

5TH ANNUAL FRONTIER HEALTHCARE CONFERENCE

June 10-11, 2026

**DoubleTree by Hilton in
Billings, MT**



Join us!

The Frontier Healthcare Conference was born from the idea that small healthcare organizations in frontier sized communities experience different situations and struggles than small healthcare organizations in rural defined communities.

Overview

Conference Description

The Frontier Healthcare Conference was born from the idea that small healthcare organizations in frontier sized communities experience different situations and struggles than small healthcare organizations in rural defined communities. Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) are vastly different throughout the nation, and frontier communities' experiences differ from even their rural neighbors.

Who Should Attend

The conference is intended to provide valuable information, education, and networking opportunities to leaders from CAHs in frontier communities. Networking may also include conversations with representatives from respective Congressional Delegations.

Participation is encouraged for CEOs/Administrators, Board Members, and Staff Leaders from these types of facilities that may be either private facilities (ex. Private non-profits) or government-managed (ex. County-owned). Services might include: inpatient and long-term care; outpatient services for both primary care and ancillary services; home health and visiting nurse services; etc. Please review the attached agenda to determine whether topics included are meaningful to your organization.

Additional Information

Our staff considered input from executive leaders of frontier CAHs in Montana while developing this program and understand that situations vary from community to community and from state to state. Therefore, in an effort to ensure the most beneficial programs to participants, our staff will seek feedback and input for future conferences.

Frontier Defined

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), frontier is defined as: counties having a population density of six or fewer people per square mile. There are other significant factors to consider as well: (1) Distance from a population center or a specific healthcare service; (2) Travel time to reach a population center or service, especially considering geographic barriers or inclement weather; (3) Functional affiliation with other hospitals; (4) Availability of paved roads; and, (5) Seasonal changes in access to healthcare services.

Continuing Education

MHN will provide certificates of attendance for the conference. While the Montana Board of Nursing Home Administrators did not grant prior approval for CEs from this conference, it will meet all requirements established by the Board for continuing education. Therefore, Montana Nursing Home Administrators should be able to present their conference certificates to the Board when documenting CEs. Participants from states other than Montana are encouraged to contact their Boards of Nursing Home Administrators to identify their requirements for documenting CEs. Additionally, conference sessions will be eligible for CEs with the American College of Healthcare Executives. All other CE standards should be researched individually for participants' professional organizations.

Conference Accommodations

We have reserved a blocks of rooms at the DoubleTree by Hilton (where the conference is being held). [Click here](#) to obtain a room reservation no later than May 15, 2026.

Registration

MHN's non-profit, Rural Health Development, is a member of the HIMSS Montana Chapter. Both MHN and HIMSS MT have supported frontier healthcare in Montana for many years. The 2026 Frontier Healthcare Conference will provide a unique opportunity to collaborate in an innovative way to bring valuable information and resources to frontier healthcare leaders throughout the region and in neighboring states. The common themes of supporting healthcare change and sharing information and services is paramount in both MHN's and HIMSS MT's Mission statements. Leaders in both organizations are excited to collaborate on this conference and create a synergistic environment of learning and networking for frontier healthcare facilities.

Registration to attend the Frontier Healthcare Conference is \$150 per participant which will include lunch on Day 1 and on Day 2. Space is limited so interested individuals are encouraged to register early to save a seat. Guest room reservations are not included in the registration fee. Please note that some registrations are eligible for discounts. Find more about the conference, hotel room blocks, sponsorship opportunities and vendor registration by clicking here.

[Registration Deadline is May 31, 2026!](#)

Use the following links to complete registration and book your hotel.

1. **Attendee Registration**
2. **Sponsor Registration**
3. **Book Hotel**

Register early!

[Registration Deadline is May 31, 2026!](#)

Continuing education credits may be available commensurate with the extent of participation in training offered. Certificates will be provided with appropriate CEs granted based on time associated with training.

