



Winter 2026 Quarterly Newsletter

Published February 2026

Celebrating 2025 CHAMPS Awardees

CHAMPS was pleased to recognize our eight 2025 CHAMPS Awardees during a virtual awards ceremony on December 10, honoring each for their exceptional contributions and unwavering dedication to the health center community while exemplifying the mission and spirit of the Community Health Center Movement in Region VIII.

Emerging Star Award

Marisa Borchardt, DMD, Chief Dental Director
[River Valley Family Health Centers, CO](#)

Excellence in Innovation Award

Scrubs Camp Program
[Coal Country Community Health Center, ND](#)

Exceptional Administrative Leadership Award

Tim Trithart, Chief Executive Officer
[Complete Health, SD](#)

Exceptional Board Leadership Award

Jim Morton, Board Chair
[Sapphire Community Health, Inc., MT](#)

Exceptional Clinical Leadership Award

Lynelle Huseby, RN, BSN, Director of Clinical Services
[Family HealthCare, ND](#)

Outstanding Advocate of the Underserved Award

Araceli Calderon, Immigrant & Refugee Center Director
[Sunrise Community Health, CO](#)

Outstanding Legislative Leadership Award

Nadine Boe, Chief Executive Officer
[Northland Health Centers, ND](#)

Stanley J. Brasher Legacy Award

Jim Garcia, Chief Executive Officer & Founder
[Tepeyac Community Health Center, CO](#)



Congratulations to the 2025 CHAMPS Awardees!

To learn more and view recordings from the virtual ceremony, visit the [CHAMPS Awards](#) webpage. The call for nominations for 2026 CHAMPS Awards is anticipated to open in early summer.

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CHAMPS Board of Directors Meeting Highlights

The annual CHAMPS Board of Directors meeting was held virtually on December 10, 2025. Attendees were joined by Jim Macrae, Associate Administrator of the [Bureau of Primary Health Care](#) (BPHC), and Joe Dunn, Chief Policy Officer at the [National Association of Community Health Centers](#) (NACHC), who provided federal and national updates and answered attendee questions. Along with these presentations, CHAMPS leadership and Executive Committee members shared progress reports and discussed key developments from the past year. Thank you, CHAMPS board members; we are grateful for your continued support!

Thank You, CHAMPS Organizational Members!

CHAMPS would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the 48 Region VIII health centers and State Primary Care Associations that have supported CHAMPS through [2025-2026 Organizational Membership](#). Organizational Memberships enable CHAMPS to deliver high-quality programs and services to Region VIII. The CHAMPS 2026-2027 membership year begins on Wednesday, April 1, 2026; more information will be available soon.

Learn more about the benefits of CHAMPS Organizational Membership on the [CHAMPS Organizational Membership Materials](#) webpage.

Now Available: NWRPCA/CHAMPS Fall Conference Session Recordings



The [2025 NWRPCA/CHAMPS Fall Primary Care Conference](#), held in October 2025 in Spokane, WA, brought together hundreds of participants from across Region VIII, Region X, and the nation. Recordings of conference sessions, including plenaries, and related materials are now available to conference attendees in NWRPCA's [Learning Vault](#).

To view highlights from the 2025 Fall Conference, please visit the [CHAMPS Annual Primary Care Conference](#) webpage.

Save the Dates: The [2026 CHAMPS/NWRPCA Fall Primary Care Conference](#) will take place October 24–27 in Salt Lake City, UT.

CHAMPS/RMPHTC Leadership Program Updates

The CHAMPS and [Rocky Mountain Public Health Training Center](#) (RMPHTC) [Leadership Program: A Collaboration with Coleman Associates' High Impact Management Program](#) is underway. Designed by [Coleman Associates](#), this virtual program is intended to help develop leaders and strengthen teams. Participants attended a virtual Kick-off Training Day on January 29, 2026, where they explored practical tools and built a solid foundation for the program. Members of the cohort are now participating in Coleman Associates' national Group Cohort Calls, where they share progress, celebrate wins, tackle challenges, and apply their learning to real-world leadership scenarios. The program will conclude with a virtual Capstone Session on Thursday, June 18, 2026, to help participants reflect on their growth and set actionable next steps to sustain their momentum. This year's cohort is comprised of 20 individuals from 14 of the region's health centers and public health organizations.

For more information about CHAMPS' leadership development trainings, please visit the [CHAMPS Leadership Learning Opportunities](#) webpage.

