

# Rural Health Transformation

## Interim Joint Committee on Health Services

June 16, 2026



# Agenda



**Rural Health Transformation Plan (RHT))  
Overview**

**RHT Program Overview**

**Activating RHT**

# Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Overview

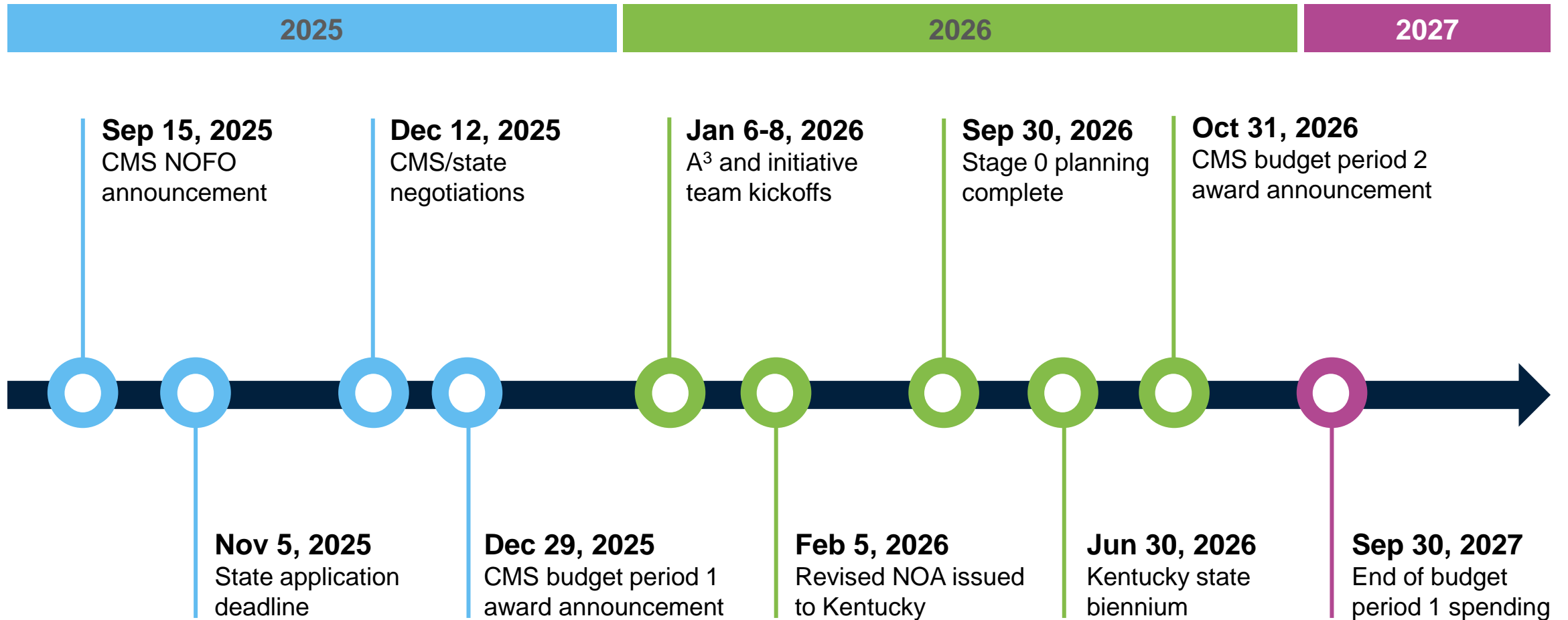


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# RHT Timeline



# RHT: Opportunity to Think Differently

## Focused Priorities

- ✓ Emphasizes **system transformation**
- ✓ CMS wants **big, innovative ideas** that are **evidence-based**
- ✓ A **5-year transformation**
- ✓ **Early wins** are critical
- ✓ State is **at risk to pay back funding**

