Voices from the field: Rural health in Wisconsin

Join this session to learn from health professionals working in rural communities in Wisconsin. After hearing from panelists, you will be invited to participate in a breakout room discussion to explore potential new collaborations on topics such as substance use, community-based mental health, Community Health Workers, or social determinants of health in the rural context. Session learning objectives include to:

1. Identify what health professionals based in rural areas in Wisconsin see as pressing health needs
2. Learn about the essential elements of successful community-university partnerships from the perspective of rural community-based organizations
3. Explore specific topics for potential new collaborations in rural health

Linda Conlon, MPH, BSN, RN is the Director and Health Officer for the Oneida County Health Department. She has been a registered nurse for over 20 years; working in long-term care and community-based settings. She has over 20 years of experience in public health, serving as a Director and Health Officer and Public Health Nurse.

Chris Frakes, MDiv, PhD is the Senior Director of Program & Service Operations at Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action programs. She started the Farm Well WI program, which focuses on improving the mental health and wellbeing of farmers, farmworkers and their families. In her current role she supervises all of SWCAP’s programs & services and works with program managers and community partners to increase our collective impact on the causes and conditions of poverty in southwestern Wisconsin.

Tim Size, MBA, PhD (hon) is the founding executive director of the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative (RWHC). Begun in 1979, it has grown to be a collaborative of 44 rural hospitals and local health systems with the twin mission of shared services and advocacy. He is President of the Wisconsin Council of Medical Education and Work Force and vice-chair of the Wisconsin Health & Facilities Authority.

Moderator: Meghan Brennan, MD, MS is an infectious disease physician whose research focuses on diabetic foot ulcers and health disparities. Her overall goal is to develop novel health system interventions that reduce major amputations among patients with diabetes, particularly those in rural areas.