Here’s One Way to Meet the Needs of Rural Folks Living With HIV

The Comprehensive HIV Plan successfully reaches Iowans in both urban and rural areas.

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About one third of Iowa’s HIV-positive residents live in rural areas, which is unusual in the world of HIV care and prevention and presents an array of specific challenges. As such, the state’s Department of Public Health has amassed experience reaching this population.

Part of its success has been a result of the way it efficiently uses data to improve care for both urban and rural Iowans, reports The (Cedar Rapids) Gazette.

The state’s Comprehensive HIV Plan developed a 55-member committee to cull through data, look at the current HIV landscape and develop necessary strategies to meet the real-world needs.

By examining comprehensive data, the group can figure out who is being well-served and who is falling through the cracks. Health care workers can then direct more support to those who need it most.

The efforts are working so well that they’ve drawn the attention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which highlights the Comprehensive HIV Plan in a report titled “Improving Health Outcomes Through Data Utilization,” which focuses on six initiatives under the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program.

“We started a push in 2012, expanding our focus from providing core and support services to integrating services along the HIV care continuum,” program manager Holly Hanson explained in the national case study.

As the Gazette points out, it isn’t just the HIV community that can gain from this expertise. The program could be a blueprint for meeting other needs of rural populations.

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