Agenda - Day 1 | Wednesday | June 10

7:30am Registration & Open for Vendors to Set Up Tables/Booths

8:15am General Session – Welcome, Introductions, Conference Overview

8:30-9:30am Clinical Innovation & Adoption - Bridging the Gap Between Technical Ideas & what Clinicians will Actually Use

Ed Marx, Marx Advisory, will explore the critical intersection of cutting-edge technology and real-world clinical practice - where innovative ideas often falter in adoption due to usability challenges, workflow disruptions, and clinician skepticism. Drawing from personal experience and real examples from the Voices of Innovation book series, Ed will dissect strategies to align technical breakthroughs with the practical needs of healthcare providers, emphasizing user-centered design, iterative feedback loops, and evidence-based implementation to ensure innovations not only dazzle but deliver tangible value. Attendees will leave with actionable insights on fostering collaboration between engineers, clinicians, and administrators to accelerate adoption, reduce resistance, and ultimately transform healthcare delivery for better outcomes, efficiency and experience.

9:30-10:30am Best Clinical Practices & Sustainability

Susie Aft, RN, MSN, Compliance Supervisor, Rural Health Redesign Center (RHRC). Rural hospitals often struggle with compliance with regulatory requirements in an environment with financial challenges, limited resources, and turnover. This presentation will include an overview of national regulatory trends for rural hospitals and key strategies to build a robust regulatory readiness program. The session will include best practices for regulatory readiness as well as how to leverage clinical priorities to improve patient outcomes as well as reduce the risk for significant survey deficiencies.

10:30-10:40am Break

10:40am-11:40am Breakout Sessions

Frontier Operations Track

Navigating the Multi-Generational Workforce

Bryan Peterson, VP Human Resources Services, Associated Employers. This topic is designed to help leaders, managers, and HR professionals understand and effectively engage employees across multiple generations—from Baby Boomers to Gen Z. This session explores the unique values, communication styles, and workplace expectations that shape each generation, while dispelling common myths and stereotypes. Participants will gain practical strategies for fostering collaboration and leveraging generational diversity to the benefit of the organization.

HIMSS Track

Empathy & Engineering Driven Innovation

Drawn from the healthcare bestseller series Voices of Innovation, (First Edition 2019, Second Edition 2023, Payer Edition 2024, AI Edition 2025, Europe Edition 2026), Ed Marx, Marx Advisory, will unpack the “Innovation Framework” that can help you lead Innovation in your organization. Leveraging the proven HIMSS “Innovation Framework” methodology, Marx will share numerous examples from peers around the world as how they leveraged this framework and transformed their health system, improving patient experience and clinical outcomes. Wondering how to lead innovation? This framework is your recipe for success.

Clinical Track

Frontier Healthcare Clinical Best Practices/The Impact of Clinical Programs on Montana’s Healthcare Landscape

Liz Davies, LCSW, Senior Program Officer, Montana Healthcare Foundation. For the last decade, the Montana Healthcare Foundation has invested in bringing evidence-based clinical models to Montana to support primary care providers, OB providers, and schools in providing team-based, whole-person care to Montanans during every phase of life. This presentation will provide a brief history of the Montana Healthcare Foundation’s clinical initiatives (Integrated Behavioral Health, School-Based Health, and The Meadowlark Initiative®) and demonstrate how this work impacts Montana’s frontier health care landscape.

11:40-12:30pm Network Luncheon - Opportunity to Visit Vendors

Agenda - Day 1 | Wednesday | June 10

12:30-1:30pm Breakout Sessions

Frontier Operations Track

Planning for the Future - Evaluating Facility Needs Through a Strategic Lens

John Downes, Principal, & Cameron Smith, Senior Consultant, Stroudwater Associates. Making facility investment decisions is one of the most expensive decisions that a rural health leader will face. This session will walk rural frontier health leaders through a process to consider when evaluating the overarching market and facility needs of community, with a focus on frontier operations. This session will lay out how to think about the market the facility serves, the financial realities of investing in a hospital, and provide rural leaders with an idea of how to effectively approach planning for their facility's future.

HIMSS Track

Frontier Healthcare Technology - Cybersecurity on a Budget: Zero-Dollar Defense

Travis Light, Cybersecurity Advisor, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). Have you heard of CISA, the National Coordinator for Infrastructure Security and Resilience? Are you interested in free vulnerability scans, cyber risk assessments, incident response tabletop exercises, or penetration tests? Join Cybersecurity Advisor, Travis Light, for more information on what CISA can do for your frontier healthcare organization. Attendees will learn about cyber threats, the joint CISA/HHS Cybersecurity Toolkit for Healthcare, cybersecurity best practices, CISA's strategic and technical assessment services, and CISA's free continuous external vulnerability scanning.

