

## FCC announces changes to Broadband Plan

Thousands to receive assistance for adequate broadband connection

*Contributed by OHN Staff*

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced in mid-July it is making changes to the National Broadband Plan, which is designed to assist thousands of health providers at hospitals and clinics in the U.S. who lack adequate broadband access and capability.

Updates to the FCC's National Broadband Plan include the development of a permanent \$400 million fund to further broadband infrastructure and build out of health information capabilities in rural areas. This financial support is an additional funding opportunity, outside of the current Rural Health Care Pilot Program (RHCPP) of which Oregon Health Network (OHN) manages for the state, and the standard Rural Health Care Program (RHC).

*Highlights of the proposed changes include:*

- Partner with public and nonprofit health care providers to invest millions in new regional and statewide broadband networks in parts of the country where it is unavailable or insufficient. The new program will help build cost-effective broadband networks—connecting doctors, hospitals and clinics—designed to meet today's health care needs.
- Making broadband connectivity more affordable by sharing half of the monthly recurring network costs with hospitals, clinics and other health care providers. This enhanced support for broadband connectivity will benefit patients served by thousands of public and nonprofit rural health care providers.

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*Our vision is clear. Everyone should have access to the best possible care, regardless of where they live in the State.*

## Public input strengthens Oregon's health information exchange planning

Plan builds on efforts combined with existing health information infrastructure

*Contributed by Carol Robinson, State HIT Coordinator and Director, Health Information Technology Oversight Council*

The development of strategic and operational plans for health information exchange (HIE) in Oregon is quickly moving toward completion in August, following a series of public community meetings in June and July. These public meetings complement the ongoing work by the Health Information Technology Oversight Council (HITOC) and its Strategic Workgroup. The plans are due to be submitted to the federal Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) for review and approval.

Five community meetings were held around the state to solicit comment on the strategic plan, which lays out the state's approach to HIE. Meetings were held in Medford (June 28), The Dalles (June 30), Coos Bay (July 13), Roseburg (July 13) and Bend (July 14). HITOC also received public comments at

its June 17 meeting, sponsored a public webinar on July 8, and received many comments by email before the July 14 public comment deadline. This flurry of activity was preceded by several months of work during public meetings by HITOC and the workgroup.

The HITOC HIE Planning Team received, collected, reviewed and analyzed more than 150 comments from more than 100 individuals and organizations. The comments and questions spanned a range of HIE issues areas, including:

- **Privacy:** There was general support for the proposed consent policy. There were several questions and concerns about consumer education around informed consent and clarifying questions about how the consent system would

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actually work. However, only one individual/organization explicitly opposed the recommended consent policy and favored an “opt-in” policy in its place. Diverse comments were received about Oregon’s current laws protecting certain types of health information (specially protected health information), with concerns spanning the feasibility of segregating information effectively in an electronic record to the desire to see these specially protected categories maintained and expanded to include other data of a personal and sensitive nature. There will be a comprehensive communications plan developing in the next few months that will address many of the concerns about consumer education and information. Also, the HITOC Legal and Policy Workgroup will be examining Oregon’s current statutes defining specially protected health information and considering potential legislative changes.

- **Security standards:** There were several comments and questions about security standards and when they will be available, and how they will be implemented. There was also concern about liability and an expressed interest in HITOC providing HIE participants with information surrounding education on legal issues involved in the exchange of health information. The HITOC Legal and Policy Workgroup will begin work on Standards and Accreditation, with a planning assumption that Oregon will look to federal standards as the foundation.

- **Cost of electronic health records (EHRs):** Many commenters said they were concerned about the cost of choosing, adopting and implementing EHRs, the impacts on

workflow and how they’ll manage connectivity. The Regional Extension Center (O-HITEC) and other partner organizations will be important resources for providers seeking help with EHR issues.

- **Technical details:** Commenters also wanted to know about the technical approach to statewide HIE, role of the state and local health information organizations (HIOs) and how they will work together. The Operational Plan has many additional details about current technology plans to support Stage 1 Meaningful Use, and the HITOC Technology Workgroup will begin work this fall on the next stage of planning.

- **Impacts on specific groups:** Dentists, long-term care providers, payers, patients, professional associations, medical providers (including rural providers), local HIOs and other organizations each had concerns and questions about how the strategic plan would impact them. Outreach and coordination will be a core component of HITOC’s ongoing efforts.