2025/2026 Region VIII Health Center TA Needs Assessment Results

CHAMPS sincerely appreciates the 355 health center leaders who took the time to complete the Winter 2025/2026 Region VIII Health Center Technical Assistance (TA) Needs Assessment. The valuable data gleaned from survey respondents, representing 98% of the region's health centers, will help CHAMPS and the five Region VIII State Primary Care Associations gain a greater understanding of the region's top concerns and challenges, the most needed TA topics, and other relevant TA information.

Highlights of the region-wide results include:

Top Five Challenges/Concerns:

1. Financial Sustainability
2. 340B Changes
3. Competitive Compensation Packages
4. Retention of Staff
5. Recruitment of Staff

Top Five Factors Impacting Health Centers in 2025:

1. Escalating Cost of Living
2. Competition for Qualified Staff
3. State/Federal Policy Impacting Population Health/
Clinical Care
4. 340B Policies
5. Funding Levels

Top Five Needed TA Topics:

1. Funding to Support Staff that Address Health-Related Needs
2. Increasing Patient Visits to Meet Budget Projections
3. Analyzing New Revenue Opportunities
4. Supervisor/Manager Skills Training
5. Improving Patient Access to Oral Health Services

Questions? Contact the CHAMPS [Workforce Development & Member Services Director](#).

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Encouraging successful careers and strong, cutting-edge organizations by providing live and archived continuing education, recruitment, and retention tools, and the latest information on current trends and statistics. Learn more [here](#).

Coming Soon: 2026 Region VIII Salary Survey Project

Every two years, CHAMPS works with the Region VIII State Primary Care Associations to conduct a **Salary, Benefits, Turnover, and Vacancy Survey** of health centers within Region VIII. Preliminary information about the survey timeline and related events has been emailed to Region VIII salary survey contacts, and the survey will be released via email on Wednesday, March 18, 2026. Those responsible for completing the survey are encouraged to register for the CHAMPS [How to Complete the 2026 Region VIII Salary Survey Tool](#) webinar on Thursday, March 19, 2026, from 12:00-1:30 PM MT | 1:00-2:30 PM CT. A recording of the event will be available shortly after the live presentation. Additional details about the survey and resulting reports can be found on the [CHAMPS Publications](#) webpage.

Questions? Contact the CHAMPS [Workforce Development & Member Services Director](#).

Is your Region VIII health center or Primary Care Association (PCA) hiring?

Post your open positions on the free CHAMPS [Job Opportunities Bank \(JOB\)](#).
To post an opening or update a current position, please contact the CHAMPS [Programs Coordinator, Health Center Workforce](#).

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT NEWS, *Continued*

Register Now: CHAMPS 2026 Next Level Skills Training

There are just a few weeks left to register for the CHAMPS [2026 Beyond CORE Competencies: Next Level Skills for Health Center Supervisors and Managers](#) (Next Level Skills) training. Designed and facilitated by Lisa Mouscher of [Sogence Training and Consulting](#), Next Level Skills is a dynamic, hands-on, and highly interactive program designed for health center leaders to explore the best practices, knowledge, and skills needed to be a great manager or supervisor. It begins with a review of the crucial skills needed to hire, coach, retain, and manage others. The program then advances to more complex topics, such as resolving conflict, strengthening decision-making, and managing change effectively. Next Level Skills is intended for both those who have completed the CHAMPS CORE Competencies for Health Center Supervisors and Managers training and those looking to build or strengthen higher-level management skills.

This virtual course will take place over five Wednesday mornings, from April 8 to May 6, 2026, meeting from 9:00-11:30 AM MT | 10:00 AM-12:30 PM CT; the first session will last 30 minutes longer, meeting until 12:00 PM MT | 1:00 PM CT. Registration will close on Monday, March 9, 2026, or when the course is full.

For more information, please visit the CHAMPS [Leadership Learning Opportunities](#) webpage. CHAMPS thanks [Colorado Community Health Network](#) (CCHN) and [Wyoming Primary Care Association](#) (WYPCA) for their support of this course.

HP-ET Resource: [User's Guide for Implementation of On-the-Job Dental Assistant Training Programs in Community Health Centers](#)

This publication, created by the [National Network for Oral Health Access](#) (NNOHA), outlines key considerations for developing an in-house dental assistant training program and guides health centers in assessing their readiness to plan and implement a program of their own.

MOUNTAIN/PLAINS CLINICAL NETWORK (MPCN) NEWS

Providing professional, administrative, and educational support to all clinicians who practice in Community Health Centers in Region VIII to ensure the delivery of the highest possible quality of care. Learn more [here](#).