Clinical Track

Frontier Operations - Steps to Implementing a Successful Remote Scanning Program

Amy Peronace, MS, CRA, RT(R)(M), VP Operations; RemoteRadTech; Darrell Messersmith, CEO, Dahl Memorial Healthcare Association; and Carla Dowdy, PA-C, CMO, Dahl Memorial Healthcare Association. As the radiology world suffers from tech shortages, this session will focus on how to implement and maintain a successful remote scanning operation. Attendees will learn about the positive impacts of remote scanning, including the actual successes at Dahl Memorial Healthcare in Ekalaka, MT. This program is vendor agnostic and applicable for outpatient, hospital and acute care facilities.

1:30-1:40pm Break

1:40-3:10pm Developing High Performing Teams

This ACHE-approved Face-to-face session will feature a panel of three healthcare leaders. Recruiting and retaining talent to drive organizational growth and sustainability is more important than ever. During this 1.5-hour interactive learning session, our panel of healthcare executives will share best practices and compelling content related to effective recruitment and retention, leveraging talent from within, and mentoring and coaching for optimal performance.

3:10-4:55pm Interstate Frontier Roundtable Discussion

Facilitated by staff from Montana Health Network (MHN) and leaders from the HIMSS Montana and Mountain Pacific Quality Health (the QIO), the goal is Roundtable Discussion about what could really make a difference in the viability and survivability of frontier healthcare. Facilitators will develop discussion formats, topics, and groupings to most effectively identify possible collaborative approaches to support frontier healthcare. Depending on attendance, participants will break into smaller groups and consider the state of frontier healthcare and how to improve in the future. Discussions will include opportunities to discuss across state lines the real issues facing frontier facilities in their day-to-day operations. Attendees should come prepared to discuss ideas on financial management, clinical and administrative operations, quality initiatives, policy issues, and workforce management.

5:00-7:00pm Networking & Cocktails - Opportunity to Visit Vendors

Dinner will be on your own.



Agenda - Day 2 | Thursday | June 11

Breakfast will be on your own.

8:00-9:00am Five Lessons I Learned Recruiting for Frontier Medical Healthcare

Mary Ellen Doty, Founder & Chief Medical Officer, Wilderness Medical Staffing. This will be a presentation on what a frontier practitioner has learned struggling to staff remote and rural healthcare sites - what works, what does not work, and some innovative ways of thinking about our frontier sites that put her agency in a positive light. Rural and remote healthcare sites often do not recognize their own worth and the treasures that they have to offer. They also often do not know the qualities to look for in a medical provider that will make him/her a good fit for their site. This presentation will address these issues from the perspective of a company that has successfully staffed over 150 clinic sites for the past 15 years.

9:00-10:15am Policy Update & Quality Update

A View from the Hill - Rural Health Updates from D.C. & Understanding RHTP

Zil Joyce Dixon Romero, Senior State Government Affairs Manager, National Rural Health Association (NRHA), will provide legislative and regulatory updates from Washington, D.C., with a focus on the impacts on rural healthcare providers and patients. This session will examine recent federal policy developments, including H.R. 1, and provide an overview of the nationwide rollout of the Rural Health Transformation Program, with particular attention to implications for frontier communities.

QIO Update - Midwest Region

Dominick Fitzsimmons, Director of Analytics, and Shay Trafton, Quality Improvement Advisor, Mountain Pacific Quality Health. Attendees will learn about the CMS Midwest Region QIN-QIO activities and supports under the new 13th Scope of Work which has begun in earnest. The Mountain Pacific team is working with hospitals, nursing homes and outpatient clinics to enroll and provide a spectrum of support within the CMS QIN-QIO program. This includes the structure of the QIO program, services offered and upcoming news that will strengthen quality, safety and patient outcomes.

10:15-10:25am Break

10:25-11:55am Easing the Path: Tools for Soothing Clinical - Community Linkages to Address Social Determinants of Health & Improve Collaboration

Trina Filan, Program Evaluator; Margaret Mullins, Social Determinants of Health Program Manager; Alison Fuller, Connect Program Manager; and Ann Clement, Executive Director, WY211. This panel will start with public health and community services (e.g., non-profits, faith communities, libraries, community pharmacies, etc.) as extra access points to the healthcare system and important for realizing frontier health and well-being. The session will then transition to a discussion of the social determinants of health and how community partners provide important patient access points as well as support that clinics haven't the time or resources to provide themselves. The panel will then discuss something called the "screening to referral pipeline" and grants that help put SDOH screening into practical action through EHR workflows and clinical-community linkages. The session's primary focus will be social network webbing and relational coordination activities to help participants visualize their local and regional partner networks and determine ways to improve those relationships for the benefit of their patients and population/community health.