- **Other comments:** These included the importance of personal health records (PHRs), public health and quality reporting.

The HIE Planning Team put together a full list of public comments, which was made public after the August 5 HITOC meeting (all materials, including the strategic and operational plans, are available at [www.oregon.gov/OHPPR/HITOC/index.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/OHPPR/HITOC/index.shtml)). Some of the comments prompted changes in the drafts, and many others are being forwarded for future use by the workgroups and panels that are expected to work on specific issues as Phase 1 of HIE implementation gets started in September.

## Oregon Broadband Advisory Council working on first report

The Oregon Broadband Advisory Council seeks to encourage coordination and collaboration between organizations and economic sectors to leverage the development and utilization of broadband for education, workforce development and telehealth, and to promote broadband utilization by citizens and communities.

The Council is currently at work preparing its first report to the Governor and Legislature on the affordability and accessibility of broadband technology in all areas of the state and on the extent of broadband technology use in healthcare, energy management, education and government. Information on the Council and its members is available at [www.broadband-oregon.org](http://www.broadband-oregon.org).

Each issue, we feature an OHN participant and how their OHN connection is helping make a difference in the communities they serve.

# Clinic remains innovative to aid homeless

## Outside In joins OHN to broaden its remote medical outreach

By Courtney Freitag, OHN Marketing Coordinator

Northwest 23rd Avenue in Portland's Alphabet District is a familiar place for Desiree. She was born at Legacy Good Samaritan. She has worked at high-end boutiques in the trendy neighborhood. And she also fought the elements, stigma and desolation of being homeless there.

"I hid my homelessness. No one knew that I didn't have anywhere to turn," Desiree said. "Luckily, word-of-mouth led me to Outside In. Everyone on the streets knows it is a safe place to go."

For more than 40 years, Outside In has been serving low-income adults and homeless youth in Portland. Their commitment to innovation, flexibility and dedication have earned them many accolades and acknowledgement both locally and nationally. Outside In also received funding commitment in July from the FCC for connection to the Oregon Health Network. The organization's clinic will receive a high quality broadband connection to continue its service and partnership within the community.

With an estimated 2,000 homeless youth in the city, Outside In has continually revised services, its approach and scope of services to meet changing client needs. Currently, they offer programs including a federally qualified health clinic, a program to help homeless youth obtain independent living, risk education, a tattoo removal service, needle exchange, risk education and much more.

"OHN will help our remote locations like medical outreach connect back to our main site," said Bill Aronson, support services director of Outside In. "This will give us consistent and reliable access to patient records, will make our outreach program more efficient and give our staff more time with the patients we serve."

For patients like Desiree, the need was extreme. Often bounced between family members and foster care, she had never been given encouragement to succeed.

"When I came through the doors of Outside In I didn't have any self esteem," Ford said. "A weakened immune system left me with a staph infection, which left marks all over my body. I felt like a leper." Combined with poor nutrition and constant exposure to the elements, street kids often have chronic infections

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**(Left) Dr. Tanya Page at Outside In addresses the medical needs of a patient. The Federally Qualifying Health Clinic, a new participant of OHN, has been open more than 40 years, helping area homeless and youth. (Right) On-site housing helps parenting youth succeed.**



Of the youth Outside In serves, 90 percent report some form of violence in their homes

Many youth flee to the streets due to forms of abuse, abandonment, poverty, joblessness, sexual/gender identity issues and more

80% of youth who go through Outside In's transitional housing program never return to the streets.



Outside In awarded from the Oregon Shelter Network, the "Cares" award from the American Health Care Systems, and 5<sup>th</sup> place out of 68 clinics reviewed nationwide as a Federally Qualified Medical Center.



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and chronic colds. Outside In addressed her medical needs immediately.

“That was just the beginning of what they did for me.”

Dispelling myths surrounding homeless youth is important and critical to the vision and mission of Outside In. There are many reasons behind the faces you see living on the

streets, including escape from abusive environments—more than 90 percent of the adolescents on the streets fled some form of violence in their home. Drug abuse, mental illness, abandonment, neglect and sexual identity contribute to nearly all of the clients that Outside In services.

At age 20, Rios faced homelessness after losing his construction job. With no financial or emotional family support, he spent three months on Portland streets before finding Outside In.

