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FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

PREVENTING LEGAL DESERTS IN OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES

Knowledge of statutes and case law provides the necessary foundation for advocacy, but that is not enough. Advice, support, and mentorship from practicing attorneys and the judiciary are what can shape and prepare a new attorney. This article describes the University of Nebraska’s [Children’s Justice Attorney Education Fellowship Program](#), which, over eight months, offers fellows with in-person workshops providing extensive education in federal and state child welfare laws, along with subjects necessary to become strong advocates, such as trauma and child development, substance use, domestic violence, complex family dynamics, and specialized Indian Child Welfare Act training, given that many Indigenous communities are located primarily in rural areas.

Fellows participate in monthly case consultations with a team of experts to address complex legal questions in their cases while learning how to increase their child advocacy skills for underrepresented communities. Finally, fellows participate in biweekly reflective practice to examine personal biases, thoughts, and feelings about their cases and use this expanded awareness to make better decisions. In two years, the program has trained attorneys in 58 percent of Nebraska counties with fewer than 50 attorneys.



RURAL JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE

Rural communities face unique challenges that impact their ability to deliver fair and equitable justice. Despite these challenges, rural communities rely on their many strengths to address the needs of their residents.

The National Center for State Courts, in partnership with Rulo Strategies, launched the [Rural Justice Collaborative \(RJC\)](#) to showcase the strengths of rural communities and highlight the cross-sector collaboration that is a hallmark of rural justice systems.

The work under the RJC is supported by a cross-sector advisory council composed of rural judges along with additional stakeholders in the justice, child welfare, and behavioral health systems. The advisory council guides and identifies innovative programs and practices.

RESEARCH & REPORTS

OPIOID AND POLYDRUG USE AMONG RURAL SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITIES: CURRENT KNOWLEDGE AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Research on opioid use among sexual and gender minorities (SGM) in rural areas has been minimal despite the rise in drug use-related fatalities, particularly concerning opioid misuse. In this paper, the author explores the existing research on opioid and polysubstance use among SGM in rural areas and provides direction for future research and clinical applications with rural SGM facing drug use-related risks.

BUILDING A RESTORATIVE JUSTICE DIVERSION PROGRAM FOR YOUTH IN RURAL AREAS

Restorative Justice (RJ) diversion models from the criminal justice system have been used successfully with adults and youth charged with minor offenses. Professionally mediated RJ conferences bring together the offender and the person(s) harmed to discuss the impact of their actions and develop a plan to restore community safety and make amends. An RJ model aimed at diverting youth from the juvenile justice system for minor offenses has successfully worked in an urban region in Kentucky for over a decade. The same RJ model was piloted in a very rural area of the state. This paper examines preliminary outcomes data.

USE OF PRIMARY CARE AND EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS FOR SUBSTANCE USE TREATMENT: THE RURAL AND URBAN DIVIDE

Alcohol and illicit substance use remain significant public health issues in the United States. In this analysis, differences were assessed in the use of primary care and emergency departments (EDs) for the treatment of substance use among rural and urban sexual minorities. Findings suggest an increased reliance on EDs for treatment of alcohol or substance use among rural sexual minorities. Future research should examine whether increasing culturally competent primary care services for sexual minorities in rural areas may be a key intervention point for reducing health disparities.



PODCASTS

RURAL ROADS - THE RCORPODCAST: HORIZON HEALTH AND RURAL TRANSPORTATION

Rural transportation challenges are a common obstacle for RCORP grantees. Navigating the logistics, development, and implementation can be a tall task amongst other competing priorities. Tune in to hear from Kyle Perkins and Tim Petro about a unique and innovative solution in [their community](#).

US & THEM ENCORE: COURT OF SECOND CHANCES?

In West Virginia, nearly 50 specialized court programs are designed to help teens and adults kick their drug addictions. Drug courts divert people from incarceration into a rigorous, court-monitored treatment program. In this Us & Them episode, host Trey Kay talks with people about this court-designed approach to sobriety that began nearly 50 years ago when the first drug court opened its doors. This episode of Us & Them is presented with support from the Just Trust, the West Virginia Humanities Council, the CRC Foundation, and the Daywood Foundation.

REACHING RECOVERY IN RURAL AND TRIBAL AREAS

Justice diversion programs like the one in Navajo County provide an alternative to incarceration for people with mental health and substance use conditions. These programs intend to address the health and well-being of individuals instead of punishing them for exhibiting symptoms of their disease. In rural communities, reaching individuals who would benefit from diversion is often complex because of challenges such as broad geographic areas served, limited availability of crisis services, gaps in treatment and social services, and constrained financial and staffing resources. In Navajo County, Arizona, county prosecutor Bradley Carlyon is working to help residents on the road to recovery from the moment they enter the county jail.

RESOURCES

OVERDOSE PREVENTION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Those living and working in rural communities know there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to tackling hard public health challenges. This guide, by the [National Overdose Prevention Network](#), is designed as a primer for those working in rural communities who want to familiarize themselves with the basic strategies, resources, and tools for working in overdose prevention.

REDUCING STIGMA IN RURAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS AND OTHER CARE SETTINGS

Individuals with substance use disorder (SUD) who present at the emergency department are at risk for a range of poor health outcomes, including overdose and suicidal behavior. However, an emergency department visit also offers a key opportunity for providers and patients to progress toward recovery. University of Rochester's Medicine Recovery Center of Excellence has developed a campaign that supports emergency department providers and staff in promoting a stigma-free treatment environment while connecting individuals and families with treatment resources.

RURAL DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL ABUSE PROGRAM ADVOCATES: MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OLDER SURVIVORS OF ABUSE

Elder abuse is a complex and deeply personal issue, posing several unique challenges that knowledgeable service providers must handle through a collaborative approach. Additional challenges may arise when abuse occurs in rural areas. This toolkit was created to provide rural domestic and sexual abuse service programs with resources and tools to effectively respond to abuse in later life, an issue that lies at the nexus between domestic violence, sexual assault, and elder abuse.

ARTICLE

CAMPAIGNS FIND SUCCESS IN DECREASING THE STIGMA AROUND SUBSTANCE ABUSE, WHICH IS GREATEST IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

The need to decrease stigma about SUD is critical in rural areas, where research has found higher levels of stigma toward people who use opioids. This article describes how a campaign in Pennsylvania called "Life Unites Us" successfully changed attitudes and beliefs about people with drug addictions and increased support for harm-reduction strategies.