## What RHT is NOT

- ✗ **Not** meant for ideas that are **unsustainable**
- ✗ **Not** meant for ideas that are **“more of the same”**
- ✗ **Cannot** be used to **replace or duplicate funding** or to **change fee schedules**

# RHT Goals and Use

## CMS Strategic Goals



Make Rural America Healthy Again



Workforce Development



Innovative Care



Tech Innovation



Sustainable Access

## Allowable Uses of Funds\*

- Prevention and Chronic Disease
- Provider Payments
- Consumer Tech Solutions
- Training and Technical Assistance
- Workforce
- IT Advances
- Appropriate Care Availability
- Behavioral Health
- Innovative Care

*\*Note: states **must invest in at least three** uses of funds*

# Funding Constraints

## FUNDING LIMITS & EXCLUSIONS



**New  
construction**



**Clinician's  
salaries**



**Independent  
R&D**

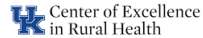


**EMR  
replacement**



**Duplicate  
billable  
services**

# Thank You For Your Support



Kentucky Association of Area Agencies on Aging



Kentucky Maternal Mortality Review Committee



79

Providers

19

Community Partners

17

Academic Institutions

7

Local Governmental Entities

7

Families, Caregivers, and Consumer Advocacy

5

Payers and Employers



Kentucky Health Resource Alliance



Maternal and Infant Health Collaborative Panel



# Kentucky's RHT Programs



## POWering Rural Maternal & Infant Health

Increase perinatal and infant care in maternity care deserts through coordinated, telehealth-enabled teams



## From Crisis to Care: Integrated EMS & Trauma Response

Enhance skills and resources for pre-hospital care and on-site interventions



## Rapid Response to Recovery: EmPATH Model & Mobile Crisis

Expand integrated, technology-enabled crisis care from community response to long-term support



## Rooted in Health: Rural Dental Access Program

Improve rural access to preventive dental care and treatment through expanded training and mobile, portable services



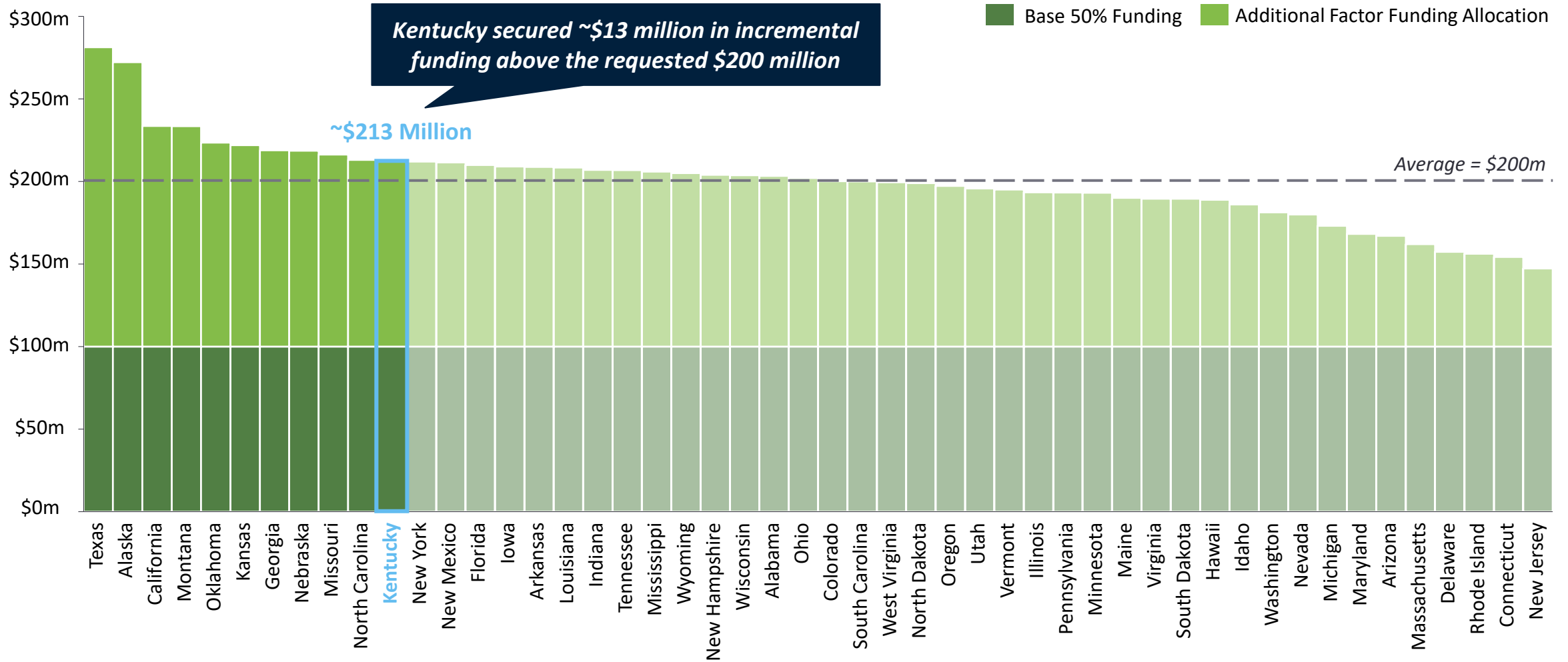
## Rural Community Hubs for Chronic Care Innovation

