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Wisconsin Rural Critical Access Hospitals Best in Nation in Quality

MADISON (July 20, 2017) ---- Wisconsin's Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) were recognized as the best in the nation by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for outstanding quality performance. The ranking is based on participation and achievement on the Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Project (MBQIP). Wisconsin CAHs achieved the highest reporting rates and levels of improvement in the country over the past year. CAHs are hospitals with fewer than 25 beds that provide essential services in rural areas. There are 58 CAHs in Wisconsin.

According to HRSA, the 10 top-performing states are: Wisconsin, Maine, Utah, Minnesota, Illinois and Pennsylvania (tied), Michigan, Nebraska, Indiana and Massachusetts.

The Wisconsin Office of Rural Health (WI-ORH) provided leadership in encouraging hospitals to participate in the MBQIP program, and provided significant support for collecting and reporting this important data. This past year, the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) collaborated with WI-ORH to provide technical assistance to a group of CAHs in Wisconsin to utilize data to drive quality improvement in their hospitals and share best practices. WHA helped the CAHs improve their performance on four rural-relevant MBQIP quality measures related to providing complete information when a patient who requires a high level of care is transferred out of the emergency department of a rural hospital to an acute care hospital.

"Rural hospitals provide a safety net of care that reaches every corner of our state," according to WHA President/CEO Eric Borgerding. "We are proud to partner with WI-ORH and work with our rural hospitals on projects that improve the quality of care they deliver every day to patients. We know rural hospitals support the physical well-being of the people living in that area, but they are also a critical asset to the economic health of the community. They are an essential part of our high-quality delivery system."

Wisconsin is consistently ranked as one of the best states in the nation based on the quality of its health care.

"High quality care in Wisconsin's rural communities is just as important as the urban settings," according to WHA Chief Quality Officer Kelly Court. "This recognition is another demonstration of how fortunate we are in our state to have rural hospitals who are highly committed to measure, improve and achieve high quality."

Kathryn Miller, manager of the rural hospitals and clinics programs at WI-ORH, who was instrumental in ensuring the success in this program, echoes Court's sentiment.

"We are extremely proud of the hospitals' dedication toward reporting and quality improvement, and that WI-ORH was nationally recognized for our efforts," Miller said. "It is a great accomplishment that 100 percent of Wisconsin's CAHs are in compliance with the MBQIP program."

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