

Rural Hospital Performance Improvement (RHPI) Project – Delta Region Evaluation Report Executive Summary, January 2003

The Rural Hospital Performance Improvement (RHPI) Project for the Delta Region is funded by the Office of Rural Health Policy, a department of the Health Resources and Services Administration. Project funding was awarded September 2001 to the Mountain States Group in partnership with the Rural Health Resource Center. This evaluation was prepared internally to guide project improvement and process refinements. The project has a consultant agreement with Ira Moscovice of the University of Minnesota, to complete an external review of RHPI's effectiveness and impact on hospitals in the region.

The RHPI Project has three primary goals:

- 1) Provide performance improvement consultant and technical assistance to eligible hospitals located in the Delta Region;
- 2) Collect and develop tools for performance improvement; and
- 3) Build capacity for the Delta hospitals, working with state partners, including offices of rural health and hospital associations.

Evaluation during the first year used client satisfaction surveys as the instrument for getting objective feedback. The surveys asked about the project and its effectiveness, and staff and their availability. Surveys were distributed to three types of "clients":

- A. Participating hospitals (93% response rate),
- B. State partners including Offices of Rural Health and Hospital Associations (75% response rate), and
- C. Consultants who worked with hospitals (83% response rate).

Overall, the survey results were very positive toward the project with specific areas of improvement noted. Highlights include (percent responding strongly agree or agree):

- Hospitals believed RHPI consultants had the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to assist them with performance improvement efforts (100%);
- Hospitals indicated the consultants were able to transfer knowledge and experience to hospital staff and Board members (93%);
- Hospitals considered the recommendations to be innovative, appropriate and practical (87%);
- Hospitals and state partners would recommend the RHPI consultants to others (93% and 100%, respectively).

Specific areas of improvement targeted in the second year of the program included:

- More advance scheduling of consultations to allow for better coordination with the state partners.

- Depending on the needs of the hospital, include additional time that consultants are on site for the comprehensive consultations.
- Ensure the targeted consultations are focused on performance improvement and the specific needs of the hospital.
- Involve participating hospitals to assist in promoting this project to other hospitals eligible for this service.
- Provide a more formal follow up process for comprehensive consultations that results in a prioritized set of recommendations and action plans with clear accountabilities.

All of the identified areas of improvement have been implemented for the second year of the program. The Rural Hospital Performance Improvement (RHPI) Project will continue to make every effort to improve the processes and the consultation provided. The project welcomes feedback from all clients and partners to improve its performance. In addition to the evaluation provided by the independent evaluator, the client satisfaction surveys will continue to be conducted in year two.