CHAMPS MPCN Provider Survey

The [Mountain/Plains Clinical Network](#) (MPCN) is a program of CHAMPS that encompasses all healthcare providers working at Region VIII community health centers. Any provider who practices at a Region VIII health center is part of this network. CHAMPS and the [MPCN Steering Committee](#) have created a very brief survey to better understand how Region VIII providers engage in the health center mission. The goal is to create connectedness within the network, encourage participation within the health center movement, and enhance connections with CHAMPS. These insights may help to inform future trainings, website resources, and communications.

Providers are encouraged to take just a couple of minutes to complete any of the questions that apply to them. Providers who complete the survey by Tuesday, March 31, 2026, will have the opportunity to be entered into a drawing to receive a \$35 gift card to [Bookshop.org](#).

Complete the brief MPCN Provider Survey [here](#).

Register Now: CHAMPS Spanish Language Trainings



Less than one month remains to register for the five courses offered as part of the CHAMPS [Spanish Language Trainings for Healthcare Providers](#), all to be held online throughout April 2026. Led by [Ríos Associates](#), these intensive and conversational trainings consist of medical vocabulary, mock patient dialogues, cross-cultural discussions, and daily practice. Designed for clinicians and clinical support staff at Region VIII health centers, the courses offer an immersive experience ideal for those with limited time who need to immediately apply their new skills with Spanish-speaking patients. Classes will be held online from 8:00 AM-12:00 PM MT | 9:00 AM-1:00 PM CT each day with extra practice offered each afternoon.

The traditional [Medical Spanish Language for Providers](#) course will take place over four half-days: Thursday, April 9; Friday, April 10; Thursday, April 16; and Friday, April 17, 2026. This course is intended for physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and other medical personnel. Beginner and intermediate skill levels will be offered, with separate virtual classrooms for each level.

CHAMPS will also host four courses that will be held over two half-days each:

[Spanish Language for Oral Health Providers](#) will take place on Monday, April 6 and Tuesday, April 7, 2026. This course is designed for dentists, orthodontists, dental hygienists, and other clinical dental personnel with beginner Spanish language skills.

[Spanish Language for Behavioral Health Providers](#) will be offered on Monday, April 13 and Tuesday, April 14, 2026. This course is intended for psychologists, psychiatrists, mental health counselors, social workers, addiction counselors, and other behavioral health personnel with intermediate to advanced Spanish language skills. Behavioral health providers with beginner Spanish language skills are invited to attend the traditional four-day course.

[Medical Spanish Language for Advanced Speakers](#) will take place on Monday, April 20 and Tuesday, April 21, 2026. This course is geared towards physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and other clinical staff with advanced Spanish language skills.

[Medical Spanish Language for Medical Assistants](#) will be offered on Thursday, April 23 and Friday, April 24, 2026. This course is designed for medical assistants and other clinical support staff with beginner Spanish language skills. Medical assistants with advanced Spanish language skills are invited to attend the Medical Spanish Language for Advanced Speakers course.

Continuing medical education (CME) credits are available. [CHAMPS Organizational Members](#) qualify for discounted registration fees. Registration will close on Friday, March 13, 2026, or when courses reach capacity.

For additional course details and registration information, please visit the CHAMPS [Spanish Language Trainings for Healthcare Providers](#) webpage. Questions? Contact the CHAMPS [Programs Specialist, Population Health](#).

Don't Miss: CHAMPS [Spanish Language Resources](#)

CHAMPS has developed an extensive collection of online resources to support health center staff in treating and supporting Spanish-speaking patients.

Stay Up to Date on All Things Region VIII – Sign Up for CHAMPS Communications

[Healthy Communities Communiqué](#) [Monthly JOB Email](#) [MPCN Minute](#) [Quarterly Newsletter](#) [Workforce Focus](#)

Recording Available: Using Age-Friendly Practices to Improve Care for Older Adults Webinar

In January 2026, CHAMPS, in collaboration with the [National Center for Equitable Care for Elders](#) (NCECE), cohosted a free webinar, [Using Age-Friendly Practices to Improve Care for Older Adults](#). Older adults are the fastest-growing patient population served by health centers, underscoring the need for integrated care approaches that address the complex medical, social, and economic challenges they may experience later in life. During this event, Arielle Mather, MPH, Senior Program Manager at NCECE, discussed how age-friendly approaches can enhance care quality and outcomes for older patients and shared practical strategies for incorporating these principles into daily practice. For interested individuals who were unable to attend the live event, a recording of the presentation and the session handouts are available to view for free on the [Online Archived CHAMPS Distance Learning Events](#) webpage.