“While providing the emotional support to help me recover from my devastating circumstances, Outside In staff also helped me identify and connect with opportunities to build a better future,” he said. “They gave me stability.”

Food, shelter, access to health care and a computer helped Rios focus on his future. The agency’s Employment Resource Center helped him obtain employment through an internship in the hotel industry and he also enrolled in college. Today he is working full-time, attending college and starting his own advocacy endeavors called Youth in Action.

The organization has been honored for its innovative services with the Youth Program, receiving an award from the Oregon Shelter Network, the “Cares” award from the American Health Care Systems, and 5<sup>th</sup> place out of 68 clinics reviewed nationwide as a Federally Qualified Medical Center. Service and trainings, such as the Overdose Prevention training, will reach a broader audience due to the improved OHN connection.

“OHN will help our staff with the technical infrastructure needed to attend webinar trainings that will help their work serving medically underserved people,” Aronson said. “In the past, we have struggled with streaming webinars and the impact on our entire system.”

The numbers speak for themselves: 80 percent of the youth who go through Outside In’s transitional housing program never return to the streets. However, the need remains crucial. With a downturn in the economy, thousands are losing health insurance and the rise of homelessness is resulting in unprecedented poverty levels. The 10-15 new faces Outside In sees every morning have nowhere else to turn.

Rios and Desiree are just two of the hundreds of stories that come from the success of Outside In. The organization continues working to serve people under 30 and homeless people of any age. The intent continues to be “provide the best primary care services available to anyone, rich or poor.”

For Rios, that commitment made every difference in the world.

“I know that despite coming from backgrounds rife with abuse, we can succeed.”

“**OHN will help our staff with the technical infrastructure needed to attend webinar trainings that will help their work serving medically underserved people.**”

—BILL ARONSON,  
Outside In’s Support Services Director



Outside In’s downtown Portland location offers both transitional and permanent housing. Last year, Outside In helped 52 youth in transitional housing stabilize in school and work, learn how to live independently, and prepare for self-sufficiency.

**FCC Broadband Plan**, *continued from page 1*

- Delivering connectivity where it is needed most today, including at skilled nursing facilities and renal dialysis centers, along with off-site administrative offices and data centers that perform support functions critical to health care networks.

As the fifth largest recipient of the FCC’s RHCPP, OHN has been actively working to draw down its \$20.2 million subsidy to bring high-speed broadband by June 30, 2011 to eligible nonprofit hospitals, clinics and community colleges through its statewide telehealth network. While the subsidy proved to be a big opportunity for Oregon, the state’s need for broadband has far exceeded OHN’s \$20.2 million award, and that more would have to be done to address the gap in coverage.

“This announcement from the FCC is great news for nonprofit Oregon providers who have not yet been able to participate in the RHCPP due to a variety of reasons, usually having to do with timing,” said Kim Lamb, Oregon Health Network’s executive director. “This new fund will now be there for them when they’re ready, to help them with the cost-prohibitive build-outs and monthly recurring costs associated with OHN-quality connectivity. Many providers are too busy and focused on other critical initiatives during these challenging times to invest in the RHCPP process.”

Additionally, during the FCC announcement, OHN (Oregon’s RHCPP) was highlighted as one of the successful examples in RHCPP’s in the nationwide program. Currently, 53 Oregon provider-vendor contracts have been signed; of those 35 Oregon provider-sites (hospitals, clinics and community colleges) have received their official funding commitment letters from the FCC. Of that, 26 are actively on the OHN network and being monitored by OHN’s Network Operations Center.



“Beyond the fund, I am very encouraged with the FCC’s clear commitment and active efforts to improve the reach and use of reliable, high-quality broadband connectivity to and by health care providers,” said Lamb. “I have been particularly impressed with the FCC’s collaborative approach to better understand and gain insight from our nation’s leading innovators in health care, telemedicine and through pilot program leadership such as OHN to make sure the plan addresses what it should. This challenge is great, the problem complex, and as a result, will take active participation by all parties on all levels to solve. But I think this plan is a solid first step to do just that.”

**Additionally, during the FCC announcement, OHN (Oregon’s RHCPP) was highlighted as one of the successful examples in RHCPP’s in the nationwide program. To date, 44 sites are actively participating with OHN with 26 actively being monitored by the Network Operations Center.**

OHN in Phase 1 is building and expanding its health care broadband infrastructure and is meeting the gaps of coverage in the state. The organization plans to bring on as many as 200 eligible hospitals, clinics, community colleges and government facilities in Oregon as a result of their \$20.2 million RHCPP subsidy to create the core footprint of the state’s first statewide telehealth network. In doing so, OHN hopes to provide a foundation for the future of digital health via a managed, reliable, high-speed, broadband network.