Reduce obesity and diabetes rate through evidence-based, community-led strategies

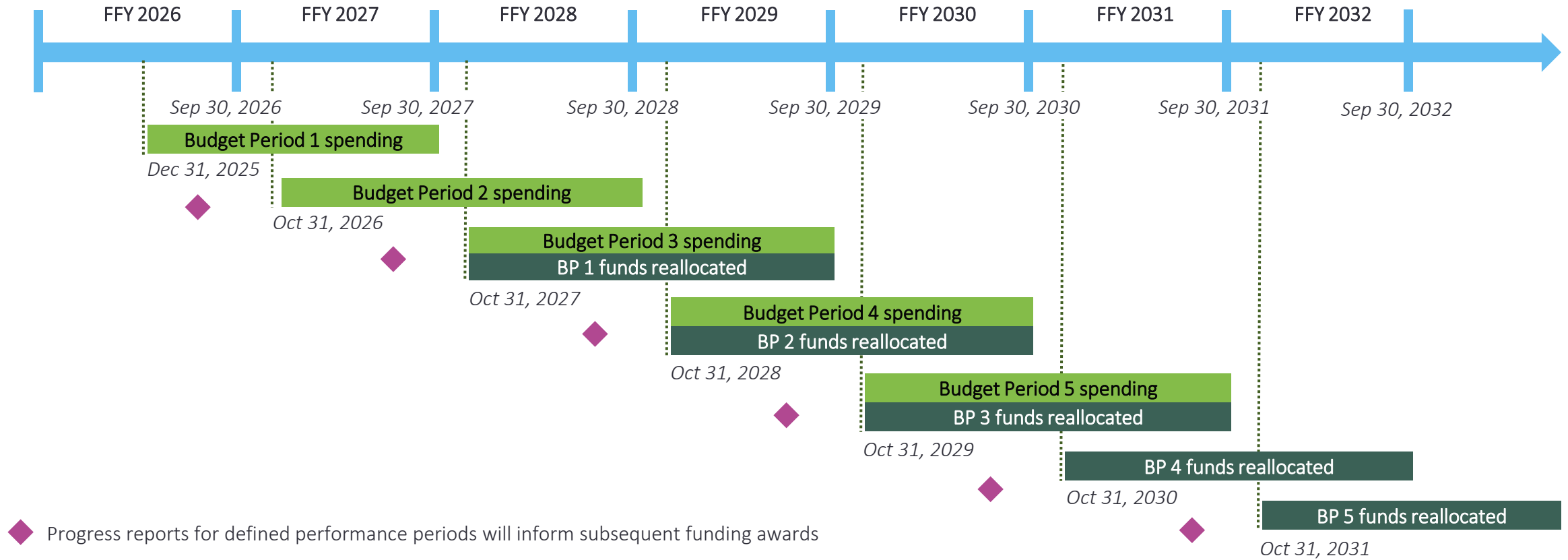


**Impact: Reimagine Rural Health Care to Achieve Effective, Sustainable Health and Vitality for All**

# First Year Funding Awards



# Overview of CMS Budget Timeline



Source: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

# Rural Health Transformation Overview



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# Rural Community Hubs for Chronic Care Innovation (RCH)

## Program Overview

The **Rural Community Hubs (RCH) initiative** seeks to unite fragmented interventions, programs, resources, and technology tools for local community organizations to **enable coordinated interventions across the chronic disease continuum**, from early education and engagement to prevention, access, and delivery of ongoing chronic care management solutions.

## Focus Areas



Hub-and-spoke  
model focused on  
cross-ecosystem action



Locally-led,  
state-coordinated  
innovations



CHW expansion and  
certification



Digital tools for  
care coordination  
and community  
collaboration

# PoWERing Rural Maternal and Infant Health (PoWER)

## Program Overview

The **PoWER initiative** (People who **W**ork for **E**ngagement and **R**esilience) enhances access to perinatal and infant care in Kentucky's maternity care deserts by deploying **local teams of community health workers, doulas, and peer support specialists** to support women from pregnancy confirmation through one year postpartum.

## Focus Areas



Pre-pregnancy  
education and  
awareness



SDoH screening  
and referrals at  
confirmation of  
pregnancy



Coordinated care  
teams leveraging  
paraprofessional  
providers



Hybrid care model  
blending telehealth  
and community-based  
visits



Perinatal wraparound  
supports for mothers  
and infants

