



Major grant for Rural Residency Development

Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services has been selected by the Health Resources and Services Administration to receive a three-year, \$750,000 grant to establish its Rural Residency Development Program.

The program will focus on providing the highest quality care for its rural community with a curricular focus on Native American patients and will be led by RMCHCS' Program Director For Family Medicine Residency and its Chief Medical Officer Valory Wangler, M. D.

The new rural residency programs will also enable participants to achieve accreditation through the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. RMCHCS was selected as one of only 27 medical facilities nationwide.

"Our Board of Trustees has encouraged us to develop a primary care physician pipeline for rural hospitals for some time now. We have been exploring various avenues to achieve such a pipeline for the past five years. This HRSA grant will make it possible for us to start a Family Medicine Residency program for medical students from this region, thus addressing the chronic shortage of primary care physicians in rural areas," David Conejo, CEO of Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services said.

"We are grateful for the opportunity to embark on such a major initiative and appreciate the support of New Mexico's Senators Tom Udall (D-N.M.), Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) and U.S.

RMCHCS wins grant focused on Native American patients

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Representatives Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.) and Xochitl Torres Small (D-N.M.), who worked with HRSA to enable our residency program to become a reality. This grant will greatly benefit the residents of Gallup and McKinley County,” Conejo added.

Approval from Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education

Earlier this year, RMCHCS received approval to build a family medicine residency program from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education that monitors for compliance and sets U.S. professional educational standards in preparing physicians to deliver medical care. The approval allows future doctors to receive their residency training in a real-world medical facility at RMCHCS’s College Clinic. Physicians will be encouraged to open family practices in the Gallup area upon graduation in 2024.

The hospital will provide specialized training in rural and Native American healthcare to serve the Navajo Nation, Pueblo of Zuni and others. Resident physicians will learn about conditions that disproportionately affect Native Americans such as diabetes and asthma.

They will also learn skills such as how to treat patients who may not have access to household staples such as running water and refrigeration, which are often necessary for medical care. Rotations at Indian Health Service and other partner sites will provide further exposure to these types of skills and to Native American life, culture and the challenges those residents face in seeking care.

“Healthcare in rural areas like Gallup is important to the area’s development and growth. Businesses, education facilities and consumer enterprises all rely on community development and one of the pillars of growth in good medical care,” RMCHCS’s Chief Medical Officer Dr. Valory Wangler said.

Her goal has been to establish the accreditation since she joined the hospital in 2018. The hospital anticipates about four resident physicians per class and plans to expand its family care training to other types of medical specialization in the future.

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Statewide Shortage

New Mexico currently has a shortage of physicians in 32 of its 33 counties. RMCHCS will focus on the Four Corners area of New Mexico.

“Healthcare is a vital need for all residents statewide,” Stephen Stoddard, CEO of the New Mexico Rural Hospital Network said. “The goal of New Mexico’s healthcare community is to bridge the gap in rural health and ensure adequate and appropriate care is available to all New Mexicans regardless of their address.”