Recordings Available: CHAMPS Region VIII Maternal Health Summit

In January 2026, CHAMPS hosted a free, virtual [Region VIII Maternal Health Summit](#), which brought together health center and maternal health experts to share evidence-based models and promising practices that support improved maternal health outcomes. This half-day event featured five engaging 45-minute sessions. For those who were unable to attend the live event, session recordings and presentation handouts are now available to view for free on the [Online Archived CHAMPS Distance Learning Events](#) webpage.

- ★ **Session One** – [Region VIII Maternal Health Landscape: Setting the Stage for Change](#)
- ★ **Session Two** – [Perinatal Mental Health: From Maternal Mortality to Meaningful Support](#)
- ★ **Session Three** – [Primary Care and Public Health Collaboration: Integrating Title V and Community Partnerships](#)
- ★ **Session Four** – [Strengthening the Foundation: Innovations in OB Care and Workforce Development](#)
- ★ **Session Five** – [Closing Keynote: From Insights to Action](#)

Visit the CHAMPS [Region VIII Maternal Health Summit](#) webpage to learn more.

Free SUD Webinar Series from MPCA

Submitted by Nicole Taule, Montana Primary Care Association

Join [Montana Primary Care Association](#) (MPCA) for the final three sessions of its free webinar series, [A Primary Care Approach to Substance Use Disorders](#) (SUD). This virtual series offers participants an opportunity to hear from a variety of experts who will cover a range of topics related to treating SUD in a primary care setting. The series began in January 2026 and will continue through April 2026. The remaining sessions will take place on the following Thursdays, each focused on a different topic:

- ★ **March 5** – Kratom
- ★ **March 19** – Stimulant Use Disorder and Contingency Management
- ★ **April 2** – Integrating Peer Supports into Your Clinic

All sessions begin at 12:10 PM MT | 1:10 PM CT and include a 30-40-minute presentation followed by time for questions and discussion. This series is designed for physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, physician assistants, pharmacists, counselors, and other healthcare providers at Region VIII health centers. Free Behavioral Health Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are available. Recordings of the first four sessions are available to view for free in MPCA's [Resource Library](#).

To learn more, please visit MPCA's [registration](#) webpage.

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES NEWS

Assisting Region VIII health centers and Primary Care Associations in pursuing healthy communities by addressing health-related risk factors and building community partnerships.

CHAMPS Health Care for the Homeless Collaborative Updates

Over the past several months, CHAMPS hosted its [Health Care for the Homeless Collaborative](#), a free, four-part virtual series. Designed for Region VIII health center staff who serve people experiencing homelessness, as well as key Primary Care Association contacts, this series provided opportunities to hear from experts in the field, discuss challenges, share promising practices, and help identify future training needs.

The series concluded in February 2026. For those who were unable to attend the live sessions, recordings and materials from all four sessions, which covered innovative behavioral health services, health management strategies, models of care, and community partnerships, are available to view for free on the [Online Archived CHAMPS Distance Learning Events](#) webpage.

Don't Miss: CHAMPS [Special Populations Webpages](#)

CHAMPS has developed an expansive online library of articles, reports, and continuing education opportunities related to special population patients, including resources for:

[Homeless & Public Housing Patients](#) | [Veterans](#)
[Victims & Survivors of Human Trafficking](#) | [Victims & Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence](#)

Upcoming Learning Opportunities & New Resources from HOP

Submitted by Jing Murray, Health Outreach Partners



Join [Health Outreach Partners](#) (HOP) for two virtual learning opportunities focused on preventive screenings and supporting agricultural worker communities.

The first opportunity is a free virtual community of practice, [Optimize Your Community: Improve Population Health Through Screenings](#). This series will explore the importance of early health screenings in saving lives, the role of outreach in communicating the value of preventive care, barriers patients face in accessing screenings, and best practices for strengthening referral and follow-up systems. Participants will also have opportunities to share challenges and successes with other health center participants. The community of practice will take place over four consecutive Wednesdays, from March 11 through April 1, 2026, beginning at 11:00 AM MT | 12:00 PM CT.

HOP is also partnering with [Farmworker Justice](#) on a free webinar, [Exploring Nutritional Impacts on Mental Health in Agricultural Worker Communities](#). This session will examine the impacts of nutrition and healthy eating on the mental health of agricultural workers. Attendees will learn about promising practices and strategies to improve mental health outcomes in this patient population. The virtual event will take place on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, beginning at 11:00 AM MT | 12:00 PM CT.

