

Expanding Farm Center Impact



Rural Health Transformation Program

Dan Bauer – Division of Agricultural Development

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

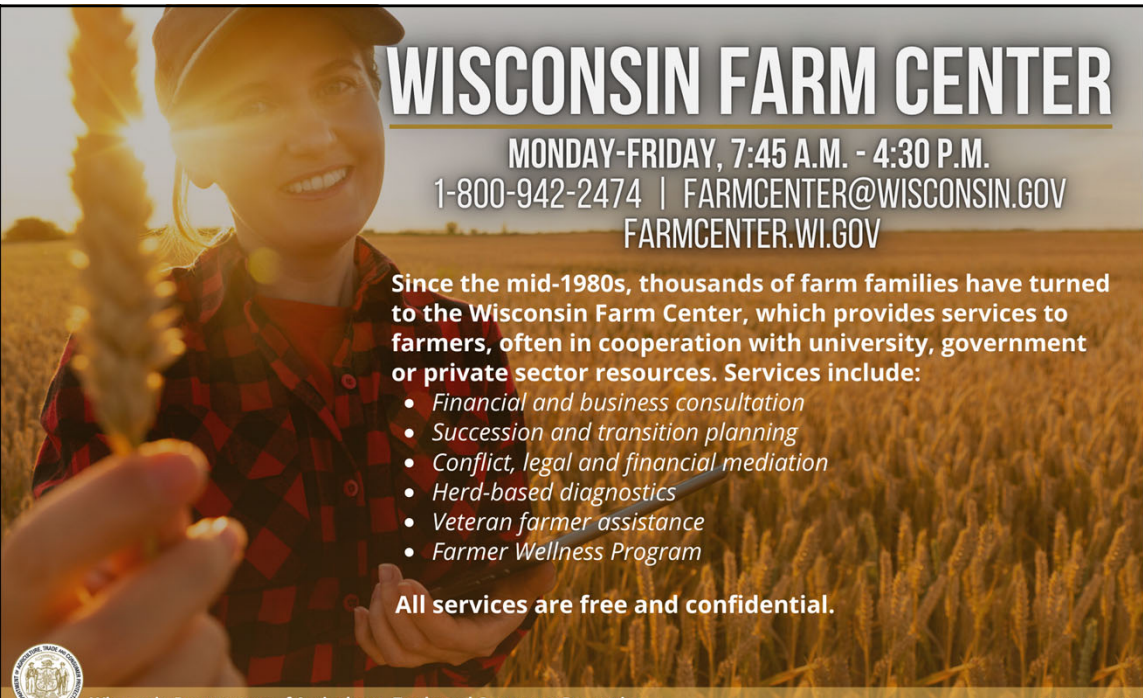
July 9, 2026

AGENDA

1. Review the Farm Center, its programs, and staff
2. Introduce the federal Rural Health Transformation Program (RHT), Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) role, and DATCP's participation
3. Walk through DATCP's RHT project, its goals, what has been achieved thus far, and why it's important



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WISCONSIN FARM CENTER

MONDAY-FRIDAY, 7:45 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.
1-800-942-2474 | FARMCENTER@WISCONSIN.GOV
FARMCENTER.WI.GOV

Since the mid-1980s, thousands of farm families have turned to the Wisconsin Farm Center, which provides services to farmers, often in cooperation with university, government or private sector resources. Services include:

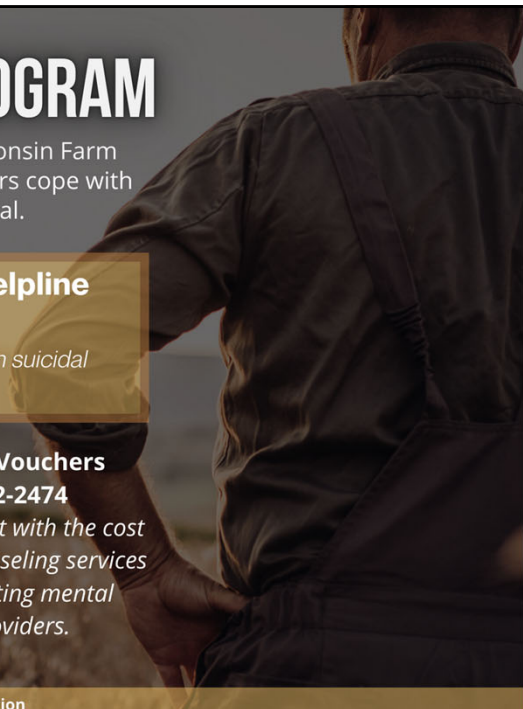
- Financial and business consultation
- Succession and transition planning
- Conflict, legal and financial mediation
- Herd-based diagnostics
- Veteran farmer assistance
- Farmer Wellness Program

All services are free and confidential.



Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

MK-FC-101 (09/20)



FARMER WELLNESS PROGRAM

Given the challenging nature of farming, the Wisconsin Farm Center is providing several resources to help farmers cope with stress. All services are free and confidential.

24/7 Wisconsin Farmer Wellness Helpline
1-888-901-2558

Around-the-clock support for farmers struggling with suicidal thoughts, depression, or anxiety.

Tele-Counseling 1-888-901-2558 <i>Free, confidential counseling sessions by licensed mental health professionals. Available by phone or video.</i>	Counseling Vouchers 1-800-942-2474 <i>Vouchers to assist with the cost of in-person counseling services with participating mental health providers.</i>
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Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



**Financial
Consulting**



**Transition
Planning**



**Conflict
Mediation**



**Herd-Based
Diagnostics**



**Veteran Farmer
Assistance**



Farmer Wellness



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MEET THE FARM CENTER STAFF



Dan Bauer



Kevin Plante



JoAnn Peterson



Nikki Lennart



Karen Endres



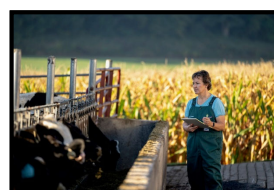
Lynae Schott



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PROGRAM ACTIVITY – FISCAL YEAR 2026 ESTIMATES

- Toll-free helpline received nearly **700** direct calls
- Projected to manage nearly **1,100** inquiries
- Projected to consult with over **90** farmers on financial and transition planning, mediation, and dairy diagnostics
- Another **80** farmers or their family members took advantage of Farmer Wellness Program services
- Will sponsor just under **600** professional counseling sessions for farmers or their family members



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WISCONSIN'S RURAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM

- **\$203.7** million federally funded initiative administered by Wisconsin DHS
- Aims to strengthen rural healthcare through workforce development, technology upgrades, and coordinated partnerships
- Funded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
- DATCP joined as an implementation partner



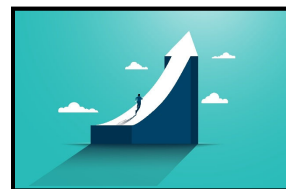
More info: [Wisconsin Rural Health Transformation](#)



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WHY IS PARTICIPATING IN THE RHT IMPORTANT FOR DATCP?

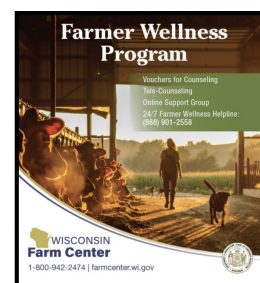
- New and valuable funding source to support the Farm Center's Farmer Wellness Program (FWP)
- Operated with state funds, the FWP is starting its 7th year, has grown each, and its growth trajectory continues
- Originally funded at **\$100,000** annually, this amount has remained static, while program usage has increased
- In the RHT project year one, DATCP will receive up to **\$185,384** to help establish and grow the FWP



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HOW TO STRENGTHEN WISCONSIN'S FARMER WELLNESS PROGRAM?

- Establish DATCP's Farmer Wellness Program as a first contact of choice for farmers seeking mental health resources
- As part of the Rural Health Transformation Program, we have completed the following towards this goal:
 - Ran educational public service announcements
 - Executed informational email campaign specifically targeting farmers
 - Began campaign to promote DATCP's Rural Realities Podcast



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EDUCATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Partnering with [Learfield](#) to reach farmer audience via public service announcement radio spots
- Designed to educate on farm stress
- Alert listeners to confidential resources available to farmers and their families
- Feature Farm Center consulting staff:
 - Kevin Plante, Financial & Transition Planning
 - Nikki Lennart, Financial & Transition Planning



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EDUCATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

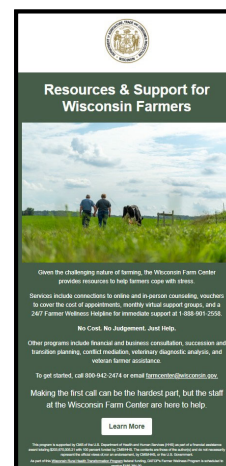
- In our staff's voice, promote the availability of the Wisconsin Farm Center and its Farmer Wellness Program
- Emphasize the free and confidential nature of this support and that no one needs to tackle struggles alone
- Communicate a clear promise: **no judgement, no cost, just help...**



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DIRECT EMAIL CAMPAIGN

- Partnering with [The Mid-West Farm Report](#) to send [direct informational emails](#) to Wisconsin Farmers
- Targeting 32,499 recipients
- Two emails:
 - The first, to the full recipient list
 - The second, to anyone who did not open the initial email



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DIRECT EMAIL CAMPAIGN – PERFORMANCE STATS

- Initial email distributed in early June:
 - 32,499 recipients
 - 8,366 opens for a 25.74% open rate
 - 961 clicks for a 2.96% click-through-rate
- Redeploy email distributed in mid-June to non-openers:
 - 24,133 recipients
 - 5,220 opens for a 21.63% open rate
 - 550 clicks for a 2.28% click-through-rate