11:55am-12:45pm Networking Luncheon - Opportunity to Visit Vendors

Agenda - Day 2 | Thursday | June 11

12:45-1:45pm Breakout Sessions

Frontier Operations Track

Navigating an Ever-Evolving 340B Landscape - Rebate Model & Manufacturer Restrictions

Zachary Schiffer, Sr. Product Manager, GCA 340B. Access to 340B pricing has grown increasingly complicated as most major drug manufacturers have implemented restrictive policies that limit Covered Entity participation. The recent introduction of the 340B Rebate Model Pilot program has intensified these challenges by allowing manufacturers to eliminate 340B pricing entirely for certain drugs subject to the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). This development poses a significant threat to the efficiency and long-term viability of 340B programs across the country. Drug manufacturer restrictions are only becoming more complex, and despite common assumptions, these challenges will increasingly affect every type of Covered Entity. This session will equip attendees with a clear understanding of anticipated changes to the 340B program, prepare them for the range of scenarios that may emerge through ongoing reform, and provide practical strategies to strengthen the efficiency and resilience of their 340B programs.

HIMSS Track

Pressure Communication for Healthcare Leaders

Anna Smith, Founder and Principal Coach, Wildbrush Collective. In frontier healthcare, pressure is not an occasional event—it is a working condition. This interactive session equips clinical, operational, and health information systems leaders with concise, repeatable communication tools to stabilize teams during high-friction moments such as staffing gaps, patient escalations, outages/downtime, workflow changes, and schedule breakdowns. Participants will practice a simple framework and leave with ready-to-use phrases and a rapid response communication plan that improves clarity, psychological safety, and follow-through.

Clinical Tracks

Bright Spots Across the Frontier - Diabetes Regional Care Coordination in Montana

Trina Filan, Program Evaluator (organizer); Melissa House, Montana Diabetes Program Manager; and a team member from backbone partner, Montana Health Network. The Montana Diabetes Program and Montana Health Network have been partnering for more than a year to expand access to quality diabetes care, management, education, and support services via regional care coordination throughout frontier Montana. This panel discussion will describe progress so far, will invite the audience to expand and refine the landscape for this project through fun and interactive activities, and will help audience members decide to what extent their own healthcare systems may want to participate in the project.

1:45-2:00pm **Break**

2:00-3:15pm **Montana's Rural Health Transformation Program**

Leadership from Montana's RHTP initiative will share the most up-to-date information, progress, and status of this historic program in healthcare. Montana's \$233 million investment from the Trump administration will be used to stabilize and modernize rural health care delivery throughout Montana. Awarded by CMS's RHTP, these funds will support Montana's rural health care providers in delivering sustainable, high-quality care and ensuring appropriate access for those in need of services.

3:15-4:15pm **Montana Made Me**

Flint Rasmussen brings authenticity, passion, and humor as he tells his story of growing up in Rural Montana, and how the values and principles learned there paved the way for him to become one of the top entertainers in the Western Sports world. He explains the responsibility that comes with wearing a cowboy hat, and how the Code of the West can help us all, even in the face of a life-changing health scare.

4:15-4:30pm **Review, Wrap-up, & Evaluations**

Thank you for attending!





HIMSS MONTANA
CHAPTER

Thank you

**FOR ATTENDING THE 5TH ANNUAL
FRONTIER HEALTHCARE CONFERENCE!**

MHN's Mission:

To support and influence the evolution of healthcare organizations, and enhance the well-being of individuals and communities through: Networking to establish bonds and trustful relationships between healthcare executives; Shared services and shared products to bring value through cost savings and efficiencies; and Research and development of products and services.

HIMSS Mission:

Reform the global health ecosystem through the power of information and technology.

HIMSS Vision:

Realize the full health potential of every human, everywhere.

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Montana Health Network is Montana healthcare facility owned and operated.