HOP has also expanded its flagship virtual program, [Pathways to Inclusion](#), with newly added content. This free, self-paced, pre-recorded series helps healthcare providers better serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Supported by the Special Olympics Systems Change for Inclusive Health Subgrant, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the program now includes enhanced content within the Motivational Interviewing and Non-Medical Drivers of Health modules. All training videos and accompanying presentations are available at no cost through HOP's learning management system, Moodle.

To learn more, please visit the [Optimize Your Community community of practice](#) and [Exploring Nutritional Impacts webinar](#) registration webpages. Visit HOP's [Pathways to Inclusion](#) webpage for more details about the program.

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES NEWS, *Continued*

NCECE's Upcoming Learning Opportunities

Submitted by Arielle Mather, National Center for Equitable Care for Elders



The [National Center for Equitable Care for Elders](#) (NCECE) is offering two free learning opportunities this March focused on improving care for older adults.

The first is a webinar, [Intimate Partner Violence \(IPV\) and Elder Abuse Later in Life](#), hosted in collaboration with [Health Partners on IPV + Exploitation](#). The session will focus on the prevalence and health impact of IPV in later life and elder abuse, while offering strategies to facilitate patient conversations, assess and respond to IPV, and improve access to supportive community services. The webinar will take place on Wednesday, March 11, 2026, from 11:00 AM-12:00 PM MT | 12:00-1:00 PM CT.

NCECE is also partnering with [Capital Link](#) to host a three-part webinar series, [The Value of Integrated Primary Care for Older Adults: Considerations for Health Centers](#). This virtual series will examine how health centers can use integrated care approaches to address the complex needs of older adults while supporting their ability to age in place. Participants will explore evidence-based strategies for enhancing care coordination, expanding service offerings, and forging community partnerships that promote healthy aging. The series will take place over three consecutive Tuesdays, from March 3-17, meeting from 12:00-1:00 PM MT | 1:00-2:00 PM CT.

To learn more, please visit the [IPV and Elder Abuse webinar](#) and [Integrated Primary Care webinar series](#) registration webpages.

REGIONAL & NATIONAL NEWS

HRSA 2026 FTCA Deeming Application Clinic

Registration is now open for the [Health Resources and Services Administration's](#) (HRSA) [2026 FTCA Deeming Application Clinic](#). This informative virtual clinic is designed to help health centers and Primary Care Associations deepen their understanding of the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) Program requirements and confidently prepare their deeming applications. This year's clinic features several new offerings, including sessions on risk management, patient safety, a targeted session for executive leaders and board members, and two specialty sessions on infection control and medical malpractice. The clinic will be held virtually from March 25-27, beginning at 11:00 AM MT | 12:00 PM CT each day.

Visit HRSA's [FTCA Deeming Application Clinic](#) webpage for more information and to register.

New Cervical Cancer Screening Guidelines from HRSA

On January 5, 2026, the [Health Resources and Services Administration](#) (HRSA) announced updated cervical cancer screening guidelines that expand screening options for average-risk women ages 30 to 65 by including the option to self-collect samples for testing. The updated guidance also includes new language that addresses follow-up testing needed to complete the screening process when initial results require further evaluation. Most health insurance plans will be required to begin covering the updated screening recommendations starting in 2027.

For more information, please view the [Update to the Women's Preventive Service Guidelines](#) Federal Register Notice.

Forecasted Funding Opportunities from HRSA & Estimated Post Dates

- ★ [Rural Communities Opioid Response Program – Planning](#) (March 13, 2026)
- ★ [Rural Residency Planning and Development Program](#) (March 16, 2026)
- ★ [Rural Communities Opioid Response Program – Impact](#) (March 18, 2026)

REGIONAL & NATIONAL NEWS, *Continued*

HRSA 2025 Year in Review

Submitted by Darci Granda, Health Resources and Services Administration Office of Intergovernmental & External Affairs, Region 8

In 2025, the [Health Resources and Services Administration](#) (HRSA) remained steadfast in its mission to protect and improve health outcomes across the nation, particularly for those who are underserved, medically vulnerable, or have limited access to care.

- ★ HRSA-supported health centers served 32.4 million patients — the largest increase in three years.
- ★ Nearly 602,000 people received care through the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, with patients achieving a 91.4% viral suppression rate.
- ★ HRSA’s workforce programs supported more than 5,540 trainees providing care in underserved communities nationwide.
- ★ HRSA’s Maternal Mental Health Hotline received more than 30,000 calls and texts — a 35% increase from the previous year.
- ★ HRSA supported nearly 48,600 solid organ transplants — the highest number ever recorded — and facilitated ongoing modernization of the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN).

We look forward to continuing to work with our partners in 2026!

