



Mid-Atlantic Rural Health Transformation and Innovation Summit
Tuesday, October 20, 2026 | Hilton Baltimore BWI Airport Hotel
Rural Health Reimagined: Bridging Gaps, Leveraging Innovation, and
Creating Lasting Impact

DRAFT AGENDA

- 8:00 AM Registration & Continental Breakfast
- 8:30 AM Welcome & Opening Remarks
Karen Twigg, MSM-HCA, BSN, RN, CMCN, MRHA Board President, and
Vice President, Population Health, The Coordinating Center
Lindsay Butler, Executive Director, MRHA
Room: Concourse AB
- 8:45 AM Keynote Presentation
Kelly Schultz, CEO, Maryland Tech Council
Room: Concourse AB
- 9:15 AM Vendor Break
- 9:30 AM Concurrent Breakout Sessions
**1A: Strengthening Health in Rural Communities: Employing Community
Health Workers to Address Our Needs**
Moderator: Kelly Arthur, Project Manager, Qlarant
Deneen Long-White, PhD, CHES, Associate Professor, Salisbury University

This presentation will describe how one program established an Opioid
Navigator CHW and apprenticeship training program that increased the
number of behavioral health-related paraprofessionals who work in
integrated, interprofessional teams providing services to families impacted
by OUD and SUD in rural Maryland. The presentation will provide practical
ways to not only implement such a program (including forms,
advertisements, collaborative agreements with employers, etc.) but also
describe the benefits to the community over the past 6 years.

Room: Concourse AB



1B: Innovative Digital Solutions for Teen Mental Health in Rural, Underserved Communities

Moderator: Erin Marie Farley, MSN, RN, Community Wellness Manager, CalvertHealth

Eric Sullivan, CEO and Co-Founder, Uneo Health

Tiffany McFarland, Mental Health Coordinator, Calvert County Public Schools

Uneo Health, a Maryland-based digital wellness company, partnered with Calvert County Public Schools (CCPS) in 2024 to provide the Prosper self-care and wellness support to teens and their families to expand access to tools that can improve social emotional learning (SEL). In this session, you will hear from representatives of both the Prosper app as well as CCPS as they discuss the experience of rolling out a self-care app to teenagers across four high schools and the outcomes of the program to-date. Importantly, approaches to reach and support teens in rural communities will be explored to expand access.

Room: Concourse C

1C: Expanding Cardiovascular Specialty Access Through Community Care Networks

Moderator: Miriam Purnell, PharmD, Chair and Professor, Program Director, PBC Rural Health Disparities and Social Inequities, Department of Pharmacy Practice & Administration. University of Maryland Eastern Shore

Alexis K. Okoh, MD, Cardiologist, Clinical Investigator, and Executive Chairman, G-ACT Foundation

Rural Communities often face significant barriers to cardiovascular specialty care, including workforce shortages, limited diagnostic resources, and fragmented referral systems. This session presents a practical Community-to-Cardiology model that expands access using existing rural healthcare infrastructure rather than building new specialty clinics. Participants will learn how structured risk assessment, technology-enabled evaluation, workforce training, referral navigation, and coordinated specialty support can improve early identification, diagnostic completion, and connection to cardiovascular care. Real-world implementation experiences and outcomes will demonstrate how rural health systems can strengthen access, improve care coordination, and create sustainable cardiovascular care networks.

Room: Concourse D

10:30 AM

Visit with Exhibitors | Break



10:45 AM

Concurrent Breakout Sessions

2A: Turning RHTP Dollars into Sustainable Access: A Practical Implementation Framework

Moderator: Stay Holler, Regional Marketing & Communications Manager, Garrett Regional Medical Center, Potomac Valley Hospital

Marissa Kawyn, Senior Consultant, Public Consulting Group LLC

Tina Allen, Associate Manager and Operations Director, Public Consulting Group LLC

Learn how a statewide public health fellowship model can translate Rural Health Transformation funding into measurable improvements in rural health access, workforce capacity, and service delivery. This session will highlight how embedded fellows, structured training, and coordinated partnerships can expand implementation capacity, strengthen local workforce pipelines, and support sustainable community-centered improvements in access, prevention, and population health outcomes across rural communities.

Room: Concourse AB

2B: Developing an Overdose Response Program on a College Campus: The Role of Undergraduate PHEs

Moderator: Mackenzie Orange, Community Programs and Data Coordinator, CalvertHealth Medical Center

Deneen Long-White, PhD, CHES, Associate Professor, Salisbury University

The eastern shore of Maryland continues to be adversely affected by the increased use of substances including but not limited to opioids. Unfortunately, college campuses are not immune to this phenomenon. To address this issue on campus, we developed an opioid response program (ORP). The unique feature of this program is the use of undergraduate peer health educators who deliver the message about opioid use prevention. Furthermore, the program trains their peers on the use of Narcan. Over the past year, the program has trained over 500 students on opioid use prevention and distributed over 1000 doses of Narcan to the trainees. This presentation will describe how to establish an ORP on a college campus including training of peers and collaborating with community-based organizations including the Student Health Center.

