



PRaCTICE: Primary Care Rural and Frontier Clinical Trials Innovation Center

Quarterly Newsletter, Summer 2026

The goal of PRaCTICE is to engage with rural and frontier primary care clinics in the Northwest United States to identify research priorities and to partner with them to implement research studies.

Co-Care

A major aim of PRaCTICE is to provide research expertise and rural partnerships for national research trials, matched through CARE for Health™. One of these is a seven-site nationwide study testing a collaborative approach to caring for patients with substance use disorder. This study, Collaborative Care for Polysubstance use in Primary Care Settings (Co-Care) (CTN-0139, LIs: McNeely & Liebschultz, NIDA Clinical Trials Network New York Node (UG1DA013035) and Appalachian Node (UG1DA049436)) has been going strong at a PRaCTICE partner clinic, Winding Waters Medical Clinic in Enterprise, Joseph, and Wallowa clinics since May of 2025.

Co-Care completed new patient recruitment on February 28, 2026, and the Winding Waters team reached their enrollment goal of 32 patients and 10 primary care providers. Each primary care panel is randomly assigned to either provide usual substance use disorder care or use a newly designed collaborative approach. In the collaborative approach, a team provides care with a nurse care manager, a provider, and a health coach, and patients can also participate in contingency management. Even though enrollment is complete, the study work is ongoing as the team collects data via monthly and quarterly surveys and visits, and begins a chart record review.

Our team member Mariana (introduced in the 'Meet the Team' segment below) shared, "Co-Care has given ORPRN a real glimpse at the main goal and intention that PRaCTICe is bringing to research: proactive same-table conversations where the clinic and the researchers sit together to strategize implementation and recruitment, and real-time application of impactful objectives driven by the clinic's culture and supported by their standing in the community ...I am looking forward to learning the outcomes of Co-Care!"

What's Next?

The study team includes two research coordinators, a project manager, a principal investigator, a clinical champion, a nurse care manager, and a clinic manager. Next up for the team will be reviewing Electronic Health Record charts for all patients as they complete their 12 months in the study. Participating providers will also be interviewed to learn about what implementation was like.

The Co-Care team's motto for success in recruitment was "We are doing ALL the things!" They used a tireless multi-model outreach approach, with community messaging and relationship building to ensure patients and the whole county knew about the study at Winding Waters. Our team member Orianna (introduced in the 'Meet the Team' segment below) said, "Working on Co-Care is multitasking at its finest, meeting

the patients where they are at, willing to jump at a moment's notice, tackling barriers we didn't even know we had!"

The team's perseverance was apparent, with the research coordinators working unusual hours to meet with patients whenever it was convenient. The team is proud to be working in the substance use space, which is often stigmatized and affects people across all walks of life.

Listening Sessions

This year, we held three listening sessions between February and March to understand key health priorities, discuss challenges and successes to research engagement, and gather feedback on study concepts. Listening sessions were held in Southern Oregon, Northern Idaho, and Southwestern Idaho. We heard from a total of 27 participants (7-14 participants per session), including various stakeholders in the health care delivery ecosystem, such as leaders from local primary care clinics and health systems, community-based organizations, state agencies, and people who receive care in the community.

The sessions offered powerful insight into the lived experiences of rural and frontier communities. Consistent with our conversations last year, we heard agreement on health priorities, barriers to care, and the need for a renewed focus on community-engaged research, despite differences across regions, populations, and types of health systems. Some central concerns were behavioral health, access to care, chronic disease management, and social determinants of health. Among the health priorities, behavioral health and substance use emerged as a particularly urgent and growing need. To make research most valuable in rural regions, suggestions included conducting practical, action-oriented research, using community-led and participatory approaches, and building local capacity.

The sessions emphasized the importance of research partnerships that clearly communicate purpose and value, and the PRaCTICe team is actively evaluating ways to bring resources back to communities and our

rural partners. The PRaCTICe team is producing a summary of findings that will be shared back with participants and partners soon.

Meet the Team: Regional Engagement Specialists (RES)



Orianna Leith is a Research Project Coordinator at ORPRN. Over the last 12 years, Orianna has held a variety of positions that introduced her to many aspects of the rural health care system. Ms. Leith started in an administrative position at an assisted living and memory care facility. Next, she worked at an FQHC on the Care Coordination team, supporting patients and providers, primarily with referrals and community resources.

Ms. Leith was the Quality Data Coordinator for a Rural Health Clinic, managing a variety of quality metrics and RHC regulations, and working toward a recent designation as a 5-star Patient-Centered Primary Care Home. After joining ORPRN in 2025, she was designated as a Coordinator on PRaCTICe's Co-Care team, assisting in recruitment and outreach, reporting, and follow-up activities. She particularly enjoys being part of initiatives that focus on patient care, wellness, improving health outcomes in rural communities - such as the one in which she lives - and developing processes that allow patients to navigate the health care system with ease.

Jessica ("Jess") Leroux is a Research Project Coordinator at ORPRN. For the past 5 years, Jess has worked on a variety of projects at ORPRN with a focus on cancer prevention research, early childhood development, and vaccine quality assurance. As a Coordinator on PRaCTICe's Co-Care team, Jess assists in recruitment and outreach, reporting, and follow-up activities. Jess enjoys the collaborative nature of Co-Care; she



appreciates meeting participants where they are and bringing research to rural communities.



Mariana Solis-Wunderlich is a Research Project Coordinator at ORPRN. Mariana joined ORPRN to support research in rural Oregon, such as the Columbia River Gorge, where she reinforced the implementation of a multi-cancer early detection study focused on underserved populations and the launch of a pediatric study with preschool-aged children testing a program to improve kindergarten readiness. Mariana travels around

Oregon to support a spectrum of research studies and activities from frontier Eastern Oregon to sunny southern Oregon, to Oregon's metropolitan areas, and back around to her neck of the woods by Mt. Hood. As a Research Project Coordinator within PRaCTICe, Mariana is a part of one of the launching NIH studies, Co-Care, where she supports the RC role via recruitment and documentation, leading the regulatory binder duties, and administers project support tasks. Mariana is driven by and attracted to ORPRN's ethos of improving health care access for all, with a focus on underserved and underrepresented communities in Oregon.

Acknowledgements

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