

## Twenty-three hospitals in North Dakota form new network to strengthen rural healthcare

*Rough Rider High-Value Network building clinically integrated network, operational shared services to deliver seamless, coordinated care and help rural hospitals across the state operate more efficiently*

CANDO, N.D.—October 12, 2023, 10 a.m. CDT—The [Rough Rider High-Value Network](#) announced its formation today as an alliance of 23 independent critical access hospitals that collaborate on clinical and operational initiatives that strengthen the availability, affordability and quality of care in rural communities across North Dakota.

Leaders from Rough Rider HVN and its member hospitals have been collaborating to develop the network for more than a year. The Rough Rider HVN's aim is to enable rural hospitals to band together to meet the increasing challenges of delivering healthcare in rural communities. The capabilities needed, such as investing in medical advances, controlling the rising costs of providing care and enhancing care coordination, often require size and scale that are difficult for an independent rural hospital to achieve.

"Interdependence drives independence," said Ben Bucher, CEO of Towner County Medical Center in Cando, N.D., and chair of the Rough Rider HVN board. "The Rough Rider High-Value Network is built on the principle that independent rural hospitals can come together to meet these challenges and emerge stronger while remaining independent."

The Rough Rider HVN board consists of seven leaders from the member hospitals. The Rough Rider HVN also has established its leadership team:

- President Alfred Sams
- CEO Nathan White
- Chief Medical Officer A. Clinton MacKinney, MD

The network has two main components:

- The network's foundation is a rural clinically integrated network (CIN) caring for a population of more than 225,000 patients.
- Rough Rider also will provide member hospitals a menu of shared services that promote more efficient operations.

The network received state funding of \$3.5 million to help facilitate Rough Rider's capabilities to support North Dakota patients and hospitals in the transition to value-based care.

### **Adding services, coordinating care**

Through the Rough Rider CIN, member hospitals will be able to coordinate seamless care for patients across the network. Where it makes sense, hospitals will collaborate within the CIN to support new specialty programs, such as in surgery, ophthalmology, obstetrics and mental health, that few of the hospitals could support on their own.

For medical providers, the CIN will streamline measuring quality and sharing best practices and reduce administrative burdens. Rough Rider has formed a Clinical Integration Committee (CIC) to oversee all clinical and quality initiatives. The committee includes one medical practitioner from each member hospital.

"Expanding access to coordinated, high-quality care in our local communities is best for patients," Dr. MacKinney said. "We also believe easing burdens on physicians and providers, and supporting them with a peer community through the CIC will help our member hospitals recruit and retain clinicians."

As care coordination, collaboration and secure data sharing deepens among members, the Rough Rider CIN will be a strong partner with payers on value-based insurance products that enable patients, providers, hospitals and payers to succeed by improving quality, reducing cost, and enhancing patient and provider experience.

### **Driving efficiency**

Rough Rider HVN also will provide member hospitals a menu of shared services that promote more efficient operations. The network is exploring shared solutions in pharmacy, laboratory, telehealth, information technology, health information exchange, clinical staffing, supply chain and other areas.

The Business Integration Committee (BIC), composed of select operations leaders from member hospitals, will oversee the development and operation of the shared service offerings. The committee also provides a forum for these leaders to discuss common business challenges and share solutions.

"By coming together in the Rough Rider HVN, member hospitals gain the benefits of clinical and operational scale they need to meet the increasing challenges of delivering healthcare in rural communities, while maintaining their ability to tailor decisions to the needs of their local communities," Sams said.

### **About**

Rough Rider High-Value Network is built on the principle that when independent rural hospitals come together, we're stronger. Through the network, 23 critical-access hospitals collaborate on clinical and operational initiatives that strengthen the availability and quality of care in rural communities across North Dakota. The network's foundation is a rural clinically integrated network caring for a population of more than 225,000 patients. Rough Rider also provides member hospitals a menu of shared services that promote more efficient operations. For more information, visit [roughridernetwork.org](http://roughridernetwork.org).

**Media Contact:**

Vince Galloro, on behalf of Rough Rider High-Value Network  
(312) 625-2137  
[vince.galloro@sunrisehlth.com](mailto:vince.galloro@sunrisehlth.com)