

HB 749 -- Missouri Rural Health Initiative

Co-Sponsors: Abel, Seigfreid, Barnitz, Whorton, Witte, Kuessner, Shoemyer (9), Ransdall, Bringer, Henke, Merideth, Sayer, Harris (110)

This bill requires the Director of the Department of Health and Senior Services, through the Office of Rural Health and in collaboration with certain state agencies, to develop a plan known as the Missouri Rural Health Initiative.

The initiative is required to:

- (1) Develop a plan that defines a system of coordinated health care services available to all persons in rural areas and provides for the delivery of health information and health care services in rural areas through telemedicine and telehealth resources;
- (2) Develop and administer technical assistance programs to assist rural communities in planning and coordinating the delivery of health care services through community-based systems of care;
- (3) Develop recommendations for obtaining financial resources for rural hospitals and clinics in isolated areas of the state;
- (4) Coordinate the development of a statewide plan for emergency medical services, in collaboration with emergency medical services regulatory agencies and representative organizations;
- (5) Develop a statewide recruitment and retention strategy for health care professionals;
- (6) Develop recommendations on the coordination and integration of mental health services in primary care settings, hospitals, and in other specified health services provided in rural areas;
- (7) Evaluate and provide projections on the economic impact of health care services in rural communities;
- (8) Identify barriers to health systems in rural areas, including recommendations to assure access of elderly populations in rural areas to health care and social services; and
- (9) Incorporate the duties of the Office of Rural Health.

The bill also establishes a 10-member Missouri Rural Health Services Commission with the department. The commission is responsible for examining the following:

(1) Infrastructure issues, including transportation systems, facilities, and workforce;

(2) Economic and educational issues;

(3) Cultural issues, including the impact of new minority population increases in rural areas; and

(4) Legal, educational, health care, and social service training for local public and private providers who deliver services to new minority populations.

The bill contains provisions pertaining to the composition of the commission, the schedule of regular and special meetings, and invitations of specified individuals to serve as ex-officio members of the commission.

The commission is required to provide two reports to the Governor and the General Assembly. The first report is due on or before January 15, 2005, and the final report is due on or before January 15, 2006.

The provisions of the bill expire on January 15, 2006.