



Dr. Mandy Cohen
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road NE
Atlanta, GA 30329

Re: CDC–2023–0075; National One Health Framework To Address Zoonotic Diseases and Advance Public Health Preparedness in the United States: A Framework for One Health Coordination and Collaboration Across Federal Agencies.

Submitted electronically via regulations.gov.

Dear Dr. Cohen,

NRHA supports the use of the OneHealth Framework as it bridges and highlights the inter-relationship between humans, animals, plants, and environmental health¹. The One Health scope is particularly useful in rural settings which are composed of 20% of the world’s population that resides on 90% of the country’s land, coexisting with other people, animals, and livestock, and interacting with protected environmental areas¹. The OneHealth framework was shown to be successful in streamlining a strong cross-sector collaboration for the COVID-19 pandemic⁶. **NRHA believes this framework can be used to support communication and collaboration between organizations to benefit rural communities and prevent zoonotic diseases.**

To ensure success of the proposed framework, **NRHA calls for prioritizing the rural impact of zoonotic diseases and how the framework can be applied to improve prevention, education, and advancing public health preparedness of zoonotic diseases in rural areas.** Rural residents often live in close proximity to livestock, wildlife, and other animals, making their exposure to zoonotic diseases more likely². The farming community in rural areas is a diverse pool of workforce members that interact with a wide range of livestock. Their risk to contract zoonotic diseases are at a higher rate than other workforce communities³. To improve preparedness for the transmission of zoonotic diseases, healthcare providers should bridge the educational gap between community members and specialists about prevention of these diseases and how to effectively work with livestock without risking high exposure³. Additionally, the most vulnerable population for zoonotic diseases are known to be those with hands-on livestock and farm work. This working population is mainly found in rural areas and are disproportionality composed of people of color and those who are less likely to seek medical help or have insurance coverage⁵.

NRHA acknowledges the many barriers and challenges with implementing the OneHealth framework successfully at a rural level. Rural hospitals and healthcare facilities currently struggle with a workforce shortage; there is difficulty sustaining, maintaining, and retaining healthcare providers, especially public health specialists, in these areas⁷. As a result, communication and education needs to be supported by physicians for prevention and advancing public health preparedness against zoonotic diseases. To successfully tackle zoonotic diseases, especially in areas of rural areas with high agricultural livelihood and livestock, there needs to be collaboration between state health departments, healthcare providers and systems, and agricultural safety organizations⁴. Prioritization on how to assess the incidence of zoonotic diseases that occur in each state, as well as specific state-wide risk factors that can be addressed should be a starting point on how to tackle these diseases at a rural level⁴.

Further, the application of the OneHealth framework can apply to many other public health and health care priorities. **NRHA would like the consideration to prioritize the use of the OneHealth framework to focus on tackling key issues faced by rural communities such as OUDs and health equity⁸.**

References:

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2. *Zoonotic Diseases in Rural America | CSELS | Rural Health | CDC*. (2023, April 21). https://www.cdc.gov/ruralhealth/zoonotic_diseases.html
3. LeJeune, J., & Kersting, A. (2010). Zoonoses: An occupational hazard for livestock workers and a public health concern for rural communities. *Journal of Agricultural Safety and Health*, 16(3), 161–179. <https://doi.org/10.13031/2013.32041>
4. Archibald, J. (2015, July 22). *Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center Surveillance for Zoonotic Diseases in Agricultural Workers in Minnesota—Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center*. <https://umash.umn.edu/portfolio/surveillance-for-zoonotic-diseases-in-agricultural-workers-in-minnesota/>
5. *Zoonotic Disease Threats in the U.S. Uncovered in Comprehensive New Report*. (n.d.). Harvard Law School - ALPP. Retrieved November 3, 2023, from <https://animal.law.harvard.edu/news-article/animal-markets-and-zoonotic-disease/>
6. *Federal One Health Coordination | One Health | CDC*. (2023, March 13). <https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth/what-we-do/federal-coordination.html>
7. *Rural Healthcare Workforce Overview—Rural Health Information Hub*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 3, 2023, from <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/health-care-workforce>
8. *Barriers to Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) in Rural Areas—RHHub Toolkit*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 3, 2023, from <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/moud/1/barriers>