



Office of Health Care System Planning Bi-Monthly Report September 2025

The Office of Health Care System Planning is providing this regular written update on selected, key health planning activities accomplished between Health Care System Planning Cabinet and EOHHS Independent Advisory Council meetings (held every other month). This written report is in addition to the along with the updates that will be presented at our next meeting, on September 11. If you have questions, please contact Sandra Powell (sandra.m.powell@ohhs.ri.gov).

Primary Care

OHIC Primary Care Rate Review

In the recent legislative session, the General Assembly passed a bill moving forward the timeline for the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner's (OHIC's) primary care rate review. The review will take place over the next year. OHIC is in the early stages of planning for this review and have had preliminary conversations with its consultants.

Prior Authorization Policy Change

The General Assembly also passed legislation establishing a three-year pilot program where insurers are prohibited from imposing prior authorizations for admissions, items, treatments, or procedures ordered by primary care providers. Prior authorizations for prescription drugs are carved out of this pilot program. As a part of this legislation, OHIC will conduct a review of the impact of the prior authorization pause.

The legislation also directs OHIC to convene a workgroup comprised of both providers and payers to make recommendations regarding the improvement and simplification of the prior authorization process. OHIC will convene workgroups on pharmaceutical and medical prior authorizations – which is the same workgroup recommended by the Health Care System Planning (HCSP) Foundational Report.

Health Professional Loan Repayment Program

The Rhode Island Health Professional Loan Repayment Program (HPLRP) is a federally funded initiative, matched by philanthropic support, that provides educational loan repayment to eligible primary care, dental, and behavioral health professionals. On July 24, 2025, HRSA released the new State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) – HRSA-25-072 – which funds the

Rhode Island Health Professional Loan Repayment Program. Applications are due January 12, 2026, with expected awards announced April 1, 2026. The anticipated project start date is July 1, 2026, with a 3-year period of performance through June 30, 2029. HRSA expects to award up to \$20 million in FY 2025, with as many as 50 grants of up to \$1,000,000 each. It is important to note that the new NOFO changes the traditional program timeline, changing the program start date from October 1, 2025, to July 1, 2026.

Key changes in the new NOFO include:

- **Discipline Expansion:** Dental Therapists and Registered Dietitians (considered part of the primary care team) are now eligible.
- **Award Increases:** Maximum award for full-time primary care medical providers in a Primary Care HPSA increased to \$75,000 for two years of service. Dental and mental health providers may receive up to \$50,000 for two years. Half-time providers receive half the award.
- **Service Hour Requirement:** Full-time service increased from 32 to 36 direct patient care hours per week, which may pose scheduling challenges for some FQHCs—similar to difficulties experienced when NHSC implemented the same change.

Primary Care Training Sites Program

The Primary Care Training Sites Program (PCTSP) is a state-funded program authorized by [R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.30](#) and administered by the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) through the state Office of Primary Care and Rural Health (OPCRH) to expand Rhode Island’s capacity to train new healthcare professionals, including physicians, nurse practitioners (NPs), and physician assistants (PAs), through high-quality, community-based clinical training. RIDOH awarded PCTSP grants for up to \$90,000 per trainee to primary care practices. The funds are awarded to incentivize clinical teaching, support innovative preceptor compensation models, and strengthen the infrastructure necessary for training future providers.

In the past two months the following activities have been carried out:

- **Enrollment complete:** RIDOH finalized contract with 34 primary care practices for the inaugural cohort.
- **Program launch activities:** The program website has been updated to showcase participating practices. In collaboration with OPCRH, the Care Transformation Collaborative- RI (CTC-RI) held two Preceptor Orientation sessions in both July and August in order to introduce the curriculum and officially launch program activities.
- **Vendor assistance support:** OPCRH is providing ongoing technical assistance for practices that are enrolling as state vendors in order to facilitate timely invoice payments.
- **Curriculum hosting and tracking:** The RIDOH Academic Institute, in collaboration with OPCRH, hosted the program curriculum on the TRAIN learning management system. Thus, the curriculum is accessible to any practice that trains a primary care health professional. A preceptor and student learning plan has been developed to monitor curriculum use for ongoing evaluation.
- **Resource accessibility:** The Preceptor Manual and Student Handbook are now available on the program webpage, ensuring that practices outside the inaugural cohort can still benefit from these materials.

- **Data and Tracking:** OPCRH is developing the functionality to track non-licensed student participants in the Primary Care Training Sites Program (PCTSP) into a new MS Access database for Loan Repayment, J-1 Visa Waiver, and PCTSP participants.

