



# Herkimer County HealthNet

A New York State Department of Health funded Rural Health Network

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## Written Testimony of Herkimer County HealthNet, Inc.

**New York State Joint Legislative Public Hearing on  
2015-16 Executive Health Budget**  
Monday, February 2nd, 2015  
10:00 AM

**Chairs:**  
Senator Kemp Hannon  
Assemblyman Richard Gottfried

**Submitted by:**  
Adam Hutchinson

January 26, 2015

Herkimer County HealthNet, Inc. (HCHN) is comprised of 27 nonprofit member agencies representing every major health and human service provider in Herkimer County. For the past twenty-five years it has worked to meet its mission to "improve the health and well-being of individuals who live, work, play, and learn in Herkimer County" by first collaboratively identifying priorities and then crafting programs to address those priorities; as well developing the reputation as the health and human service system's gatekeeper. Over the past 18 months, HCHN has had a hand in every major Department of Health (DOH) initiative; serving on two DSRIP PPSs, executing a Memorandum of Understanding with its regional Population Health Improvement Program contractor, and helping to facilitate Herkimer County's Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan.

This year the Governor's Executive Budget calls for an approximate 15% across the board cut and/or contract cancelations for several programs critical to rural health. One such program is the Rural Health Network Development (RHND) Program. The Governor's Budget achieves these cuts by bundling several existing budget lines. RHND, simply, does not belong in the same budget line as these unrelated workforce programs. It needs to be unbundled and its funding restored to \$6.4 million for RHN.

HCHN meets its mission by working to meet the goals of the NYS DOH's Prevention Agenda, DSRIP, and State Health Improvement Plan. It is impossible to meet these goals without effective health planning and priority setting. HCHN has utilized a portion of its funding for more than a decade to assist Herkimer County's Integrated Planning Program in producing the Herkimer County Risk Assessment Profile (<http://www.herkimerhealthnet.com/dprofile.html>).

This document examines the County utilizing the six Life Areas of the New York State Touchstones model: Community, Citizenship, Physical and Emotional Health, Family, Economic Security, and Education, and incorporates the New York State Department of Health's Prevention Agenda's Priority Health Areas into the Physical and Emotional Health section of the document. The Risk Assessment Profile has been the main driver of HCHN's priorities since 2000 and was a major factor in Herkimer County's recognition as one of 12 "Effective Community Collaborations" nationwide by the Bridgespan Group for the White House's Council on Community Solutions in 2010. Herkimer County was the only rural county selected, and the only identified collaborative from New York State. This would not have been possible without RHND Program funding.

Recently, HCHN has sponsored two studies examining specific aspects of the health and human service system in Herkimer County. The first was a Perinatal Health Needs Assessment that was conducted by John Snow, Inc. This needs assessment highlighted the lacking of primary and prenatal care services in Herkimer County and led directly to a regional primary care group applying the federal government for funding to open a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Herkimer, NY. Should this FQHC be funded it would bring \$650,000 per year in federal funding to provide access to primary, prenatal, dental, behavioral, and tele-health services for the uninsured, underinsured, and Medicaid population in Herkimer County. Additionally, the regional group has committed to addressing the health status of these populations in some way, based on the results of the needs assessment, even if they are not funded to open the FQHC. This would not have been possible without RHND Program funding.

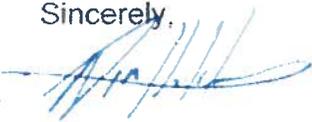
The second study examined the care transitions services available to Herkimer County's older adults (aged 60+). This study provided a baseline that is being utilized to offer technical assistance directly to local hospitals and agencies responsible for discharging older adults back into the community with the goal of reducing the number older adults from Herkimer County who are readmitted within 30 days of discharge. This would not have been possible without RHND Program funding.

HCHN has leveraged its RHND Program funding to bring approximately a quarter million dollars, annually, in funding to address identified health priorities in Herkimer County. These funds have sponsored efforts to prevent falls among older adults in Herkimer County, provide National Diabetes Prevention Program Classes at three locations in Herkimer County, and support environmental strategies to reduce obesity and improve nutrition by working with farmers markets; supplying over \$275,000 to improve Herkimer County's system of trails and playgrounds.

These activities would be imperiled, if not outright impossible, if the RHND funding is not unbundled from the unrelated workforce programs and restored to its \$6.4 million funding level.

Please do not hesitate to contact me via email at: [ahutchinson@herkimercounty.org](mailto:ahutchinson@herkimercounty.org) or telephone at 315-867-1552. I would be more than happy to explain the benefits this funding has had in Herkimer County.

Sincerely,



Adam Hutchinson  
Executive Director