

# Letter to the Secretary: June 6-8, 2004, Nebraska City, Nebraska

June 2004

The Honorable Tommy G. Thompson  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, D.C.  
20201

Dear Secretary Thompson,

I wanted to share with you the highlights from the most recent meeting of the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services in Nebraska City, Nebraska June 6-8, 2004. As you know, at this time of year the Committee is in the early stages of developing the various chapters for its annual report. The 2005 report focuses on four key issues for rural communities. The first chapter will examine the importance of collaboration in rural communities. We believe this chapter will be a logical extension of the important themes raised in the 2003 report from your Rural Task Force. The second chapter will look at access to obstetrical services in rural communities. The third chapter examines the problem of obesity in rural communities. The final chapter will focus on the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program and how it meets human service needs in rural communities.

The recent meeting provided us with an opportunity to better understand all of these issues and how they play out in rural Nebraska towns such as Beatrice, Crete, Tecumseh and Syracuse. The Committee used this meeting to meet with State officials as well as health and human service providers across southeast Nebraska and to gather information on all of the report topics.

During the coming months, the Committee will continue to gather data on all of these issues and begin formally drafting chapters for the 2005 report and present those draft reports at the September 12-14th meeting in Tupelo, MS. This meeting will provide another opportunity to examine the 2005 report topics in light of how they affect rural communities in northeast Mississippi.

We are excited about the 2005 report and the opportunity to provide the Department with some analysis of these important rural issues and a number of recommendations on how to better address these challenges. It is our hope that you can join us for the September meeting. Thank you again for your support of this Committee and your support of Rural America.

Sincerely,

David M. Beasley  
Chair