Become a HRSA Grant Application Reviewer

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is seeking qualified individuals to serve as grant application reviewers. HRSA welcomes applicants with expertise in behavioral health, health workforce training, primary care delivery, rural health, and other related fields.

Interested individuals can register via HRSA’s [Reviewer Recruitment Module](#).

Visit HRSA’s [How to Become a Grant Reviewer](#) webpage for more information.

340B Recertification Deadline

Health centers must complete the mandatory annual 340B recertification process before Monday, March 2, 2026. The recertification process entails reviewing and ensuring the accuracy of all information listed in the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Office of Pharmacy Affairs Information System (OPAIS). This includes details for each clinical site and contract pharmacy arrangement, as well as the names and contact information for the Authorizing Official(s) and Primary Contact(s). The process also requires formal attestation that all information is accurate and up-to-date and that the health center complies with all 340B requirements.

To begin the recertification process, log in to the [340B OPAIS](#) website.

For questions related to the recertification process, please contact Apexus Answers at apexusanswers@340bpvp.com or 888-340-2787.

BPHC Operational Site Visit Updates Webinar

Join the Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC) for a free webinar overviewing recent updates to the Health Center Program Site Visit Protocol (SVP) and Operational Site Visit process for 2026.

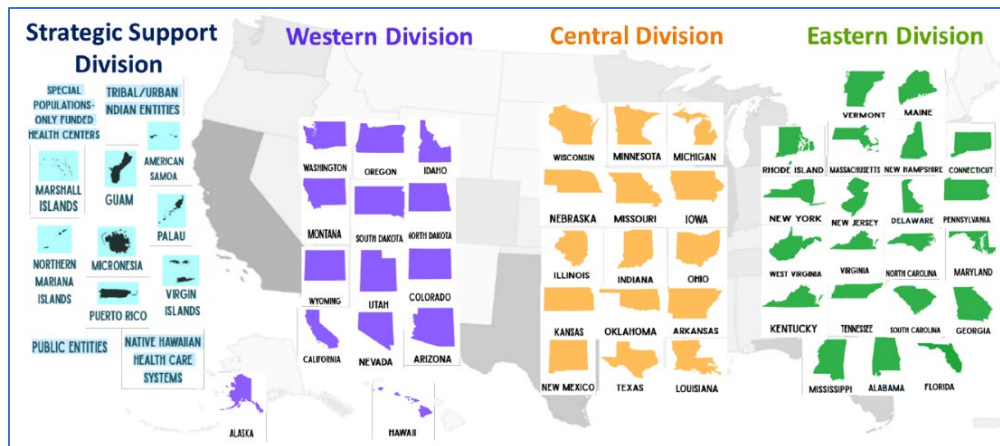
The webinar will take place on Thursday, March 5, 2026,
from 11:30 AM-1:00 PM MT | 12:30-2:00 PM CT.

Join the webinar using this [link](#).

REGIONAL & NATIONAL NEWS, *Continued*

BPHC Office of Health Center Program Monitoring Organizational Updates

The [Bureau of Primary Health Care](#) (BPHC) Office of Health Center Program Monitoring (OHCPM) has implemented a new operating model, including the reintroduction of the Project Officer (PO) role. Each health center now has a dedicated PO serving as its primary programmatic point of contact. POs will be responsible for reviewing and coordinating programmatic activities, including Change in Scope requests, Prior Approval requests, Progressive Action Conditions, and Operational Site Visits. POs have sent introductory emails to the designated contacts at their assigned health centers. Health centers are encouraged to continue using the [BPHC Contact Form](#) for general program questions, while time-sensitive grant matters should be directed to the assigned PO.



The restructuring also includes a shift from functional to regional and segmented divisions. Oversight will be supported through four divisions: Eastern, Central, Western, and Strategic Support. This structure is designed to promote consistent, strategic, and region-specific support to health centers nationwide. The six Region VIII states fall under the Western Division, led by Mylandar Davis-Ardila, Director of the Western Division, and Capt. Michael Bowens, Deputy Director of the Western Division.

Rural Health Transformation Program Funding Updates

On December 29, 2025, the [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#) (CMS) announced that all 50 states will receive awards under the Rural Health Transformation Program. The program's total funding of \$50 billion will be allocated to approved states, with \$10 billion available each year from 2026 through 2030. In 2026, first-year awards will average approximately \$200 million per state, ranging from \$147 million to \$281 million. The six states in Region VIII will receive a total of \$1.2 billion in 2026. This funding is intended to assist states in expanding access to care in rural communities, strengthening the rural health workforce, and modernizing rural facilities and technology. The program will be administered by the new Office of Rural Health Transformation, created within CMS to guide states in implementing their plans and provide technical assistance and oversight throughout the five-year program.