# Rapid Response to Recovery (RRR): EmPATH Model & Mobile Crisis

## Program Overview

The **Rapid Response to Recovery (RRR) initiative** builds on Kentucky's EmPATH model and mobile crisis intervention services to create an **integrated behavioral health crisis system** that supports individuals throughout their care journey. RRR aims to address high rates of untreated mental illness and substance use disorder by reducing avoidable costs, minimizing reliance on first responders, and improving patient outcomes.

## Focus Areas



EmPATH expansion for rapid stabilization and psychiatric treatment



Community-based behavioral health crisis support expansion



Telebehavioral health coordination hub



Real-time technology to enable connections across the entire crisis continuum

# Rooted in Health (RIH): Rural Dental Access

## Program Overview

The **Rooted in Health (RIH) initiative** seeks to improve dental care within rural communities in Kentucky by increasing **dental externship opportunities and training programs** with rural providers in the state, providing **teledentistry** support, expanding **community access points** for oral hygiene care, and reducing emergency department (ED) visits for non-emergent dental pain.

## Focus Area



Accredited dental hygiene  
programs expansion



Teledental hubs



Portable and mobile dental  
care expansion



Extraction Training for  
General Dentists

# From Crisis to Care (CTC): Integrated EMS & Trauma Response

## Program Overview

The Crisis to Care (CTC) initiative seeks to enhance **prehospital care capacity, responsiveness**, and coordination by improving workforce training, technology enablement, and establishing new protocols to **treat patients in place (TIP) and transport to alternative destinations (TAD)**. The initiative seeks to also improve care coordination through integrating CHWs into EMS agencies and increasing the number of EMTs that become CHWs.