Data Dashboard Development

- Freedman Healthcare has been preparing a report that includes a primary care capacity assessment, recommendations on consistent primary care definitions and methodologies, and a primary care data inventory. They will be reaching out to key stakeholders for input soon – and aim to complete this deliverable by the end of November.

Loan Repayment & Supports Navigation Tool

The Loan Repayment & Supports Navigation Tool is an online resource developed by RIDOH and the Executive Office of Health & Human Services (EOHHS) to support health workforce recruitment and retention. The tool was updated in July and reflects up-to-date federal and state loan repayment opportunities. It helps current and aspiring health professionals explore student loan repayment options available in Rhode Island, with a focus on increasing access to primary care, dental, and behavioral health services in underserved areas.

The tool provides user-friendly guidance on state and federal loan repayment programs, most of which require a service commitment in HPSAs or other high-need communities. By reducing the financial burden of student debt, the tool aims to help diverse, qualified professionals enter and stay in health careers that serve Rhode Island’s most vulnerable populations.

Oral Health

- Another year of the dental assisting program was completed with East Providence High School Career and Technical School’s Dental Assisting Program. The dental assisting program introduces high school students to the field of dentistry, many of whom continue their dental assisting careers or move on to other dental-related fields. Next semester’s Fall 2025 roster had a freshman waitlist of over 26 students who applied to the program.
- RI Oral Health Program continues to work with the Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) to support dental externships with 4th-year dental students. Currently, the Blackstone Valley Community Health Center is working with Boston University School of Dental Medicine. The Comprehensive Community Action Program (CCAP) Health Center, Providence Community Health Center, and WellOne are working with Tufts Dental School students. The externship program brings dental students to Rhode Island with the vision that they will be exposed to practicing here and potentially choose to continue their dental careers in the state.

- The second ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) series was completed in May 2025, covering Oral Surgery. Subject matter experts prepared monthly educational sessions for ECHO participants to enhance their professional skills in oral surgery.
- Rhode Island continues to work with internal and external partners on the Building State Capacity for Integration Learning Collaborative. The learning collaborative works to integrate oral health and prenatal care, including expanding oral health education for doulas and other prenatal professionals.
- As part of action planning on the Dental Workforce Strategic Plan, RIDOH's Oral Health Program is seeking to understand the State's workforce challenges and develop a strategic plan to address these concerns. The group has developed four priority areas: Workforce Education and Training, Policy Development, Recruitment, and Retention.

Behavioral Health

Children's Behavioral Health Crisis Team

The Children's Behavioral Health Crisis Team is holding a series of 5 meetings with community partners to discuss and prioritize services and supports across the Children's Behavioral Health System of Care to ensure there is a sufficient safety net in place, especially in advance of potential funding cuts. The Team has begun mapping out the best ways to move forward with defining the safety net and is working to determine services and supports to prioritize.

Behavioral Health Prevention Efforts

There are a significant number of media efforts focused on behavioral health prevention either in process or in planning, targeted at wide, diverse audiences and developed with community engagement, as described below. Several of the campaigns have received recent regional and national awards.

- BHDDH contracted with MADD to develop a public awareness campaign to address drunk and drugged driving, with a specific focus on driving under the influence of cannabis. The media campaign includes 30-second audio messages on iHeart Media social platforms and streaming services. To date, the audio message has reached 224,550 unique individuals through podcasts and 224,233 unique individuals through streaming services. An animated video is in production and is projected to be completed in September.
- The BHDDH/MADD collaboration also includes the presentation of MADD's substance use prevention program, The Power of Youth, to middle and high school students and to driver's education students at Community College of Rhode Island. The program has been presented to 704 students to date.
- BHDDH's 988 Campaign continues to run through September. It includes bus, billboard, radio, TV, digital/social media, as well as print collateral and events in anticipation of national 988 Day on September 8, 2025. Event details can be found on PreventOverdoseRI.org along with a [registration webpage](#). A press conference and Launch/kick-off event will be held on September 8 at the RI State House, Governor's State Room, from 10:00am – 11:00am
- RIDOH recently launched its Rhode Island Responsible website to help people across the state better understand the health risks of cannabis use. The campaign includes a communications toolkit with fact sheets and social media content available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese

that focus on responsible use, safety, and access to treatment and recovery support services. The communications team is now working on several outreach efforts, including advisories for community organizations, healthcare professionals, and educators, and a formal press release announcing the campaign.

