practice efficiency by implementing rural-relevant time-saving strategies and EHR enhancements that prevent clinician burnout, resulting in better patient experience and clinical quality. (Served 20 provider-based rural health clinics to date, starting in 2024 with the Rough Rider High Value Network in North Dakota)

Stratis Health as a Valued Partner

Stratis Health also serves as a preferred partner, leading and supporting quality improvement and value-based care-related technical assistance with small rural hospitals and clinics across the country that are participants in the following Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) funded programs:

- In partnership with the National Rural Health Resource Center:
 - Rural Healthcare Provider Transition Program
 - Rural Hospital Stabilization Program
- In partnership with the Rural Health Redesign Center:
 - Appalachian Region Support Programs
 - Northern Border Technical Assistance Program
 - Rural Emergency Hospital Technical Assistance Program
- In partnership with the Georgia Health Policy Center:
 - Community-based Grant Programs Technical Assistance

National Technical Assistance

Stratis Health designs and leads national technical assistance programs, working with state- or regionally based programs to support the implementation of federal initiatives. Current and recent examples include:

- **Rural Quality Improvement Technical Assistance Program:** Improved quality and health outcomes in rural communities across the country by providing technical assistance to the 45 State Flex Programs funded through the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Program and the 1,350+ critical access hospitals (CAHs) supported by that program nationwide, and grantees of the Small Health Care Provider Quality Improvement program. (Launched and led inaugural national program 2015 – 2023)
- **CMS Medicaid Innovation Accelerator Program:** In partnership with NORC (formerly the National Opinion Research Center), developed tools and provided technical assistance to state Medicaid agencies to support strategies for readiness assessment, education, and engagement of providers and key partners as a component of implementing Value-Based Payment approaches. (2018 – 2019)
- **CDC Diabetes Mobilizing Access Through Capacity Building and Health (MATCH) Initiative:** As part of the national MATCH team, support national diabetes prevention program providers in expanding access and delivery of diabetes prevention program services by providing technical assistance such as workflow analysis, payor engagement strategies, contracting coaching, and training. (2023 – present)
- **Quality Improvement Organization National Support Center Programs:** From 2005 – 2019, Stratis Health served on teams leading three iterations of national technical assistance and coordination programs for the CMS Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) program. While focus areas evolved, Stratis Health provided support and technical assistance to QIOs as they implemented improvement strategies for rural hospitals, long-term care, and chronic disease care. (After 2019, CMS no longer funded a national coordinating center.)

CMS Quality Improvement Organization

Stratis Health has served as a CMS-designated Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) since the inception of the QIO program more than 20 years ago. We are currently serving as QIOs through two partnerships:

- Superior Health Quality Alliance, a Stratis Health joint venture: Improves care for Medicare beneficiaries by collaborating with patients, clinicians, health care organizations, and communities. Currently serving as QIN-QIO for a six-state region (IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, and WI). (2019 – present)
- American Indian/Alaskan Native QIO (formerly referenced as Partnership to Advance Tribal Health – PATH): Provide technical assistance and support to more than 200 facilities within the Indian Health Service (IHS), tribally managed health care facilities, Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs), and CMS-designated nursing homes across the nation. (2016 – present)

Strategic Planning and Facilitation of Partnerships

Stratis Health has a long history of serving as a neutral convener and facilitator. It is skilled at bringing together a variety of health care organizations, payers, and partners to reach consensus on recommendations and to plan and implement collaborative improvement efforts. Recent examples include:

- **Co-Creating a Shared Approach to Social Needs Resource Referrals:** Led and facilitated a multi-sector effort in Minnesota with health care, social care providers, and payer organizations to articulate a statewide strategy for social needs referrals, that includes a trusted and accessible community resource information directory, interoperable exchange of information, and standards for contracting with social care providers that supports sustainable financing of social care. (2021 – 2024)
- **Next Generation: Quality Program Workgroup:** As part of a state-level planning process to support development of a successor to the Pennsylvania Rural Health Model, Stratis Health facilitated a payer/provider workgroup to make recommendations on measures and methodology for incorporating quality measurement and performance into a new value-based model targeting rural hospitals and communities in PA. (2025)
- **MN Guaranteed Basic Care:** Stratis Health led engagement and facilitation of a Payer and Provider Advisory Group as part of a state-funded exploration into opportunities for developing a program that guarantees basic primary care services to all Minnesota residents. (2025)
- **Collaborative Health Plan Performance Improvement Projects (PIPs):** For more than 20 years, Stratis Health has served as a neutral convener and facilitator, supporting the implementation of collaborative performance improvement projects to improve the health of public program members and reduce disparities for low-income Minnesotans. (2006 – present)

Our Staff

At Stratis Health, our [rural health transformation team](#) brings decades of experience and a deep understanding of the unique strengths and challenges facing rural communities. Alongside these experts, Stratis Health boasts a diverse team across 10 states with a broad range of skills and experience, ready to support and drive rural transformation. Relevant organizational and individual professional credentials include:

- Designated Project ECHO Partner by the University of New Mexico
- Staff certified as Team STEPPS (Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance & Patient Safety) Master Trainers, Certified Professionals in Healthcare Quality (CPHQ), and Certified Professionals in Patient Safety (CPPS)
- Stratis Health was the inaugural recipient of the National Rural Health Association’s (NRHA) Quality Award in 2005, and multiple staff members have been selected and served as NRHA Fellows.



We can partner with you to lead [rural health transformation!](#)

[Our rural health experts](#) are ready to team up with you. For more information, please reach out to Karla Weng at kweng@stratishealth.org or 952-853-8570.