



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES RECIPIENTS OF \$15 MILLION TO IMPROVE RURAL HEALTH CARE *UNICOM TO RECEIVE \$10 MILLION***

WASHINGTON, Oct. 23, 2008 — Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Thomas Dorr today announced the selection of six recipients in five states to receive \$15 million in distance learning and telemedicine loans and grants.

“The availability of locally provided quality health care services is important to the residents of rural communities. It is also one of the factors that encourages families, businesses and institutions to locate in rural areas,” Dorr said. “These funds will assist rural hospitals and medical centers as they work to upgrade health care delivery services to benefit patients and improve the quality of rural life.”

The Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) program is designed to meet the educational and health care needs of rural America through the use of advanced telecommunications technologies.

For example, Eastern Maine Healthcare System in Brewer, Maine, was selected to receive an \$800,000 loan and a \$200,000 grant to expand its Electronic Medical Records (EMR) system by purchasing software, medical carts and laptop computers to provide centralized, electronic patient records-sharing among 18 offices. EMR systems use technology to improve the speed and accuracy of transmitting medical data to doctors, nurses, hospitals and other medical professionals and facilities in rural communities. Kossuth Regional Health Center, in Algona, Iowa, was selected to receive a \$537,532 loan and a \$134,382 grant to implement a comprehensive EMR filing system using high-speed telecommunications lines.

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The complete list of recipients is below. Funding of individual recipients is contingent upon their meeting the conditions of the loan and grant agreement.

#### **2008 Distance Learning and Telemedicine Funding Recipients**

<b>State</b>	<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Loan Amount</b>	<b>Grant Amount</b>
AK	Unicom, Inc.	\$9,000,000	\$1,000,000
IA	Ellsworth Municipal Hospital	\$657,897	\$164,474
IA	Kossuth Regional Health Center	\$537,532	\$134,382
ME	Eastern Maine Healthcare System Center	\$800,000	\$200,000
NH	Spears Memorial Hospital	\$797,421	\$88,602
OH	HealthSource of Ohio, Inc.	\$800,000	\$200,000
PA	Dubois Regional Medical Center	\$500,000	\$125,000

USDA Rural Development's mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for rural residents. Rural Development has invested more than \$110 billion since 2001 for equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. More than 2 million jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA Rural Development's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.