

⑦ This is the seventh in a series of reports from Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota.

WE ASKED. YOU RESPONDED.

Nearly 13,000 shared your thoughts and concerns.

We're listening...

Last fall, we began an ongoing conversation with North Dakotans.



It started with a survey sent to Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota (BCBSND) members. Responses poured in by the thousands.

Responses are now streaming in from a second survey recently sent to areas we didn't reach last fall.



The discussion moved into neighborhoods through a statewide series of community forums. Look for additional locations this spring.



The conversation continues today, online. Join in at: BCBSND.com/BlueInsight

Taking action...

You want us to lead in finding solutions—and we are. BCBSND has been working internally and with others across the state on rising costs, accessibility, quality of care and many other issues brought up at the statewide forums.

And continuing the conversation.

This series from BCBSND answers the questions North Dakotans are asking and tells you what we're doing about them.

You asked,

“Why is access to health care an issue in North Dakota?”

As a rural state, North Dakota is challenged with providing quality health care to all its citizens. A shortage of primary care doctors, the lack of specialists, the need to drive long distances for care and the viability of our rural hospitals and clinics—all these issues generated lively dialogue in our health care forums.

What is BCBSND doing to enhance access, especially in rural areas?

Helping to attract primary care doctors

Because there is a nationwide shortage of primary care physicians, BCBSND is collaborating with health care organizations throughout the state to help make North Dakota the most attractive place to practice primary care. One part of that equation is changing the way we pay doctors. BCBSND is moving away from compensating doctors for the amount of services they deliver toward paying them based on the quality of care they provide.

Connecting rural and urban providers

Location becomes less of an issue when providers can work together from various facilities. We helped create a free technology platform that allows computer systems to work together, regardless of their type and location, so information can be efficiently and securely shared. The technology allows doctors to see details of care provided outside their own facility so they have a more complete picture of the patient before suggesting a course of action. As a result, patients are able to manage their conditions more successfully and require less critical care.

Encouraging rural facilities to use technology to bridge the location gap

Throughout the last 11 years, BCBSND has funded Rural Health Information Technology grants to help outlying organizations share information with their urban counterparts, resulting in better quality care, greater efficiency and reduced costs.



In 2011, health care facilities throughout North Dakota benefited through technology with grants from BCBSND.

In 2011, Rural Health Care Information Technology grants were awarded to:

- Hospice of the Red River Valley of Fargo to help implement software to improve communication and care coordination between rural and urban providers across the entire hospice patient care experience.
- Catholic Health Initiatives of Fargo to fully integrate two-way video support between emergency care specialists in Sioux Falls, S.D., and the emergency rooms of critical access hospitals in Carrington, Lisbon, Valley City and Devils Lake.
- St. Alexius Foundation of Bismarck for telehealth equipment that monitors chronically ill patients in their homes after discharge. Partnering facilities are located in Turtle Lake, Garrison, McClusky and Washburn.
- Ye Olde Medicine Center in Park River to expand telepharmacy services to efficiently and cost-effectively ensure continued pharmacy services to the Drayton community and local medical providers.
- Wishek Hospital Clinic Association to help implement electronic medical records in two critical access hospitals in Wishek and Ashley.
- St. Andrew's Health Center in Bottineau to expand data storage capacity to allow 10 rural hospitals making up the Northwest Alliance for Information Technology maximizing use of their electronic health records and shared patient information.
- Garrison Memorial Hospital to implement wireless electrocardiogram units in Turtle Lake, Garrison and Washburn, allowing for instant transmission of test results for view by on-call cardiologists at St. Alexius Medical Center.

WE'RE STILL LISTENING

Visit the blog at BCBSND.com/BlueInsight



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Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross & Blue Shield Association

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Next up in our series:
How do we encourage people to live healthier lives?