View CMS' [press release](#) for further details.

2026 Federal Poverty Level Standards

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently released an informational bulletin with the [2026 Federal Poverty Level Standards](#).

Included with the bulletin is the [2026 Dual Eligible Standards](#) chart, which displays the new standards for the Medicare Savings Program categories.

REGIONAL & NATIONAL NEWS, *Continued*

2026 NACHC P&I Awards: Region VIII Recipients

Each year during its [Policy & Issues Forum](#) (P&I), the [National Association of Community Health Centers](#) (NACHC), in collaboration with the Geiger Gibson Program in Community Health at the [George Washington University's Milken Institute School of Public Health](#), announces the recipients of the Geiger Gibson Emerging Leader Award. Established in 2007, this competitive award recognizes the achievements of next-generation leaders from health centers and Primary Care Associations across the country. It honors individuals whose work exemplifies the health center mission and reflects the vision of Drs. H. Jack Geiger and Count Gibson. Of the 14 Emerging Leader Award recipients this year, one was from Region VIII: **Tierney Queen-Stewart, MPA**, Director of Cover Montana at [Montana Primary Care Association](#).

In addition, **Lisa James, MA**, Senior Director of Philanthropy and Advocacy at [Peak Vista Community Health Centers](#) (CO), was named the recipient of NACHC's 2026 Advocacy Award. This award honors individuals whose advocacy efforts reflect a deep commitment to advancing community health through education, engagement, and mobilization, and whose work creates meaningful and lasting change.

Congratulations, Tierney and Lisa!

*For more details about the 2026 Emerging Leader Award recipients, please view this [press release](#).
To learn more about NACHC's award programs and submit a nomination, please visit the [2026 NACHC Awards](#) webpage.*

MPCA's Under the Big Sky Event

Submitted by Nicole Taule, Montana Primary Care Association

Registration is open for [Montana Primary Care Association's](#) (MPCA) annual [Under the Big Sky](#) event, taking place March 25-26, 2026, in Butte, MT. This event brings together leaders from community health centers and Urban Indian Organizations to collaborate, learn, and innovate. With sessions focused on quality improvement, workforce development, and health information technology, Under the Big Sky is designed for healthcare executives, clinical leaders, human resource professionals, and health information technology specialists. This event is open to participants from across Region VIII.

Visit MPCA's [Under the Big Sky](#) webpage for more information and to register.

ShepsGME Technical Assistance Center's State Graduate Medical Education Summit

The [ShepsGME Technical Assistance Center](#) is hosting its second annual [State Graduate Medical Education \(GME\) Summit](#). Join state offices, policymakers, rural GME programs, teaching health centers, and other health leaders to share best practices and explore strategies to strengthen state GME funding in support of rural and medically underserved communities nationwide. Attendees will gain a broader understanding of the national healthcare workforce landscape, explore case studies highlighting innovative state-level GME reporting and funding models, review key state GME financial concepts, and more. Continuing Medical Education (CME) credit will be offered. This free virtual event will take place on Wednesday, March 18, 2026, from 10:00 AM-1:00 PM MT | 11:00 AM-2:00 PM CT.

For more details, please visit the event's [registration](#) webpage.

Value Based Care Resource: [Community Health Centers: Leveraging Artificial Intelligence to Address Workforce and Value Based Care Challenges](#)

This article, published in the Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved, discusses how artificial intelligence (AI) can help health centers ease workforce pressures, improve patient care, and better succeed in value-based care models.

REGIONAL & NATIONAL NEWS, *Continued*

Educational Offerings from the NTTAP on Clinical Workforce Development

Submitted by Bianca Flowers, National Training and Technical Assistance Partners on Clinical Workforce Development

The [National Training and Technical Assistance Partners \(NTTAP\) on Clinical Workforce Development](#) at Community Health Center, Inc. (CHCI) is hosting several free upcoming learning opportunities.

The first is a webinar, [Strengthening Emergency Preparedness: Overcoming Barriers and Fostering Partnerships](#). Join subject matter experts from CHCI and [Jensen Hughes](#) for a dynamic discussion on addressing the complex challenges that shape community health. This webinar will explore strategies to overcome barriers, build partnerships, and integrate emergency preparedness into organizational planning. The session will take place on Thursday, March 12, 2026, from 12:00-1:00 PM MT | 1:00-2:00 PM CT.