Room: Concourse C

2C: Humanizing Healthcare in Rural Maryland: A Blueprint for Action



Moderator: Karen Twigg, MSM-HCA, BSN, RN, CMCN, MRHA Board President, Vice President, Population Health, The Coordinating Center
Mary Golway RN, MSN, NPD-BC, Program Administrator and Research Administration, School of Nursing Johns Hopkins University
Lucas Welch, Co-founder and CEO, Slow Talk

Humanizing Healthcare is a Maryland-based initiative led by R³, the Resilient Nurses Initiative at Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, in partnership with Slow Talk. Over several months in 2026, frontline nurses and other healthcare professionals engaged with community members in structured, small-group conversations about the human experience of care. Using an innovative platform, the project captures themes about the current state of healthcare. Early findings highlight workforce strain, rising violence, and the feeling of being lost in the system. The session shares preliminary insights, practical solutions, and future-focused tools to help communities replicate this model and humanize healthcare across Maryland.

Room: Concourse D

11:45 AM Networking Lunch | Visit with Exhibitors
Room: Concourse AB

1:00 PM Plenary Session
Room: Concourse AB

2:00 PM Visit with Exhibitors | Break

2:15 PM Concurrent Breakout Sessions

3A: Hidden in Plain Sight: The Untapped Potential of Physician Assistants in Rural Health

Moderator: Brandon Butler, Founder, Pinnacle Strategies, LLC
Mirley Adolphe, DMS, MSPAS, PA-C; Chesapeake Health Care
Mary Jo Bondy, DHEd, MSL, MHS, PA-C; Associate Dean, Associate Professor, Maryland Reproductive Health Grant Co-Investigator, University of Maryland Baltimore, M.A.R.C.H. Program
Laurarose Dunn-O'Farrell, DMSc, MSPAS, PA-C, LCPC; Assistant Professor, Department Chair/PA Program Director, Frostburg State University; Immediate Past President, Maryland Academy of PAs
Deanna Najera, PA-C, DFAAPA, FCPP; Carroll County Health Department; MedStar Health



Physician assistants/associates (PAs) were created to address healthcare shortages, yet workforce utilization remains limited by policy, informational, and technological barriers. This experienced panel explores how optimizing the PA workforce can strengthen healthcare access and sustainability in rural and underserved communities across Maryland and the Mid-Atlantic region. Drawing from diverse practice settings, panelists will share data-driven, quality improvement-focused strategies to address workforce deployment challenges, expand access, and support rural health transformation. Attendees will gain practical insights and evidence-informed solutions to reimagine challenges and opportunities, aligned with Maryland Rural Health Transformation Program initiatives to bolster the ecosystem future of rural healthcare delivery.

Room: AB

3B: Rural Trial Access Reimagined: Clinicians, AI, and Decentralized Care

Moderator: Karen Twigg, MSM-HCA, BSN, RN, CMCN, MRHA Board President, and Vice President, Population Health, The Coordinating Center

Christine Lee, PharmD, PhD, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, ACHIEVE Clinical Expertise, Inc.,

Gene M. Ransom III, Chief Executive Officer of MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society

Korrey Monroe, Research Program Manager at the North Carolina Community Health Center Association (NCCHCA)

This session explores scalable models for expanding rural access to clinical trials and innovative care through clinician activation, AI-enabled referrals, decentralized care delivery, and community-based implementation infrastructure. Panelists will discuss how trusted local clinicians, FQHC care teams, nurses, pharmacists, community health workers, and technology partners can bring research opportunities closer to patients' homes, with a focus on Maryland rural and underserved communities including the Eastern Shore, Appalachian West, and Prince George's County. Participants will leave with a replicable framework and actionable strategies to strengthen workforce



capacity, care coordination, and sustainable rural participation in the clinical research economy.

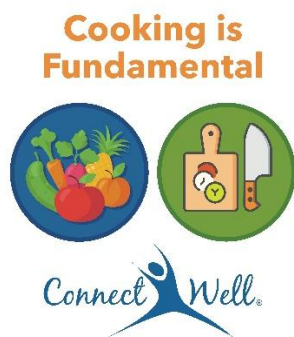
Room: Concourse C

3C: Activating People in Healthy Eating Practices: Profiling Successful Community-Based Programs

Moderator: Kim McMillan, External Affairs Manager -Western Maryland, CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield

Andrea Bloom, Founder, ConnectWell

Shannon Goldrick, Clinical Content Strategist & Health Coach, ConnectWell



80% of healthcare happens outside of clinical walls, and 70% of preventable illness is due to unhealthy lifestyle practices. The rise in food-related illness is driven largely by the consumption of ultra-processed foods (UPFs). This session shares how community-based organizations have successfully deployed ConnectWell's Healthy Eating Challenge and Food as Medicine Program to activate participants in healthy eating practices. ConnectWell's framework, Learn | Take Action | Support, will be discussed and results from pilots will be shared. ConnectWell's Cooking is Fundamental Offering combines ConnectWell's curriculum with a turnkey Mobile Kitchen which enables organizations to teach hands-on cooking programs. These programs educate people about the negative impacts of UPFs and emphasize using whole, nutrient-dense foods to help prevent and manage health conditions. In this session a live interactive food demonstration with the Mobile Kitchen will be provided using ConnectWell's curriculum.

Room: Concourse D



3:15 PM Visit with Exhibitors | Break

3:30 PM Closing Keynote Presentation

Walter Simmons, Secretary of Social and Economic Mobility, Maryland
General Assembly

Room: Concourse AB

Closing Remarks

Lindsay Butler, Executive Director, MRHA

Room: Concourse AB