Phase 2 will work to bring on for-profit providers such as radiology clinics, labs, pharmacies, long-term care facilities and general for-profit clinics. These participants are critical to the delivery of care in the state but who are too often left behind in receiving government support for their required broadband investments.

OHN provides its participants with reliable, high-speed, high quality, broadband connectivity for electronic medical records, radiological images, videoconferencing, and distance education applications which will expand the use of telemedicine and telehealth education in Oregon. The network also connects providers to each other, reducing the cost of health care in rural communities by minimizing duplicate efforts and time, obtaining correct patient information, procedure codes and referrals, and much more.

The complete report can be view on our website: <http://www.oregonhealthnet.org/resources/pressroom>.

**Participants in OHN’s Phase 2 will be critical to the delivery of care in the state and are often left behind in receiving government support for their required broadband investments.**

# Portal system gives access to participants, vendors

## OHN launches web-based electronic database for invoicing and file management

By Courtney Freitag, OHN Marketing Coordinator

Months of hard work by the OHN team and our outsourced technical agency Cogent IT have resulted in a new web-based MS Sharepoint portal system for use by our participants and vendors. The portals hold all contracts, forms, supporting documentation, notes, contact information and much more. Email notifications to participants and vendors are generated when there is an invoice to review and approve—which can be done through the portal—keeping the system paperless and electronic.

Currently, 31 participants are using the portal. Each has the ability to access all OHN documentation, update contact information, review NOC reports, assist in the review and approval of pending invoices from vendors, and more. The invoicing is in visible fields for review and approval, with links to ask a question at any time from the OHN staff. Additionally, a history report of invoices to date is also included on the participant's portal page.

"The portal is very user friendly," said Monica Canaday, Billing Analyst/Rural Health Care Coordinator for Integra Telecom, an OHN approved vendor. "I like the fact that the majority of the information is pre-populated into the invoice form which reduces the time it takes to process and submit."

Helping vendors process invoices more expeditiously is just one administrative benefit. Also having information available at a click and the ability to run customized reports makes quantifying information that much easier.

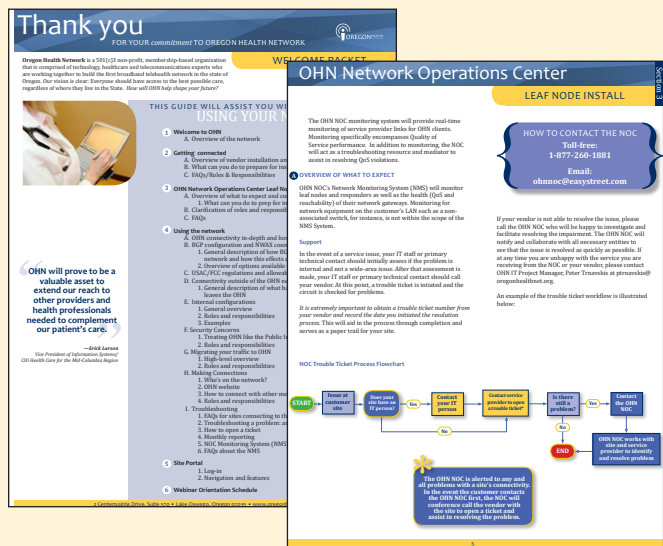
"Because it's in a Sharepoint system, we can compile the information into any report we need to submit," said Deb Galiel, Office Manager and Associate Project Coordinator for OHN. "This greatly improves the function of processing quarterly reports for the FCC."

Accuracy, efficiency and accessibility were goals in developing the portal, ensuring our vendors are paid and our participants are getting the best quality of service on all levels. This tool will help improve that efficiency between participants and vendors, and from OHN to the FCC, allowing the most accurate information available for processing according to the FCC RHCPP guidelines.

