



Illinois Health and Hospital Association

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Illinois' Small and Rural Hospitals Provide Jobs, Drive Economic Growth and Offer Quality Care to Patients

IHA's Annual Meeting Highlights Ways to Innovate, Strengthen Rural Healthcare

SPRINGFIELD - The Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA) today kicked off the start of its Small and Rural Annual Meeting entitled "Inspiring Connections" at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield.

The two-day [event](#), which runs from June 16-17, brings more than 100 rural healthcare leaders together to identify ways to address healthcare challenges, increase recruitment and retention efforts, and better serve patients and communities in rural Illinois.

"Illinois' small and rural hospitals are vital to communities throughout the state, creating more than 76,000 jobs across Illinois, pumping billions of dollars into the state and local economies and offering the highest quality care to the communities they serve," said IHA President and CEO AJ Wilhelmi. "IHA is proud to host this annual meeting to bring healthcare leaders together to prepare for future challenges, collaborate on ways to retain a robust workforce, and build financial strength to keep our rural hospital and healthcare systems vibrant so they can continue to provide access to quality healthcare in our rural communities."

Paul Keckley, PhD, Managing Editor of *The Keckley Report* will provide the meeting's keynote address entitled "The Future of Rural Hospitals: Critical Factors for Growth and Sustainability." The meeting also will address key issues in rural healthcare, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, staff burnout and health equity.

The 86 small and rural hospitals in Illinois provide essential healthcare services to residents in rural areas and serve as leaders in their communities. As significant economic engines, small and rural hospitals have created approximately 76,350 jobs in Illinois and have a total economic impact of \$13.7 billion annually across the state.

"It is an honor to be among some of our state's top healthcare advocates this week to partner on creative solutions to address challenges, identify ways to enhance our services and provide

the highest quality of care for our patients,” said Genesis Medical Center Administrator and IHA’s Board Chairman Ted Rogalski. “We know how important small and rural hospitals are to our downstate communities and vow to continue to do everything we can to strengthen and expand services for the patients we proudly serve.”

“Small and rural hospitals face unique challenges, but are dedicated to ensuring access, providing quality care, and hosting community events to get to know their patients and their needs,” said Dolan Dalpoas, President and CEO of Lincoln Memorial Hospital and Chairman of IHA’s Small and Rural Constituency Section. “We are excited about the opportunity to join fellow small and rural healthcare leaders this week to help ensure we are doing everything we can to provide important, life-saving healthcare services to the people within our state.”

Small and rural hospitals provide critical care in the surrounding community, ranging from health screenings to pain management clinics. A few highlights include:

- **Providing Health Screenings and Healthy Food | FHN Memorial Hospital in Freeport** partnered with the Northern Illinois Food Bank to provide residents with medical screenings and healthy food at the same time. FHN also offers wraparound services, connecting program participants with social service agencies when needed. This dual approach reduces food insecurity, as well as emergency department visits for vulnerable populations.
- **Reducing Opioid Prescribing | A multidisciplinary team at Genesis Medical Center, Aledo** employs several interventions to reduce opioid prescribing and save lives. Staff from the hospital and its family practice clinic established a pain management clinic; launched an alternative prescribing improvement program; and implemented patient opioid contracts and drug testing. Emergency department staff also limited opioid dispensing.
- **Improving Emergency Preparedness | HSHS St. Joseph’s Hospital, Breese** brought together hospital leaders and frontline healthcare professionals to enhance workplace safety through a strategic collaboration with county officials and other hospitals. The hospital team standardized and improved drills, education and supplies. These efforts resulted in optimized emergency response and enhanced coordination with emergency medical services—better protecting both patients and staff in the event of a crisis.
- **Getting Hospital-Level Care at Home | Patients as far as 60 miles from Blessing Health System in Quincy** can get hospital-level care in their home as part of a three-year study called the Rural Home Hospital Project. Home care includes twice-a-day nurse visits and a daily telehealth check-up with a physician. Patients also wear a patch monitoring vital signs, which their physician can check via computer or phone. The study seeks to build, launch and evaluate a nationwide home healthcare program serving rural residents.
- **Addressing Childhood Obesity | Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Lincoln** partnered with Lincoln Elementary School District 27 to reduce childhood obesity and promote healthy habits from a young age. Hospital staff worked with educators to enhance the Coordinated Approach to Child Health program, which incorporates health lessons into the curriculum and increases movement during the school day. Lincoln Memorial also

helped the school add more fresh and local foods into kids' meals, improving overall well-being.

- **Reducing Behavioral Health Readmissions** | To meet the complex needs of behavioral health patients, **OSF HealthCare Saint Elizabeth Medical Center in Ottawa** enhanced protocols across departments. Patients receive psychiatric evaluations and therapy appointments within seven days of inpatient discharge. The hospital also provides telehealth, case management appointments, medication assistance and safety plans at the time of discharge. Together, these actions have decreased readmissions, which reduces delays in the emergency department (ED) and improves overall patient outcomes.
- **Improving Patient Care** | **Washington County Hospital in Nashville** took action on hypoglycemia, which is common among inpatients receiving insulin. The hospital's multidisciplinary team re-educated clinical staff on the different types of insulin, proper use of point-of-care monitors and two-person verification. Leaders also worked with the hospital's electronic medical record (EMR) vendor to enhance insulin order sets. These evidence-based interventions have reduced adverse drug events (ADEs) and decreased length of stay.

For more information about the impact of Small and Rural Hospitals in Illinois, click [here](#).

About IHA

The Illinois Health and Hospital Association, with offices in Chicago, Naperville, Springfield and Washington, D.C., advocates for Illinois' more than 200 hospitals and nearly 40 health systems as they serve their patients and communities. IHA members provide a broad range of services—not just within their walls, but across the continuum of healthcare and in their communities. Reflecting the diversity of the state, IHA members consist of nonprofit, investor-owned and public hospitals in the following categories: community, safety net, rural, critical access, specialty and teaching hospitals, including academic medical centers. For more information, see team-iha.org. Like IHA on [Facebook](#). Follow IHA on [Twitter](#).

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