

PREVENTION LINK

of Southern Maryland
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Our focus: Dr. Carter's Corner
Prince George's County's Health Officer Discusses
Expanding Care in Rural Communities

Feature: Improving Access to Care in Rural Communities
An interview with Jonathan Dayton, Executive Director of
the Maryland Rural Health Association

**Power Up Your Practice: An innovative new approach to
improve health care in rural communities**

**Recognition. The Prince George's County Health Department
receives highest recognition from the CDC**

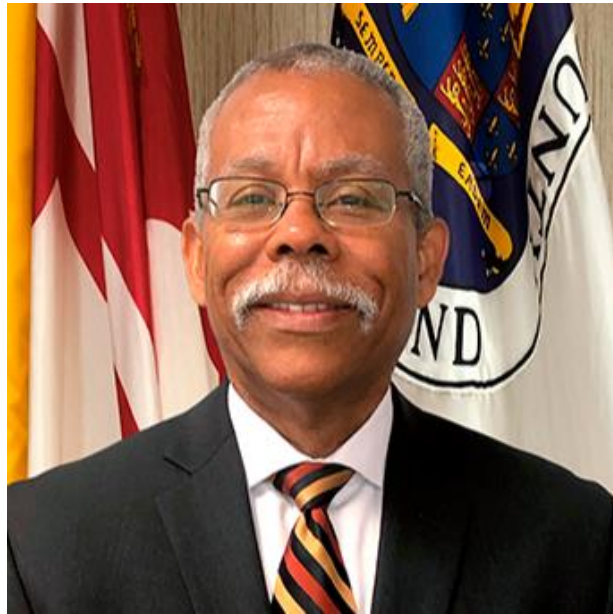
Webinars

Rural Health

Despite advances in medical care, rural communities continue to face challenges in accessing quality healthcare. This is particularly true for chronic conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, which require ongoing management. PreventionLink is committed to helping improve health outcomes for residents of Southern Maryland.

This month our focus is on healthcare in rural communities.

Dr. Carter's Corner



Expanding Care in Rural Communities

Maryland's rural healthcare needs are vast and complex. These residents are more likely to be uninsured and have higher out-of-pocket healthcare costs than people living in urban areas. This lack of access can lead to poorer health outcomes and increased mortality rates.

We're committed to improving and expanding access to healthcare in Southern Maryland's rural communities. Alongside our partners, we aim to strengthen PreventionLink's provider network, which currently focuses a great deal on preventing and managing chronic disease.

As part of our efforts to improve healthcare access for vulnerable groups, we are increasing awareness among these populations through print and digital advertising campaigns, which will help us reach even more residents. This outreach provides people outside major cities or towns with free services they might not otherwise be able to afford or even know exist!

The need to improve healthcare in rural communities is challenging, and we can't do it alone. Together, we can make a difference. Join our [provider network](#) to help prevent the devastating consequences of chronic disease in rural communities and improve healthcare for all Marylanders!

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Improving Access to Care in Rural Communities



An Interview with Jonathan Dayton, Executive Director of the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

Residents of rural communities often have a harder time getting access to quality healthcare than those who live in more urban areas, and there are already too few doctors practicing in rural areas. PreventionLink sat down with the new Executive Director of the [Maryland Rural Health Association \(MRHA\)](#), Jonathan Dayton, to talk about the association's upcoming conference, emerging trends in rural health after the Covid-19 pandemic, and his plans for the association. He also provided some insights into the challenges faced by rural communities when it comes to accessing quality healthcare.

Getting to know the Maryland Rural Health Association and Jonathan Dayton

MRHA is a nonprofit membership organization comprised of local health departments, hospitals, community health centers, and other organizations that work together to improve the health of Maryland's rural population. MRHA hosts an annual conference for its members and their guests that includes keynote presentations, engaging education and training sessions, an awards ceremony, exhibits, networking opportunities, and more.

The 2022 conference theme is ***Defining Rural Health & Putting the Pieces Together*** and will be held in person from October 24–25 at the Rocky Gap Resort in Flintstone, Maryland. This may be good news for attendees who are ready to disconnect from Zoom conferences and are looking to network face-to-face with their peers. The new executive director, Jonathan Dayton, is excited about this opportunity to reconnect with peers.

