

Potter County is one of 13 participants selected for Public Health Leadership Academy, a project of the National Assn. of Counties and the de Beaumont Foundation. Commissioner Paul Heimel and Human Services Administrator Thomas Patterson will work with experts to:

- *create a communitywide strategic plan to ensure access to safe, affordable health care.*
- *develop a Health Access Navigation function to connect residents with needed care.*

SESSION NO. 1 REPORT, Nov. 16, 2026

Our orientation workshop was inspiring as we learned more about the academy experience and the objectives of each county engaged in the 2026-27 cohort. We met the project leaders and learned that Potter County is being viewed as a rural pilot among the 13 teams selected through a highly competitive application process that was open to more than 2,500 counties nationwide. We're joined by:
Boone County, Mo. (pop 192,000).; **Lake County, Ind.** (504,000); **Clinton County, Mich.** (80,000); **Santa Cruz County, Calif.** (271,000); **Cook County, Ill.** (5.2M); **Forsyth County, N.C.** (402,000); **Cobb County, Ga.** (797,000), **Linn County, Iowa** (232,000); **Northwest Arctic Borough, Alaska** (7,800); **Tooele County, Utah** (88,000); **Stearns County, Minn.** (164.000); and **Sonoma County, Calif.** (486,000).

We were tasked today with identifying "bright spots" in Potter County (pop. 15,900) – in other words, elements that support community well-being and good health – as well as defining our expectations for the two deliverables we'll be working on (see above).

Meanwhile, we have gotten an early start. To prepare for the academy, we have connected with administrators at UPMC Cole, the Pa. Office of Rural Health, Hospital and Healthsystem Assn. of Pa., Pa. Rural Health Assn., the National Rural Health Assn., EMS West and other potential partners and stakeholders. We will continue to reach out to other agencies, organizations and individuals.

Our next session will be on Dec. 14. In the meantime, we welcome suggestions, comments and observations as we begin to identify the stakeholders who will be invited to the table after we complete the academy in March 2027. Feel free to send your comments to pheimel@pottercountypa.net and tpatterson@pottercountypa.gov. We also welcome suggestions for additions to our mailing list. Thank you for your interest!