This webinar is followed by a companion activity session led by Matthew Griswold, Facilities Director at CHCI. During this interactive session, participants will explore innovative approaches to emergency preparedness through case studies and best practices, with a focus on building partnerships and developing a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan. The virtual session will be held on Thursday, March 19, 2026, from 12:00-1:00 PM MT | 1:00-2:00 PM CT.

The NTTAP on Clinical Workforce Development is also hosting an additional activity session, [Standing Orders Activity Session on Diabetes Management](#). Presented by Mary Blankson, Chief Nursing Officer at CHCI, and Natalie Bycenski, Senior Nurse Manager at CHCI, this activity session will examine how to implement effective standing orders for diabetes management, drawing from national best practices and CHCI's organizational guidelines. Expert faculty will highlight the key roles of registered nurses and medical assistants in streamlining clinical processes, training, and credentialing. This virtual event will take place on Thursday, March 26, 2026, from 12:00-1:00 PM MT | 1:00-2:00 PM CT.

For more details and to register, please visit the event webpages for the [Strengthening Emergency Preparedness webinar](#), the [Emergency Preparedness activity session](#), and the [Standing Orders activity session](#).

Emergency Preparedness Resource: Health Center Preparedness & Response Forum Webinar Series Recording – Extreme Weather

In November 2025, several HRSA-funded National Technical Assistance Programs co-hosted a Health Center Preparedness & Response Forum webinar series. The first session of the series featured a moderated discussion on how health centers can prepare for extreme weather.

Region VIII in the News

- ★ Elevated Community Health: [Local nonprofit health center launches flat-rate membership program](#) (*SummitDaily, January 2026*)
- ★ Midtown Community Health Center: [First Narcan vending machines in Utah installed across Weber County](#) (*KUTV, November 2025*)
- ★ Northland Health Centers: [Northland Health Centers expands access to addiction counseling with telehealth](#) (*KFYR-TV, January 2026*)
- ★ RiverStone Health: [New clinic in Billings boosts healthcare access for homeless community](#) (*NonStop Local, February 2026*)
- ★ Wyoming Primary Care Association: [\\$205M federal health grant kicks off flurry of policy work for Wyoming](#) (*WyoFile, December 2025*)

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 2026

[CHAMPS How to Complete the 2026 Region VIII Salary Survey Tool Webinar](#)

March 19

[ACU 2026 Workforce Symposium](#)

March 24-25; Nashville, TN

[MPCA Under the Big Sky Conference](#)

March 25-26; Butte, MT

[HRSA 2026 FTCA Deeming Application Clinic](#)

March 25-27

May 2026

[CHAMPS Beyond CORE Competencies: Next Level Skills for Health Center Supervisors & Managers Training - May Session](#)

May 6

[CCHN Triannual](#)

May 7; Colorado Springs, CO

[MPCA Addiction Medicine Network & Pain Management Conference](#)

May 18-20; Butte, MT

April 2026

[CHAMPS Two-Day Spanish Language for Oral Health Providers](#)

April 6-7

[CHAMPS Beyond CORE Competencies: Next Level Skills for Health Center Supervisors & Managers Training - April Sessions](#)

April 8, 15, 22 & 29

[CHAMPS Four-Day Medical Spanish Language for Providers](#)

April 9-10 & 16-17

[CHAMPS Two-Day Spanish Language for Behavioral Health Providers](#)

April 13-14

[NCFH Spring 2026 Agricultural Worker Health Symposium](#)

April 15-17; New Orleans, LA

[CHAMPS Two-Day Medical Spanish Language for Advanced Speakers](#)

April 20-21

[CHAMPS Two-Day Medical Spanish Language for Medical Assistants](#)

April 23-24

[NACHC Workforce Conference](#)

April 28-29; Las Vegas, NV

[CHAD Great Plains Clinically Integrated Network Summit & Strategic Planning Conference](#)

April 28-30; Rapid City, SD

Looking Ahead

[NHCHC Policy & Symposium](#)

June 8-11; Orlando, FL

[CHAMPS/RMPHTC Leadership Program Capstone Session](#)

June 18

[2026 National School-Based Health Care Conference](#)

June 23-25; Washington, D.C.

[ACU 2026 Conference](#)

July 26-29; Washington, D.C.

[NACHC Community Health Conference \(CHI\) & Expo](#)

August 16-18; Las Vegas, NV

[CHAMPS/NWRPCA Annual Primary Care Conference](#)

October 24-27; Salt Lake City, UT

Please contact Haleigh@CHAMPSonline.org with questions or comments, to sign up to receive the newsletter, change your subscription email, or submit articles.

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Please evaluate this resource by visiting:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CHAMPScommunications-Eval>.

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