



## Top Stories

### Air Ambulance Study Could Boost Legislation on Surprise Bills

In 2016, nationwide median charges for air ambulance services, which are used disproportionately in rural areas, were 4.1 to 9.5 times what Medicare paid for the same services. That's according to **a new study** from Johns Hopkins University researchers, which finds that the billing disparity for air ambulance services is much higher than for physicians or ground ambulance services. The findings could add fuel to national legislation in the works to clamp down on unexpected medical bills.



Photo by Vishnu Gowda

[Read more](#)

### Rural Hospitals Innovate to Meet Community Needs

The **American Hospital Association blog** reports on two rural hospitals innovating to meet the needs of their communities. In Baldwin, Wisconsin, Western Wisconsin Health is focusing on upstream interventions to help patients before they need more intensive services. And in Winona, Minnesota--near the Wisconsin border--Winona Health is experimenting with new payment models and partnering with bigger entities to maximize resources.



Photo by Bill Oxford on Unsplash

[Read more](#)

### Northwoods Medical Clinic To Focus on Tick-Borne Illnesses

A new medical clinic in Woodruff, Wisconsin will seek to address patient concerns and advance scientific understanding around tick-borne illnesses. The **Tick-Borne Illness Center of Excellence** is scheduled to open this summer, and will be the first in the Midwest to combine clinical treatment for tick-borne illnesses with scientific research. According to the Centers for Disease and Control, in 2017, Wisconsin had 3,000 confirmed or probable cases of Lyme disease--**the fourth highest in the nation.**



Photo of Howard Young Medical Center in Woodruff

[Read more](#)

## More News

- A Wisconsin bill would provide three kinds of **refundable tax credits** to fire and emergency medical service volunteers. The bill currently sits in the Committee on Ways and Means.
- An **initiative in Michigan** is piloting medication-assisted treatment to treat substance abuse, primarily for those in hospitals and jails.
- In a move to address workforce shortages, UW-Madison **may soon expand** its physician assistant program to UW-Platteville.
- Two rural entrepreneurs are asking for **input from rural folks** on community and business challenges. Take the **Survey of Rural Challenges.**
- Governor Tony Evers has **signed legislation** to make it easier for patients to get needed prescription drugs without trying cheaper alternatives first, addressing an insurance process known as "step therapy."

## Grants & Funding Opportunities

- Grants for local education agencies to develop, enhance, or expand frameworks for **improving school climate**. Priority will be given to rural and tribal schools and projects that address opioid abuse and prevention. Deadline: July 22.
- The Wisconsin Dental Program offers funding to nonprofit organizations that are engaged in projects to **improve access to oral health care**. Deadline: July 31.
- Funding to support **health-related programs** that strengthen regional and rural communities in western Wisconsin. Deadline: August 9.
- Funding for the development and expansion of **dementia-capable home and community-based service systems** in states and communities. Deadline: August 13.
- **Grants** to include education and neighborhood improvement, economic development, youth development, community problem-solving, and more in **some Wisconsin locations**. Deadline: August 29.
- **Equipment grants** for rural fire, rescue, and ambulance departments. Deadline: August 31.

The state of Wisconsin provides funding to public school districts for students to obtain recognized credentials in certain industries with workforce shortages, including some health professions.

A specialized program recently began for high school students to receive training in emergency medical services or firefighting. Schools will receive \$1,000 for every student who receives an industry certification to become an EMR, EMT, Firefighter 1 or 2, or Fire Inspector. Students will also receive \$500 upon their successful completion.

See our [fact sheet](#) for more information.

Public School Incentive Grants for Health Professions, EMS, & Fire

The state of Wisconsin provides funding to public school districts for students to obtain recognized credentials in certain industries with workforce shortages. These grants, in place since 2016, provide up to \$1,000 to schools for every student who earns such a credential while in high school.

Each year, the Department of Workforce Development publishes a list of certification options for the program. There are a variety of opportunities related to health professions. The program is subject to an allocation of \$25 million. If more than 2,000 students are part of the program, the amount distributed becomes prorated based on the total number of student applications.

Recently, a specialized program began for high school students to receive training in emergency medical services or firefighting. Schools will receive \$1,000 for every student who receives an industry certification to become an EMR, EMT, Firefighter 1 or 2, or Fire Inspector. Students will also receive \$500 following successful completion of the program.

Schools will only receive the full \$1,000 per student if the student has completed their education and has passed their industry certification test. For EMT and EMT-Paramedic, the industry certification test is the National Registry. For Firefighters 1 and 2, the test is the industry certification test but has received a state-approved embedded technical diploma, the school can still make the claim, but are not eligible for the full \$1,000 and the \$500 student allowance.

While students who are not seniors may participate, the school may only submit claims for that year's graduating class. Schools start the process by submitting a claim to the Department of Public Instruction. Only public schools qualify for this program.

Funding for the program is provided for by Wisconsin State Statute 120.27. Career and technical education incentive grants and completion awards in general (CITA) can be found [here](#). More information specific to EMS and Fire can be found [here](#).

This fact sheet was produced by the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health for young rural professionals. Questions about agricultural and forestry opportunities can be directed to [RuralSupport@doh.wisconsin.gov](mailto:RuralSupport@doh.wisconsin.gov) or [608.785.8200](tel:6087858200). Email: [RuralSupport@doh.wisconsin.gov](mailto:RuralSupport@doh.wisconsin.gov)

## Events

- July 18: A **webinar** will highlight the Zero Suicide initiative, its precursor, and its impact in state and federal sectors. 11am.
- July 18: A **webinar** will focus on safer opioid prescribing for adults after surgery and trauma. Participants can receive free opioid CME credit. Noon.
- July 18-19: Two **workshops** in Wausau (July 18) and Rhinelander (July 19) will focus on building resilient families and communities by moving through trauma, adverse childhood experiences, and addiction.
- July 30: A **webinar** will outline an initiative to increase the number and competency of sexual assault nurse examiners in Indiana, with a focus on rural and underserved communities. 1pm.
- July 30: A **webinar** will outline how to build a strong, professional therapy service for your rural hospital. 2pm.
- Register for our **Rural Hospital Finance Workshop** on August 23 in Sauk City, with topics on: a CAH regulatory update, Medicare and Medicaid updates, 340B, co-location guidance, telehealth compliance and billing, and measuring CAH productivity.



Wisconsin Office of Rural Health