

## Improving Access to Diagnostic and Support Resources for Rural Populations Impacted by Multiple Sclerosis (MS) in Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia

### Purpose

To improve access, delivery, and utilization of MS specialty health care and related community support services for people living with MS in rural areas of MD, NC, VA, and WV.

### Award Details

This project is made possible by generous support from the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation (BMSF) whose mission is to promote health equity and improve the health outcomes of populations disproportionately affected by serious disease and conditions strengthening community-based health care worker capacity, integrating medical care and community-based supportive services, and mobilizing communities in the fight against the disease. An award in the amount of \$747,505 will be distributed over the three-year project period.

### Goals

1. Deliver MS education and training to non-specialty health care professionals
2. Connect rural residents impacted by MS with relevant resources
3. Increase public awareness about MS, its risk factors, early symptoms, and options for treatment

### Methods

1. Develop an expanded coalition of health care professionals living or delivering services in rural areas with specific knowledge about MS, its risk factors, early symptoms, and options for treatment
  - a) Leverage existing ECHO programs in project area to deliver MS-curriculum
  - b) Recruit non-specialty health care providers and community professionals delivering health-related services
2. Create an innovative navigation tool that maps MS-specific and MS-related health and social service programs to connect people living with MS and their care partners to vital resources
  - a) Assess priority needs of people impacted by MS living in rural areas
  - b) Identify health and social service programs in the project area
  - c) Create a digital network mapping tool
  - d) Train community leaders on use of the tool and establish community-based navigation centers in the project area
3. Develop awareness materials and partner with trusted community leaders to implement effective dissemination campaigns to high-risk rural communities

## Reach

The project aims to reach 5,000 rural residents across MD, NC, VA, and WV through convenings, community events, health screenings, navigator centers, and health and health-related professionals delivering care in rural areas.

State	Counties
Maryland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Caroline</li><li>• Garrett</li></ul>
North Carolina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Caswell</li><li>• Duplin</li><li>• Greene</li><li>• Jones</li><li>• Lenoir</li><li>• Montgomery</li><li>• Surry</li><li>• Wilkes</li></ul>
Virginia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brunswick</li><li>• Buckingham</li><li>• Charlotte</li><li>• Cumberland</li><li>• Henry</li><li>• Louisa</li><li>• Lunenburg</li><li>• Nottoway</li><li>• Orange</li><li>• Patrick</li><li>• Pittsylvania</li><li>• Prince Edward</li></ul>
West Virginia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fayette</li><li>• Marion</li><li>• McDowell</li><li>• Mercer</li><li>• Monroe</li><li>• Preston</li><li>• Raleigh</li><li>• Summers</li><li>• Wetzel</li><li>• Wyoming</li></ul>