

**Hertford County Senior Center’s Telehealth Program:  
Changing the Face of Health Care Delivery**

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For citizens of rural communities across North Carolina, it can be difficult to access many types of services, but it can be especially challenging for older adults.

Several years ago, the Hertford County Office of Aging in Winton, in partnership with the Roanoke Chowan Community Health Center (RCCHC) in Ahoskie, identified accessing health care as one of the top challenges faced by many older adults. It was often difficult to get to their physician’s offices and clinics for required follow-up blood pressure checks, diabetic monitoring and other wellness checks.

Through its Telehealth program and a grant allowing the purchase of Telehealth monitors, RCCHC was able to offer these monitors at kiosks, administered through the Hertford County Office on Aging, in specific sites in the area. The Hertford County Senior Center, which is certified as a Senior Center of Excellence by DAAS and includes a nutrition site, received three kiosks. One kiosk went to the senior center and the other two to nutrition sites in other parts of the county.

To get started in the Telehealth program, the older adult completes the required registration with a RCCHC nurse. The nurse, in turn, develops an individual profile for each patient. Once the profile is complete, the older adult can access their physician’s office with a simple swipe of their individual medical identification card. As the user follows the on-screen prompts, the monitor records their vital signs and other screenings and sends these immediately to their physician. If the physician’s office receives any data that are abnormal for that patient, this is duly noted when the data is received, prompting a follow-up call from the physician’s office to the patient or their emergency contact person. The follow-up call instructs the patient as to what steps to take, directed by the physician.

The kiosks provide older adults in the community with greater access to care by connecting them to physicians who can evaluate their health and treat them, if needed. This allows for closer monitoring of the patient. In addition, the placement of the kiosks at sites around the county where the older adult is already present eliminates transportation issues that can often hinder access to medical care, particularly in rural areas of the state.

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For more information on Senior Centers in North Carolina:

<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/scenters/scenters.htm>