Reconnecting with peers

"I'm looking forward to having everyone back in person, as it's been a couple of years," says Dayton. "The interaction among Maryland colleagues trying to achieve the same goals is huge. The wealth of knowledge that many have learned during Covid on new best practices shared during the conference will benefit us all."



Best practices, lessons learned, and new legislation

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced healthcare systems around the world to rapidly expand their use of telemedicine to continue providing care while limiting exposure to the virus. Now, as the world begins to emerge from the pandemic, there is an opportunity to reflect on the lessons learned and how they can be used to improve care in the future — especially for rural communities.

The conference will feature a robust legislative panel, says Dayton, including Maryland state senators and delegates who will discuss topics such as reimbursement and telehealth. The Maryland General Assembly recently enacted the [Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021](#), which expands the definition of telehealth and the coverage and reimbursement requirements for telehealth services for Medicaid and private insurance providers.

"The adoption of this type of practice (telehealth/telemedicine) becoming more readily available during Covid," says Dayton, "has only highlighted the importance and benefits that telehealth can bring to rural communities, which often have significant access-to-care barriers."

Another critical lesson learned is that telemedicine can help bridge the gap between primary and specialty care. In many rural communities, there is a shortage of primary care providers, which Dayton says affects everyone and can make it difficult for rural residents to get the care they need.



Meet MHRA's new executive director, Jonathan Dayton

With a background in marketing and public relations, he is on a mission to improve healthcare in rural communities by expanding membership and awareness. He especially wants younger professionals to join the organization.

Reaching a new audience

Dayton plans to tap into social media and podcasts to reach more people, especially the younger generation. He says rural healthcare providers have ongoing staffing challenges, so he's placing an emphasis on students and young professionals who may have never considered a healthcare career.

Dayton says this could include starting a MHRA student chapter or re-structuring its existing student memberships. In addition to increasing student membership, Dayton says there is an opportunity for members to join the MRHA outside of the typical hospital or clinical setting; for example, members of rural public safety agencies might be interested in this career path.

He believes that, by reaching out to a wider audience and including students who may never have considered working in health care, he can make a difference. This is an admirable goal and one that could have a real impact on the way we think about healthcare delivery.

Pulling it All Together

Dayton says talking about telehealth must also include the technology education and broadband access. Conference panelists are expected to discuss how best to harness the latest innovations to expand care and improve access for rural communities.

Other topics expected to be covered at the conference include:

- Addressing healthcare barriers for vulnerable populations in rural areas
- Leveraging technology to address substance use disorders, including the opioid crisis.
- Oral health in rural areas

In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, many healthcare providers have struggled to expand their services while still providing quality care. That's why networking with peers and discussing best practices and advancing technologies is so important. By sharing information and resources, healthcare providers can help each other expand care while still maintaining high quality standards.

The Maryland Rural Health Conference is open to all healthcare professionals. More information about the conference can be found on the [MRHA website](#).

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The graphic features a scenic background of a lake at Rocky Gap State Park with a forested hillside and a blue sky. A semi-transparent dark circle in the center contains the text 'SAVE THE DATE MRHA CONFERENCE OCTOBER 24 - 25, 2022'. In the top right corner is the MRHA logo, which includes a stylized sun and the text 'MARYLAND RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION'. On the left side, green text reads 'EDUCATING AND ADVOCATING FOR THE OPTIMAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES AND THEIR RESIDENTS.' with three green arrows pointing right below it. In the bottom right corner, white text reads 'Rocky Gap State Park Allegany County, MD'.

Maryland's rural healthcare needs are vast and complex. More than one quarter of [Maryland's residents live in rural communities](#), but that percentage rises even higher when considering Southern Maryland. In Prince George's County alone, 38% of residents live outside major metropolitan areas and must deal with myriad health disparities, including access to care and higher rates of chronic diseases such as hypertension and obesity. These residents are more likely to be uninsured and have higher out-of-pocket healthcare costs than people living in urban areas. This lack of access can lead to poorer health outcomes and increased mortality rates. We're committed to improving and expanding access to healthcare in Southern Maryland's rural communities. Alongside our partners, we aim to strengthen PreventionLink's provider network, which currently focuses a great deal on preventing and managing chronic disease.