## Focus Areas



EMS learning  
management  
modernization



Post-response care  
coordination



Treat-Not-Transport  
(TNT) and Transport to  
Alternative  
Destinations (TAD)



Regional medical  
operations coordination  
centers (RMOCC)



Special needs tracking  
and awareness response  
system (STARS)

# Technology Enablement



Kentucky's Approach to RHT Technology Enablement

 Vitality Signs  
Community Collaboration Hub

 Community Care Coordination Tools

 Data Interoperability

 Consumer-facing Technology

# Activating RHT



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# Activating Kentucky's RHT

## Staffing our team

- Hire and onboard dedicated **Aspire → Activate → Attain (A<sup>3</sup>)** and RHT initiative teams
- Establish **robust processes and ways of working** to support RHT implementation and communication

## Launching early pilots

- Determine **approach for pilot selection**
- Work with community stakeholders to **design initial pilot locations**
- Move forward on **initiative implementation milestones**
- Document early learnings with a focus on **rapid cycle feedback**

## Measuring progress

- Align on data sources and tools for **performance reporting**
- **Baseline key initiative metrics** underpinning Objectives and Key Results (OKRs)
- Identify evidence-based **Leading Indicators**
- Submit first **CMS annual progress report** in late August 2026

# Measures of Success: Objectives & Key Results

## Rural Community Hubs

## PoWERing Maternal and Infant Health

## Rapid Response to Recovery

## Rooted in Health

## From Crisis to Care

### Initiative Objectives (O)

Reduce obesity and diabetes, focused on upstream prevention

Increase timely perinatal care in maternity care deserts

Expand integrated, technology-enabled behavioral health crisis care

Improve access to preventive dental care and treatment

Build capacity and capability for pre-hospital care and treatment-in-place

### Key Results (KRs)

- Development of rural community hubs
- Launch of locally-led chronic care initiatives through pilot hubs
- Bidirectional data sharing and referral closure
- CHW training and certification for chronic disease

- Early prenatal engagement
- Completion of key prenatal /postpartum visits
- Increased maternal behavioral health screening and referral
- Access to nutrition, coordinated care, and wraparound supports
- Access to well-child visits

- Increased use of community paramedicine and co-responder teams
- Fewer ED visits for behavioral health
- Active treatment follow-through
- Access to telebehavioral health support for urgent response

- Increased preventative oral care for adults
- Increased preventative oral care for children
- Expanded dental hygienist workforce
- Fewer ED visits from preventable dental needs
- Teledental care delivery

- Increased capacity for EMS providers and CHWs
- TIP or TAD utilization
- Reduction in preventable ED visits
- Coordination between EMS and trauma systems

# Alignment With Approved Application

The RHT application serves as a guardrail for our evolving efforts over the 5-year federal funding period

## What we CAN do:

- ✓ Develop new **strategies and tactics** to achieve the goals of the five RHT initiatives
- ✓ Expand **stakeholder partnerships** to extend reach across the health and wellbeing ecosystem
- ✓ Identify additional **Objectives and Key Results (OKRs)** to enhance tracking and reporting of existing initiatives
- ✓ Propose ideas for **sustainability beyond the federal grant cycle** that build on the application's foundation

## What we can NOT do:

- ✗ Design **entirely new initiatives** that do not align with the five initiatives in the approved application
- ✗ Undertake activities that would result in **spending above the proposed budget** submitted to CMS
- ✗ Commit to **work that derails timelines** or risks our ability to meet existing milestones and OKRs
- ✗ Use RHT funds to address priorities that **do not align with CMS strategic goals**

## Rural Health Transformation is a cooperative agreement between CMS and the Commonwealth of Kentucky

### Rural Health Transformation

The Commonwealth of Kentucky has been awarded funding through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Rural Health Transformation Fund (RHTF). This investment will empower Kentucky to launch and implement its Rural Health Transformation Plan (RHTP) — a community-driven strategy to expand access and improve health outcomes for rural residents across the Commonwealth. [Read Governor Beshear’s press release.](#)

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### About RHT

This project is 100% funded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for a total of \$212.9 million in budget year 1 with 100% by CMS/HHS. The RHTF grant spans five budget periods aligned with federal fiscal years (FY2026–FY2030). Funding is disbursed annually by CMS based on achievement of performance metrics. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CMS/HHS, or the U.S. Government. [View the Notice of Funding Opportunity from CMS.](#)

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