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**NRHA launches Rural COVID-19 Technical Assistance Center**

Individuals in rural communities often face barriers to health stemming from economic factors, environmental differences, and feelings of isolation. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a generational challenge and exacerbated these concerns, revealing a critical need for rapid response efforts. With the support of a generous grant of \$200,000 from CoBank, the National Rural Health Association (NRHA) is helping rural health care providers overcome barriers they face through the creation of the Rural COVID-19 Technical Assistance Center.

The Technical Assistance Center will focus on two key areas: finance/reimbursement and operations/supplies, including personal protective equipment (PPE) sourcing and distribution, testing and contact tracing, and long-term care collaboration. NRHA will assess and triage needs from across the country to ensure rural communities are equipped with knowledge, connections, and resources throughout the pandemic. This is being accomplished through various partnerships and collaborations with organizations such as Project N95, PROJECT C.U.R.E., Hearts 4 Heroes and NRHA Platinum Partner Intalere.

Grant funding from CoBank has also enabled NRHA to hire two technical assistance specialists. Tommy L. Barnhart, a longtime rural health consultant and 2018 NRHA president, and Roger A. Masse, a longtime NRHA member and former Ellsworth County Medical Center CEO, will work with NRHA members and rural health care providers to provide guidance on Small Business Association Paycheck Protection Program loans and relief fund opportunities, determine needs regarding PPE, and connect providers with PPE supplies.

“CoBank is pleased to partner with NRHA to support the association's COVID-19 Technical Assistance Center,” says CoBank president and CEO Thomas Halverson. “Rural communities are facing the same challenges as their urban counterparts in the wake of COVID-19, but with fewer resources at their disposal. It is our hope that the Technical Assistance Center will provide information, facilitate collaboration and ease the burden on rural America’s already challenged health care system.”

“With more than 84,000 COVID-19 cases in rural counties and more than 3,200 rural deaths, the need for rural assistance is growing,” says NRHA CEO Alan Morgan. “Through the generous support of CoBank, NRHA is proud to collaborate with so many dedicated stakeholders to provide technical assistance and critical support to rural health care providers across the country.”

**[www.RuralHealthWeb.org](http://www.RuralHealthWeb.org)**

**About NRHA**

The National Rural Health Association is a national nonprofit membership organization with more than 20,000 members. The association's mission is to provide leadership on rural health issues. NRHA membership consists of a diverse collection of individuals and organizations, all of whom share the common bond of an interest in rural health.

**About CoBank**

CoBank is a \$158 billion cooperative bank serving vital industries across rural America. The bank provides loans, leases, export financing, and other financial services to agribusinesses and rural power, water, and communications providers in all 50 states. The bank also provides wholesale loans and other financial services to affiliated Farm Credit associations serving more than 70,000 farmers, ranchers, and other rural borrowers in 23 states around the country. CoBank is a member of the Farm Credit System, a nationwide network of banks, and retail lending associations chartered to support the borrowing needs of U.S. agriculture, rural infrastructure, and rural communities. Headquartered outside Denver, Colorado, CoBank serves customers from regional banking centers across the U.S. and also maintains an international representative office in Singapore.