

Kier Todd, Physician Assistant, Brookings Ore.

Kier Todd, a physician assistant out of Brookings, Ore., is playing a vital role in providing health care services in rural Curry County. Located in the far southwestern corner of Oregon, the county has just a handful of family practice physicians, a few rare specialists and only three PAs. The county's hospital, Curry General, has just 17 beds and is one of the smallest hospitals in the country.

Despite its size, the county has its fair share of people with mental health issues. So in October 2009 when the county lost its only psychiatrist, it knew it would soon have an urgent need for medical professionals to provide psychiatric services. In this time of need, Todd stepped up to the challenge. With the approval of Bill McMillan, CEO of Curry Health District, Todd began taking additional training in psychiatry and psychopharmacology, and since the beginning of 2010 he has been working full-time in psychiatry.

Todd's efforts have helped Curry General Hospital receive statewide recognition for its access to mental health treatment, as the hospital was notified in May 2010 that it had earned the Access Award from the Oregon Psychiatric Association. Todd's willingness and dedication to expanding access to health care in rural Curry County is a great example of the important role physician assistants play across the state in promoting quality, cost-effective and accessible health care.