

## **Rural Health Policy Congress Orientation Material**

Modeled after the National Rural Health Association's committee, the Rural Health Policy Congress is the policymaking body that determines the Rural Health Association of Tennessee's (RHA) positions regarding public policy. The responsibilities of the members are to:

- Identify topics and provide technical expertise on the development of Association policies.
- Create, review, and approve Association policy recommendations and positions.
- Ensure the Association's guiding principles and mission are promoted through all policies.
- Develop policy papers to communicate the Association's priorities and recommendations.

## **Membership**

The Rural Health Policy Congress shall be composed of individuals from the Member groups:

- Board of Directors (3)
- Federally Qualified Health Centers (3)
- Hospital and Health Systems (3)
- Rural Health Clinics (3)
- Rural Community Opioid Response (3)
- K-12 Education (3)
- Public Health (2)
- Higher Education (2)
- Statewide Health Resources (2)
- Students (3)
- Individual Member (3)

Efforts will be made to maintain representation between West, Middle, and East Tennessee.

Initially members will be recruited by RHA Staff and Board. Beginning in 2027, RHA will collect nominations for the membership to vote.

The Board of Directors shall elect a Chair from its membership to serve a two-year term. The Chair of the Rural Health Policy Congress shall conduct the Rural Health Policy Congress meetings, appoint members to ad hoc committees and other committees, sit as a member of the Board of Trustees, and report to the Board, at each of its meetings.

All Congress meetings are open to any RHA member as a non-voting participant (online only).

## **Procedures**

Proposed policy positions shall be considered by the Congress only when the position is sponsored by a constituency group or when forwarded to the Congress by RHA's Legislative Committee. A majority of the voting members of the Rural Health Policy Congress shall constitute a quorum. At any meeting of the Congress at which a quorum is present, a majority affirmative vote shall adopt a proposed policy. Voting by proxy is not allowed, although feedback provided in advance will be considered as feasible.

In determining the Association's positions on public policy, the Rural Health Policy Congress may use an ad hoc committee structure to research and develop policy positions and to receive, review, and report on proposals submitted for the consideration by the Rural Health Policy Congress. Members of any ad hoc committee or committees shall be appointed by the Rural Health Policy Congress Chair. Ad hoc committee members must be members of the Association, but such committees may invite the participation, without vote, of persons not members of the Association to provide expertise or assistance in developing the policy.

Any Association member may bring a position for consideration of the Rural Health Policy Congress by submitting the position in a letter co-signed by at least 10 RHA Members (not of the same organization) and submitting it to the Rural Health Policy Congress Chair.

### **Expectations**

Rural Health Policy Congress members shall:

- Attend all three in-person meetings scheduled to coincide the time of the West Regional Event, Annual RHC Summit (Middle), and Annual Conference (East).
- Meeting virtually is permissible when the meeting is outside of the representative's home region and/or when providing advance notice to the Chair.
- Serve as authors and/or mentors in the development of policy papers to communicate the Associations priorities and recommendations
- Respond to questions and requests from RHA staff and membership regarding Rural Health Policy Congress business
- Participate in community conversations with RHA members as appropriate

Rural Health Policy Congress meeting process:

- The Chair conducts the meetings and develops meeting agendas in collaboration with RHA staff. Congress members will be provided an opportunity to modify the agenda.
- RHA staff will maintain written minutes of each meeting. The minutes will be provided to Congress members prior to the next subsequent meeting during which the minutes will be approved by the Congress.
- Attendance by roll call, or other means, will be taken at each meeting. Attendance records will be maintained by the Chair of the Congress with the assistance of RHA staff.

### **2026 Meeting Dates**

- March 31<sup>st</sup> – Jackson, 3-5pm Central
- June 23<sup>rd</sup> – Murfreesboro, 3-5pm Central
- November 18<sup>th</sup> – Knoxville, 3-5pm Central

### **Nomination Form Link:**

[Tennessee Rural Health Congress Nomination/Application – Fill out form](https://forms.office.com/r/yeURufbzqU)  
(<https://forms.office.com/r/yeURufbzqU>)

**Nominations for 2026 must be submitted by Monday, January 5<sup>th</sup>.**

**Inquiries may be sent to [jacy@tnruralhealth.org](mailto:jacy@tnruralhealth.org)**