Office of Health Care System Planning Bi-Monthly Report

February through April 2026

The Office of Health Care System Planning is providing this regular written update on selected, key health planning activities accomplished since the last Health Care System Planning Cabinet and EOHHS Independent Advisory Council meeting. This report addresses activities in February, March, and early April of 2026. If you have questions, please contact Sandra Powell (sandra.m.powell@ohhs.ri.gov).

Health Care System Long Term Planning

The Office Health Care System Planning is preparing to release an early draft of the Rhode Island Health Care System Plan to the Health Care System Cabinet for discussion at the April 15, 2026 Cabinet meeting. This will lead into an open public process for input on the draft Plan.

This draft includes detailed SMART Aims (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) that will be filled in with specific targets with the ability for significant public comment. The Health Care System Cabinet will then work with the EOHHS Independent Advisory Council and our data experts to line up the SMART Aims with the key strategies for success – some of which are already underway and others that were laid out in our 2024 Foundational Plan. Together, those will lead to our desired outcomes of a stronger, more accessible and sustainable health care system that provides preventive, primary, and acute care for all Rhode Islanders. The plan will be aligned with state agencies' priorities, the Rural Health Transformation Program (described below), and community priorities.

All Cabinet and Advisory Council meetings are public. If you are interested in becoming involved in the creation of the statewide long-term health care system plan, please email Cindy Singleton, at cindy.singleton@ohhs.ri.gov, to ask to be put on the Advisory Council Interested Parties list.

Primary Care

Prior Authorization Policy Change

In 2025 General Assembly passed prior authorization 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.

The Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC) promulgated updated regulations RICR 230-20-30-4. Section §4(11)(f) includes reference to a required 20% reduction in prior authorizations by the end

of 2026. OHIC plans to collect information on prior authorization and develop its first report to the legislature and the governor's office on the status of the PA Pilot Program by July 1, 2026.

Loan Repayment & Supports Navigation Tool

Since the Loan Repayment and Support Navigation Tool update in Fall 2025, there have been no major changes to the Loan Repayment & Supports Navigation Tool. The tool continues to reflect the 2026 updates to National Health Service Corps (NHSC) programs. This has been vital this year, given the delay of the RI Health Professional Loan Repayment Program at the federal level (HRSA). The Office of Primary Care and Rural Health (OPCRH) is entering the NHSC recruitment season in Spring 2026. Additionally, the OPCRH recently completed the National Shortage Designation Update (NSDU), which requires all Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) to be redesignated. OPCRH collaborated with Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) to ensure they have the most competitive HPSA scores in advance of the NSDU, positioning sites for optimal eligibility in upcoming federal programs.

Health Professional Loan Repayment Program

As previously shared, 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. The State Loan Repayment Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) HRSA-25-072 was released on July 24, 2025, with applications due January 12, 2026. Awards to state were expected to be announced April 1, 2026, however, the announcement date has been pushed back several weeks. The project start date is anticipated to be July 1, 2026, with a three-year performance period through June 30, 2029.

Long-term outcomes of the program remain strong, as 91% of RI HPLRP recipients from 2013 to 2025 continue to work and maintain an active Rhode Island license after their service obligation ends. The program estimates that more than 100,000 Rhode Islanders receive healthcare from a former or current State Loan Repayment Program participant.

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, and physician assistants, 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.

Within this reporting period:

- In February 2026, RIDOH issued the annual report for program year 2025 the General Assembly. The report is entitled Primary Care Training Sites Program: Report to the General Assembly.

- The program is mid-way through Period 2, and evaluation activities are underway to understand the impact of the program.
- Also, by year's end, RIDOH plans to complete program data collection and analysis to inform a full program evaluation, which will be included in the next statutory annual report due December 31, 2026.

Oral Health

Here is an update on the RIDOH Oral Health Program during the reporting period:

- RIOHP 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.
- Action planning continues on the Dental Workforce Strategic Plan. RIDOH OHP sought to understand the State's workforce challenges and develop a strategic plan to address these concerns. 4 priority areas have been developed: Workforce Education and Training, Policy Development, Recruitment and Retention.

Behavioral Health

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. Here is information on the activities during the reporting period.

- EOHHS, BHDDH, and RIDOH launched *No Matter Why You Use*, an overdose prevention public awareness campaign focusing on Rhode Islanders age 45 and older. The campaign ran through February 2026.
- RIDOH is collaborating with AAA on outreach efforts focused on the effects of cannabis use on drivers and adolescents. As part of our participation in three upcoming Brain Waves fairs, the group has loaned out one of its impairment goggle kits to give kids a hands-on look at the ways that cannabis can impact them both short- and long-term. In addition, a senior spokesperson will be joining RIDOH's Public Health Out Loud podcast to talk about AAA's Shifting Gears program, an impaired driving curriculum that has reached thousands of students in health classes throughout the region.
- The State is preparing for Mental Health Awareness month in May, developing social media content. Agencies will be promoting Preventsuicideri.org, Parentcoach RI, and other programmatic resources.
- From March 31 to April 13, Rhode Island's iconic "Big Blue Bug" will display a banner promoting **QuitNowRI**, the statewide tobacco use cessation program that offers free treatment and

coaching to all Rhode Islanders interested in quitting tobacco and nicotine products. The 59-foot bug structure, owned by Big Blue Bug Solutions, is located near two of Rhode Island's most heavily trafficked interstates and is viewable to motorists traveling through Providence. The banner, prepared by Rhode Island Department of Health's Tobacco Control Program, encourages people to contact QuitNowRI for free help to quit smoking and vaping.