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The PreventionLink
Provider Network of
Southern Maryland



Power up your practice: A new approach to improving healthcare in rural communities

According to the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis, the number of Americans living in rural communities is projected to grow by 2.4% between 2018 and 2030. This increase will put a strain on the already-limited healthcare resources available in these areas.

The rural medical community has been hit hard by a shortage of providers, limited resources, and geographic isolation, but there are solutions for the growing population that needs care — including incentives to draw them into our system.



The power to improve healthcare delivery

There are many challenges associated with providing adequate healthcare for the growing rural population, but one of the biggest is the lack of coordination among providers. This can lead to duplicate testing, procedures, and even medications, wasting time and money, and possibly putting patients in danger. New healthcare delivery models are being developed to address this issue, such as [virtual care platforms](#). These allow providers to share patient information and coordinate care remotely. Another approach is developing regional health networks that connect rural providers and specialists in urban areas. By scaling these kinds of innovative healthcare delivery systems, physicians can provide more efficient and coordinated care and improve patient outcomes.

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More innovative ways to improve health outcomes in rural communities:

- Develop and implement a [workforce-planning model to](#) forecast staffing needs, hire and train cross-professional care teams to provide more efficient and high-quality care.
- Reduce staff burdens by referring at-risk patients to community partners like PreventionLink that have community health workers. They can serve as an extension of the practice, advocating for patients' needs, such as securing free or low-cost emergency broadband, transportation, or prescription services.
- Telemedicine is a promising way to improve rural patients' outcomes using technology to bridge the distance between patients and providers, expanding access to care.



Financial Incentives for Providers

The [National Health Service Corps](#) provides up to \$50,000 in loan repayment and scholarships for physicians who work for two years in a Tier 1 Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). While financial incentives are important, they are not the only factor to consider when attracting providers to rural areas. Other factors, such as quality of life and community support, also play a role.



The Prince George's County Health Department receives highest recognition from the CDC for its commitment to diabetes prevention and management.



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The Prince George's County Health Department is now one of only seven organizations in Maryland to receive the CDC's Full Plus Recognition for providing residents high-quality, evidence-based lifestyle change programs that help prevent or manage Type 2 diabetes.

"The Health Department is honored to get this recognition from the CDC," said Prince George's County Health Officer Dr. Ernest Carter. "We have been working hard with a collaborative, inclusive, and regional approach to enhance diabetes prevention and management services into communities across Southern Maryland. This is an exciting time for us as we continue on this journey to improve the health and quality of life of people who either have diabetes or are at high-risk of a diagnosis."

To learn more about the stringent standards of CDC Full Plus Recognition, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and view the [CDC's national registry](#) of recognized organizations.

Register for an Upcoming Webinar

Learn more about how PreventionLink is helping providers transform their practices in Southern Maryland

<https://tinyurl.com/TCLMD>



You don't want to miss out on these upcoming webinars hosted by our Provider outreach team.

Thursday, August 11th at Noon <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88693602453>

Tuesday, August 16th at 5pm <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83911151536>

Thursday, August 18th at 5pm <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89273520893>

Tuesday, August 23rd at Noon <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83956656053>

Thursday, August 25th at Noon <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87394133722>

Tuesday, August 30th at 5pm <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82161789421>

Thursday, September 1st at 5pm <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89020720671>

Tuesday, September 6th at Noon <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87167067950>

Thursday, September 8th at Noon <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81995614053>

Tuesday, September 13th at 5pm <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84009528214>

Thursday, September 15th at 5pm <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85837960042>

Tuesday, September 20th at Noon <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87448592691>

Thursday, September 22nd at Noon <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87837964578>

Tuesday, September 27th at 5pm <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83089771170>

Thursday, September 29th at 5pm <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84632679256>

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