- The most recent episode of RIDOH's Public Health Out Loud podcast focuses on the dangers of cannabis use and pregnancy with Dr. Mara Coyle of Women & Infants Hospital. It addresses the role that cannabis can play in family planning, particularly those who may seek it out as a means of dealing with pregnancy-related morning sickness, anxiety, and sleep disorders. Those who are interested are encouraged to share the post on Facebook, X, and LinkedIn.
- As a continuation of International Overdose Awareness Day, observed on August 31st, Rhode Island community organizations have scheduled statewide naloxone distribution events (providing free naloxone and education materials) and are holding remembrances across the state on September 4, 2025.
- September is Recovery Month. Statewide events are taking place throughout the month, including Rhode Island's 22nd annual [Rally4Recovery](#), which will be held this year on Saturday, September 13th at 195 District Park in Providence. It's a free, family-friendly event celebrating recovery from alcohol and drug addiction as part of National Recovery Month. Statewide events are taking place throughout the month. A calendar of events is available on [PreventOverdoseRI.org](#).

Hospitals

AHEAD Model

- EOHHS and OHIC continue to communicate with CMS on Rhode Island's participation in the AHEAD Model. Changes to the AHEAD program made under the new federal administration were just recently finalized, creating delays in Rhode Island's implementation.

Data Dashboard Development

- OHCS is working with Freedman Healthcare to design Rhode Island's Hospital Fiscal Transparency and Performance Dashboard. Freedman staff will be gathering key stakeholders to provide input and expertise to the dashboard design process.

Workforce

Data Collection and Analysis

Transfer of physician specialty data to Ecosystem

RIDOH has transferred physician specialty data to the Ecosystem and has been working closely with EOHHS and the State Data Ecosystem team to ensure that specialty categories are clear, consistent, and reliable. Ecosystem data analysts are finalizing the dashboard tools that will be used to visualize and analyze specialty data. This process is nearly complete.

New funding for Caring Careers

EOHHS communications staff and others have been working with Medicaid staff to support a proposal to CMS to utilize Civil Monetary Penalty funds to support the continuation and expansion of the Caring Careers website and outreach campaign. We are awaiting CMS approval as well as internal approvals to procure a vendor to assist with Caring Careers website enhancements.

Clinical Placement Registry

EOHHS identified several cloud-based applications that are used in other states to support clinical placements for health professional students. EOHHS is now working with a staff person from the Office of the Post-Secondary Commissioner (OPC), with the support of OPC leadership. We are renewing this effort to pursue new technology solutions and funding to improve clinical placement connections between higher education institutions and healthcare organizations.

Health Information Technology

Federal National Provider Director Initiative

CMS has announced a large federal initiative to promote interoperability, including a sizeable investment in a national provider directory. You can find more information on the project here: [cms.gov/health-tech-ecosystem](https://www.cms.gov/health-tech-ecosystem) and [Press Release Federal Commitment to Create Patient Centric Healthcare Ecosystem](#). Note that the effort is voluntary and not mandated for providers, payers, and HIT vendors. If pursued in Rhode Island, CurrentCare (Rhode Island's Health Information Exchange, or HIE) is positioned to take advantage of this, and it could be leveraged in numerous other areas of value to the state's healthcare system.

CurrentCare Health Information Exchange

- CurrentCare, RI's Health Information Exchange (HIE), completed a transition to a new opt-out consent model on May 1, 2025. To date the volume of opt-outs remains very low, averaging at fewer than 10 opt-out requests per month.
- The patient consent tool in the HIE for Part 2 records is now live. Part 2 records are those protected under Federal regulations 42 CFR part 2, ensuring the confidentiality of substance use disorder (SUD) treatment records. No Part 2 data has yet been received – but a Statement of Work and timeline has been developed for Care New England for Part 2 data connectivity to be completed by year's end, as part of a phased implementation. Discussions about Part 2 data, consent and the HIE are underway with other health care systems.
- South County Health admission, discharge and transfer notifications (ADTs) are now live and added in CurrentCare. The only remaining hospital unable to transmit ADTs is Westerly Hospital, but there are discussions with their parent organization, Yale New Haven Health, to pursue transmissions.
- Initial outreach has taken place with the Massachusetts Department of Health to facilitate incorporating MA Prescription Drug Monitoring Program data into CurrentCare.
- All legacy HIE system transition activities have been successfully closed out.

- HIE and Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs): SNF connectivity strategic planning has been added as a possible development project for the HIE Project Governance Committee, to be voted on in the September Project Governance Committee meeting. If approved, enhancing SNF connectivity to the HIE will reduce administrative burden on transferring patient information with a goal toward improving clinical outcomes.