Hospitals

AHEAD Model

- EOHHS and OHIC continue to communicate with Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI/CMS) regarding the Achieving Healthcare Efficiency through Accountable Design (AHEAD) model. OHIC and EOHHS plan to negotiate an amendment to our State Agreement with CMMI/CMS on AHEAD that will incorporate recent changes in the AHEAD model. This negotiation is now scheduled to take place during the second quarter of 2026. OHIC's hearings at the General Assembly included questions on the "Choice and Competition" components of the AHEAD model that require legislative action.

Health Care Workforce Transformation

Data Collection and Analysis

- **Collect additional data through RIDOH licensure process**
  RIDOH has begun implementation of the Healthcare Workforce Data Collection Act. Additional data questions have been developed and were added to provider licensure renewal applications, starting with Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, and Advance Practice Registered Nurses in February 2026. The questions will also be included in renewal applications in June for Physicians, Physician Assistants, and Dentists. The additional data will be shared with and reviewed by the Ecosystem data analytics team for eventual incorporation into the Health Workforce Data Dashboard.
- **New funding for Caring Careers**
  EOHHS communications staff are moving forward to utilize Civil Monetary Penalty funds to support the continuation and expansion of the Caring Careers website and outreach campaign in alignment with the CMS Nursing Home Staffing Campaign. The program is seeking additional funding sources to continue to support the project.

Health Related Social Needs

Health related social needs (HRSN) include social, environmental, and economic conditions impacting an individual's health and ability to engage with the health care system. The HRSN Leadership Team has identified 4 priorities:

- Develop, refine, and align state structures to oversee, coordinate, assess, promote, and implement strategic actions that will improve SDOH, with a specific focus on communities with a high prevalence of vulnerability.
- Refine and apply existing data systems to monitor, inform, and guide decision-making aimed at integrating and delivering services and coordinating care
- Inventory the specific programs and services being conducted across public state agencies and private organizations/coalitions that screen, assess, and link residents to HRSN services
- Develop and implement a strategic framework for aligning state resources that promotes collective action, leverages resources across all sources, and streamlines service delivery models to meet community needs

In September 2025, EOHHS established and convened a public/private stakeholder group called the HRSN Design Team to establish the strategic framework needed for the development and testing of an HRSN Care model in Rhode Island.

The Design Team has convened several times since September, most recently on March 20, 2026. In those convenings, the Design Team has provided critical stakeholder feedback to help prioritize the advancement of specific recommendations and provided guidance on acceptance criteria to shape the approach to the establishment of an HRSN data system to guide future efforts.

Health Information Technology

CurrentCare Health Information Exchange

- Rhode Island's Health Information Exchange (HIE), called CurrentCare, continues to onboard new data feeds and users. Discussions are underway to explore incorporating MA Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) data into RI HIE feeds.
- EOHHS Issued a competitive procurement in 2025 to incorporate Electronic Health Records (EHRs) for enhanced quality reporting with new opt-out HIE. The Request for Proposals (RFP) for new Quality Rating System (QRS) has been posted, and a tentative award has been issued to MedicaSoft for the QRS RFP. The contract is expected to start in April. Additionally, the Regional Health Information Organization (RHIO) RFP went out to bid and EOHHS is in the final stages of identifying a new organization to operate the RHIO. Transition will occur in mid-2026.

  HIE and Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs): SNF connectivity strategic planning was proposed as a possible development project for the HIE Project Governance Committee. The initiative was voted on in the September Project Governance Committee meeting and approved to be funded through the HIE budget. The initiative will enhance SNF connectivity to the HIE to reduce administrative burden on transferring patient information between healthcare providers. While efforts began with PointClickCare, an EHR software used by most SNFs in Rhode Island, to submit data, those efforts are on hold pending transition to a new RHIO provider.

Data Development

Data Dashboard Development

- OHCSP is working with our data consultant, Freedman Healthcare, to design Rhode Island's Hospital Fiscal Transparency and Performance Dashboard, as presented in the February 2026 joint Cabinet and EOHHS Advisory Council meeting. The Dashboard is in a prototype format, and EOHHS continues to seek additional feedback from community partners.
- Freedman Healthcare has also been continuing to prepare a report that includes a primary care capacity assessment, recommendations on consistent primary care definitions and methodologies, and a primary care data inventory.