



Illinois Rural HealthNet Consortium

Improving health care through connectivity

Northern Illinois University

Illinois Critical Access
Hospital Network

Tri-Rivers Health Partners

Metropolitan Research and
Education Network

Illinois State University

Janet Wattles Center

Ben Gordon Center

Sinnissippi Center

Delnor Hospital

University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign

Carle Foundation Hospital

Southern Illinois University
School of Medicine,
Telehealth Networks and
Programs

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Attention Editor

FCC AWARDS \$21 MILLION FOR ILLINOIS RURAL HEALTH NETWORK

(DeKalb) – Enhanced emergency care, remote diagnostics and better access to medical specialists will soon be available at rural hospitals and clinics throughout Illinois, thanks to a three-year, \$21 million grant announced last week by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Illinois Rural HealthNet, a consortium of universities and rural health care providers, won the competitive pilot grant with a plan that connects 88 locations across the state to a fiber optic and wireless network with broadband speeds ranging from 100 megabits to one gigabit of information per second.

In lay terms, the lightning speed of fiber optic and point-to-point wireless transmission means that health providers in rural areas can consult with specialists, monitor patients in remote locations, transmit and receive very large files such as MRI scans – all in a matter of minutes or seconds. In many parts of Illinois, patients have no local access to specialists in critical fields such as radiology, cardiology and neurology, and must travel great distances – often in very fragile health – to obtain those services.

In 2006, a group of research universities with access to the private research network known as Internet 2 initiated discussions with hospitals and clinics interested in high-speed broadband access. While most saw enhanced connectivity as the answer to many rural health care challenges, few had the ability to obtain that access or connect to research networks.



Members of the Illinois Rural HealthNet Consortium submitted a plan to the FCC's Rural Health Care Pilot Program that would use federal seed money for connections to 88 locations throughout Illinois, from Chicago and Northwest Illinois to Carbondale and East St. Louis (see attached list). Beyond that, the IRHN plans to expand the network by inviting other public, non-profit and for-profit health providers to utilize the broadband network for medical, psychiatric and educational purposes.

IRHN combines the expertise of Illinois hospitals, universities, and medical schools with the outreach of rural hospitals and medical clinics, and adds the technical knowledge of leaders of the Internet. In addition to improving rural access specialty care and diagnostic services, benefits of IRHN membership will include access to advanced training, coordinated use of medical data, and links to Internet2 sources of information and education.

The IRHN consortium includes:

- Northern Illinois University
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign College of Medicine
- Southern Illinois University School of Medicine and Telehealth Networks and Programs
- Illinois State University Mennonite College of Nursing
- Metropolitan Research and Education Network
- Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network
- TriRivers Health Partners
- Sinnissippi Centers
- Ben Gordon Centers
- Janet Wattle Centers
- Carle Foundation Hospital
- Delnor Community Hospital

For more information on Illinois Rural HealthNet, visit the consortium's website at illinoisruralhealthnet.org