



## *Increase Health Care Opportunities Through Telemedicine*

**The Challenge:** Wyoming's citizens continually face problems in accessing quality healthcare and health education. Distance, geography, inclement weather, and rural communities all present challenges for the state's residents in gaining access to health care. Population dispersion makes it difficult to achieve the economy of scale necessary to support adequate primary care, much less specialty care. Currently Wyoming is forty-eighth among the fifty states in physicians per 100,000 population. Nearly half its twenty-three counties qualify as Health Professional Shortage Areas. Many of Wyoming's residents must travel long distances for even primary care services, and often they seek healthcare in neighboring states when unable to access needed care in Wyoming.

**Telemedicine as a Solution:** Use technology to support consultation, supervision, home health, and interdisciplinary care conferencing in underserved areas with:

- ***Direct patient care***
- ***Consultation with other professionals***
- ***Supervision for licensure, new provider, retraining, specialty training***
- ***Home health and other residential setting.***
- ***Interdisciplinary bio/psycho/social care conferences, with family members***

Increasing the use of telemedicine can increase access and quality of care by linking appropriate care when it is needed. Patients may receive appropriate care in a more timely way through consultation and/or supervision. This may increase access to specialty care, integrated care, and disease management. Increasing supervision and consultation via home health increases access and quality and improves people's ability to receive treatment in the least restrictive setting possible.

The mission of the Wyoming Network for Telehealth (WyNETTE) project is to improve access to, and quality of, health care in Wyoming through information and telecommunications technology. The project's primary objectives are (1) ***increase health care opportunities*** for the state's residents through telemedicine; (2)

***increase the number, types, and skills of health professionals*** in the state through distance delivery of health care education; and (3) ***increase access to information*** to support both health care and the administration of care through informatics and information technology, research, and policy development.