

Rural Assistance Center

The Rural Assistance Center (RAC), established in 2002 as part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Rural Initiative, is a unique resource to help rural communities and stakeholders access information on programs, funding and research beneficial to rural residents. Multiple stakeholders including local health and human services providers, community-based organizations, local and state government entities, private foundations and researchers utilize RAC's resources in their efforts to improve access, quality and financial viability of rural health and human services delivery systems.

RAC is housed in the Center for Rural Health (CRH) at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences. CRH acts as the lead partner on RAC, collaborating with the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI). Funding for RAC comes from HRSA's Office of Rural Health Policy.

RAC provides the nation access to information and technical assistance on a full range of available programs, funding and research on rural health and human services. Since it was launched in December 2002, RAC has provided assistance through a state-of-the-art website, email, phone, and fax requests to people in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C.

Kristine Sande, project director for RAC, says that RAC capitalizes on information technology by making virtually all information web-accessible. "Basing RAC in North Dakota is possible because of information technology that makes our rural health and human services expertise immediately available across the country," Sande said.

Information available on RAC's website includes *information guides* on topics such as dental health, domestic violence, tribal health and grant writing, *recent news* from the rural community; *possible funding sources* for rural health and human service projects; *a searchable resource database*, and a *calendar of events* listing conferences, workshops and other events of interest.

RAC also distributes up-to-date information through electronic mailing lists. The RAC listservs update over 4,000 subscribers on recent announcements, funding opportunities, research findings and late-breaking news. *The Rural Monitor*, RAC's quarterly electronic newsletter, provides up-to-date and in-depth coverage on issues concerning the well-being of rural America.

RAC also provides free customized assistance on topics related to rural health or human services. RAC's information specialists respond to callers who call in on a toll-free line.

"People from throughout the nation have easy access to information specialists who provide customized assistance, such as database searches on rural health and human services topics and funding resources, linking users to organizations for additional information, and furnishing relevant publications," Sande said.

RAC can be reached at, I-800-270-1898, info@raconline.org or at www.raconline.org.

