## Maine

## Medical Care Development, Inc. Maine eConsult Network

P10RH37483

**Project Focus Areas:** Increase Health System Efficiencies

Other Focus Areas: Integrated Health Services

Reimbursement for Health Services

Telehealth

Workforce Development

## **Network Statement**

Maine covers a vast geographic area that includes rugged coastline and dense forest. The nature of this geography, though full of natural beauty, brings inherent challenges for Maine's rural communities and healthcare providers. Isolation, poverty, and a poor economic outlook have been associated with poor access to medical, mental, and dental health care, as well as high levels of morbidity and mortality from chronic disease. Maine also has one of the oldest populations in the nation and a high percentage of dual Medicare and Medicaid eligibility. The level of health needs among this population, combined with the limitations of the current health care delivery system (provider shortages, long specialty wait-times, etc.) creates a critical need for innovative approaches to improve and streamline healthcare delivery across the state.

The Maine eConsult Network (MEeCN) was initiated in 2020 to address these challenges in collaboration with the Maine Rural Health Collaborative (MRHC) and Penobscot Community Health Care (PCHC). The MEeCN is working to establish a system of eConsult services to facilitate communications between rural primary care providers (PCPs) and distant specialty providers. A PCP in a rural community can initiate the consultation and request recommendations from a specialist by sending patient-specific information and questions to a secure shared electronic platform. A specialist from a selected group or pool of providers is then assigned and responds (typically within 24-48 hours) with recommendations for the PCP to consider in the care and treatment of the patient or advice that the PCP should refer the patient to a specialist. The specialist may also request additional, clarifying information from the PCP. Through implementation of this statewide eConsult Network, rural, medically underserved residents – and their providers - will benefit from extended and timely access to the specialty care they need and expect.

## **Network Development**

Over the past year, the Maine eConsult Network (MEeCN) has worked toward network formalization through multiple activities. During the first few months of the grant period, fiscal agent of MEeCN, Medical Care Development, Inc. (MCD; www.MCD.org), confirmed network staffing and roles, including a Network Director and Network Coordinator, and grant management systems, consisting of project and budget management. Monthly meeting protocols were established with Network Members and the first monthly meeting of the MEeCN was held in September 2020. Over the first six months, the MEeCN worked to formalize the Network and governance structure including drafting a Charter with Vision, Mission, and Values statements for the Network, the structure and function of the Leadership Team, and Definitions and Roles in MEeCN. Historically, MCD, in its role as convener of the MEeCN and host of the HRSA-funded Northeast Telehealth Resource Center (NETRC; www.NETRC.org), has worked independently with both MEeCN Members, the Maine Rural Health Collaborative