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RURAL REALITIES PODCAST PROMOTION

- Rural Realities blends insight from host Karen Endres with guest experts to deliver practical advice helping farmers improve wellbeing and solve everyday challenges
- Partnered with Learfield to develop video clips for social media to create podcast interest
- DATCP is also planning on using the content on its social media channels



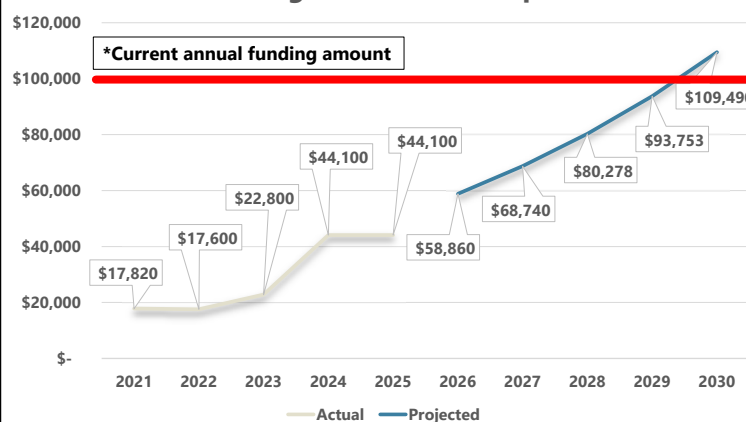
Left: Link to preview of May's Mental Health Month Episode with Secretary Romanki
Right: Link to Rural Realities podcast library



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LOOKING AHEAD: WHY IS RHT FUNDING CRITICAL FOR DATCP'S FARMER WELLNESS PROGRAM?

Est. Counseling Voucher Redemption Cost



- **\$100K/yr.** state funds
- In fiscal year 2026, nearly **\$60K** of funding will go to vouchers (3x's the amount used in early years)
- Over the last five years, growing at nearly 17% CAGR
- Demand will outpace annual state funding amount

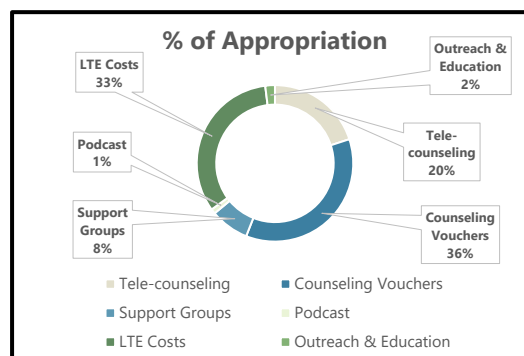


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LOOKING AT TOTAL FARMER WELLNESS PROGRAM COSTS: FISCAL YEAR 2025

Initiative	FY25 Actual \$	FY25 %	FY25 Budget \$	FY25 Variance %
Tele-counseling	\$24,152	20%	\$25,000	-4%
Counseling Vouchers	\$44,100	36%	\$25,000	43%
Farmer Support Groups	\$10,500	8%	\$7,000	33%
Rural Realities Podcast	\$519	1%	\$0	100%
Limited Term Employee (LTE)	\$40,586	33%	\$25,000	38%
Outreach and Education	\$3,106	2%	\$18,000	-480%
TOTALS	\$122,963	100%	\$100,000	-23%

- **\$22,963** of staffing costs covered by DATCP General Purpose Revenue (GPR)
- GPR availability is not guaranteed
- RHT award or increased state funds critical



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COUNSELING VOUCHER DEMAND ILLUSTRATION: HOW CAN RHT PROVIDE SUPPORT?

Fiscal Year	Projected Voucher Usage	Projected Cost	Projected Extra \$ Needed	Rounded RHT Request \$
2026	589	\$58,860	\$8,856	\$10,000
2027	687	\$68,740	\$18,740	\$20,000
2028	803	\$80,288	\$30,288	\$30,000
2029	938	\$93,753	\$43,753	\$40,000
2030	1,095	\$109,490	\$59,490	\$50,000
Total	-	-	-	\$150,000

Assumptions:

- 16.8% compound annual growth rate based on prior five years
- At least \$50,000 of the \$100,000 per year of state funding available for counseling vouchers
- Round numbers used for future RHT application amounts for ease



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RURAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM: PRIMARY BENEFITS

1. As demonstrated, support increasing demand for counseling sessions
2. Farm Center and Farmer Wellness Program budgets are typically operations-focused; therefore, RHT funding can help with investments in outreach to ensure more farmers know about available services
3. Farmer Wellness Program staffing costs not covered by specifically appropriated state funds which have been supported by GPR in previous years



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THANKS TO DHS FOR INVITING DATCP TO JOIN THIS PROJECT!



Dan Bauer

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