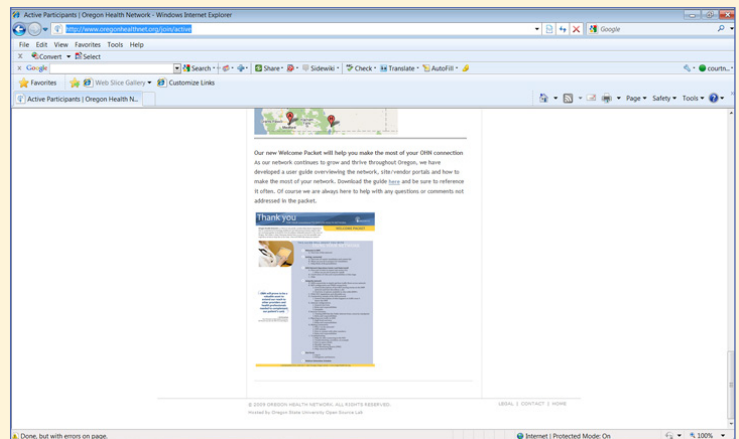
# OHN Welcome packet gives overview of helpful topics

In hopes of enriching the participant's experience with OHN, we have developed a welcome packet which gives an overview of the network, our portal system, getting connected, our sophisticated network, working with a vendor and much more. The packet is broken into sections and is available by PDF found here.

This welcome packet is meant to help our participants get the most out of their network, make connections in their community, establish relationships with their vendor, and aid in preparing for installation of their connection.



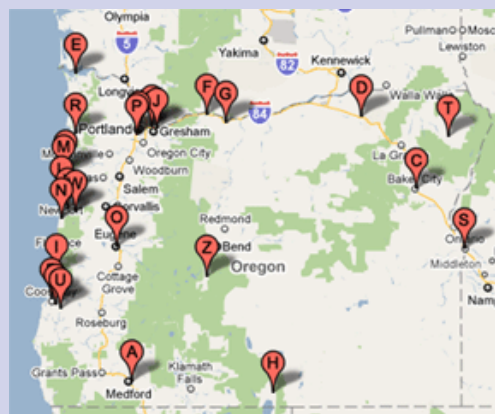
Welcome packet for participants can be found here: <http://www.oregonhealthnet.org/join/active>



## Additional sites live on network

The list of active participating sites around Oregon continues to grow. At press time, there were 42 sites that had received funding commitment. Of those, 26 are being actively monitored by the Network Operations Center.

The sites around the state represent hospitals, urban and rural clinics, FQHC's and tribal clinics in the RHCPP \$20.2 million subsidy awarded to OHN in 2007.



## USDA seeks public comment on distance learning, telemedicine

Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Dallas Tonsager announced that the USDA will facilitate a virtual discussion for individuals interested in the field of telemedicine. *The Power of Telemedicine* web discussion is an

extension of the USDA's Open Government effort and Rural Development's latest effort to encourage a more widespread use and understanding of telemedicine.

[Click here to read more](#)



## UPCOMING Industry Events

### Second International mHealth Networking Conference, September 8-9, 2010

Town and Country Resort Hotel, San Diego, California

<http://www.mobih.org/meetings/>

### OHN Stakeholder Council Off-site Meeting, September 17, 2010

Hood River, Oregon

Location TBD

### Oregon Connections Conference, October 21-22, 2010

Hood River Inn, Hood River, Oregon

<http://www.hoodriverinn.com> (Register at: <http://www.oregonconnections.info/>)

Preparations are underway for the fifteenth annual Oregon Connections Telecommunications Conference. The conference will be in Hood River on October 21 and 22, and the theme for 2010 will be *Oregon Telecom: The New Age of Broadband*. Steven Bass, President and CEO of Oregon Public Broadcasting, will be the keynote speaker. The conference draws attendees from all regions of the state to share ideas, experiences and knowledge about telecommunications. Conference information and on-line registration is available at [www.oregonconnections.info](http://www.oregonconnections.info).

### Creating Possibilities: The Convergence of Healthcare and Telecommunications

#### TAO Annual Meeting & Summit, November 3, 2010

University Place Conference Center: 310 SW Lincoln Street, Portland OR

<http://www.ortelehealth.org/>

### American Telemedicine Association International Meeting & Expo, May 1-3, 2011

Tampa Convention Center, Tampa, Florida

Call for presentations; visit website for full details including categories and formats: [www.americantelemed.org](http://www.americantelemed.org)

To submit an upcoming industry event, email [cfreitag@oregonhealthnet.org](mailto:cfreitag@oregonhealthnet.org)