



## South Dakota

Rural Utilities Service • Telecommunications Program • Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program

### Horizon Leverages Telemedicine Services To Combat Opioid Abuse

As the spike in opioid-related deaths becomes a national emergency, health centers across the country are pursuing ways to address the crisis. Outside of prescriptions, South Dakota’s Opioid Abuse Advisory Committee has identified that poverty, limited access to mental health services, and inadequate insurance coverage are associated with opioid addiction. In a state where over 40 percent of the population lives in rural areas where these risk factors are prevalent, health centers are faced with the challenge of providing comprehensive care in these high-need communities. With a rural network that covers over one-third of the state and a Sliding Fee Program that ensures affordability, Horizon Health Care, Inc. is uniquely positioned to prevent and treat opioid addiction.



*Providers and patients utilize high-definition video cameras during consultations.*

For nearly 40 years, Horizon’s growing number of health centers have been delivering medical, dental, and mental health care services to people living in rural, medically underserved communities. At the heart of Horizon’s robust network is its telemedicine program, which originally facilitated psychiatric care. In response to the rising demand for mental health specialists, Horizon has been adding advanced practice providers to the network. “The opioid crisis grew as we were developing these resources,” said Scott Weatherill, Horizon’s Chief Information Officer.

Within the last two decades, Horizon has utilized four USDA Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) grants, totaling over \$1 million. “USDA’s been a huge asset to us as we develop our telemedicine program,” said Weatherill. With funds from the most recent DLT award, Horizon will pilot a video-based mental health program starting in 2017 in the Central and Southwest Regions, with future expansion to all regions.

By leveraging its telemedicine network with funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Horizon is building a mental and behavioral health team that will include a certified nurse practitioner, a nurse, two licensed social workers, and a contracted psychiatrist. With skilled personnel, community partnerships, and advanced technology, Horizon will be able to provide opioid abuse recognition and testing training, conduct consultations, and increase its clinics’ capacity to treat opioid and substance abuse disorders at all of its locations.

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<b>Obligation Amount:</b>	\$238,303 Telemedicine Grant
<b>Date of Obligation:</b>	9/18/2015
<b>Congressional District:</b>	Representative Noem, At Large; Senators Thune and Rounds
<b>Partners:</b>	SD Community Mental Health Centers; Rosebud, Yankton Sioux, Lower Brule, Standing Rock, and Cheyenne River Indian Tribes; Aurora Plains Academy; Tiospaye Topa School
<b>Demographics:</b>	Horizon’s 31 clinics serve rural communities across 19 counties and 5 reservations.
<b>Impact:</b>	With an enhanced video-based telemedicine system, Horizon will implement a mental health program that will serve patients in nearly 28,000 square miles of rural, frontier, and tribal land.

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