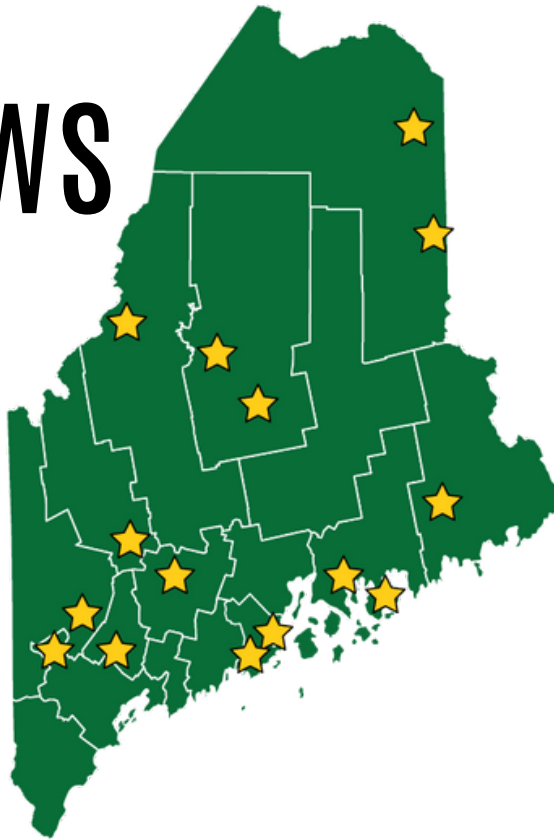


MERGE News

MERGE IS GROWING “UP” WITH MORE ROTATIONS

The MERGE Collaborative is moving on up! We are now offering electives in every rural region of Maine, including partners in Aroostook County. With new rotations in Presque Isle and Houlton we are making opportunities in every corner of the state. New opportunities have also opened in Western and Central Maine with our partners from Northern Light Health at CA Dean and Mayo hospitals. The MERGE Collaborative now boasts 31 unique rural elective opportunities across thirteen disciplines. To learn more about our catalogue of offerings, be sure to visit our elective offerings website at <https://mergecollaborative.org/rural-resident-training/>.



SERVING MAINE THROUGH 2025

We are excited to share that funding for the MERGE Collaborative from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has been extended through 2025. Thanks to prudent fiscal management in our first year and the natural progression of expenses landing later in the program, the DHHS has allowed MERGE to extend the original grant of \$950,000 into a third year. This extension will allow MERGE to better serve the residents of Maine and give the program time to deliver on longer-term goals.

REMINDER

The First Annual MERGE Conference will be on March 28th in Orono, ME. We will kick off at 8:30 AM at the Wells Conference Center!

Newsletter Highlights

[Maine Rural Healthcare Education Grand Rounds](#)

[New Housing Reimbursement Policy for MERGE Residents](#)

[Elective Rotation Spotlight: Carceral Medicine with the Maine State Department of Corrections](#)

[A Message from Dr. Kathryn Hoffmann of the Maine-Dartmouth Family Medicine Residency](#)

New MERGE Rotations

Family Medicine in Dover-Foxcroft, ME

Family Medicine-OB in Sangerville, ME

Cardiology in Lewiston and Augusta, ME

Emergency Medicine in Houlton, ME

Anesthesiology in Farmington, ME

Hospice Care in Presque Isle, ME

MAINE RURAL HEALTHCARE EDUCATION GRAND ROUNDS

The MERGE Collaborative has teamed up with the [Building-ME Network](#) to deliver the Maine Rural Healthcare Education Grand Rounds. This program takes place on the second Friday of every month at 12:00 PM on a virtual platform. Each session is designed to support a range of healthcare professionals engaged in clinical teaching. All sessions are eligible for CME credit and can be accessed directly at http://bit.ly/Maine_Rural_Healthcare_Education.

Our next session will be on April 12th and it will feature Dr. Jason Hine of Southern Maine Health Care. He will present, “Time Efficient Teaching.” This 30-minute virtual session will cover the educationally enriching roles learners can play to support clinical operations and share presentation techniques in the clinical teaching setting.



Dr. Jason Hine of Southern Maine Healthcare will present “Time Efficient Teaching” on April 12th.

NEW HOUSING REIMBURSEMENT POLICY FOR MERGE RESIDENTS

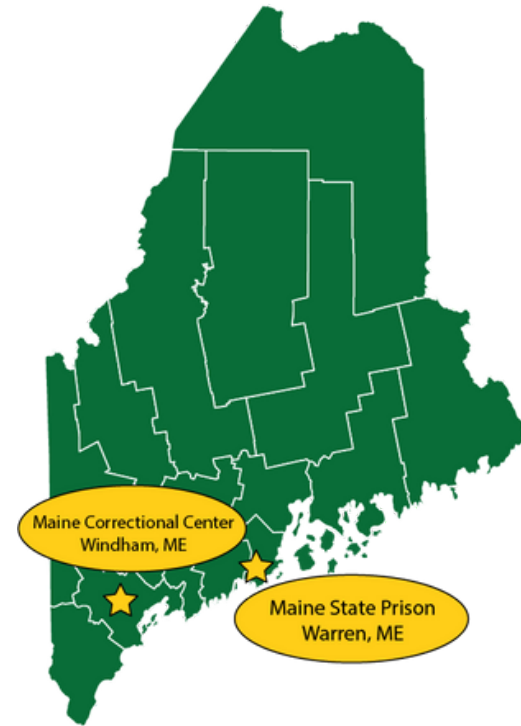
One great benefit of the MERGE Collaborative is that we can support learners in finding housing for our rural sites where on-site housing is not available. We recognize that funds to cover housing are a limited resource and should be distributed in a way that is fair to our residents and the sites supporting them. As we provide support through 2025, we encourage residents and learning sites to learn more about our reimbursement policies so that we can best serve all of our partners and, in turn, serve the population of Maine. Please visit <https://mergecollaborative.org/merge-housing-reimbursement-policy/> to learn more.



SPOTLIGHT: CARCERAL MEDICINE WITH THE MAINE STATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

The MERGE Collaborative was founded to serve Maine's rural and underserved communities. One of the most vulnerable populations in our state is the incarcerated. According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, "Inmates in correctional facilities have significantly higher rates of disease than the general population, and correctional facilities are often an ill-equipped provider for the medically underserved. This population tends to suffer in greater numbers from infectious disease, mental health problems, and substance use and addiction."

The MERGE Collaborative is working with the Department of Corrections to offer a 2-4 week elective rotation in carceral medicine. Focusing on facilities in Windham and Warren, this rotation is open to resident physicians of any discipline.



According to Regional Medical Director Jennifer McConnell, MD, "Our facilities, providers and incarcerated residents have had the opportunity to experience our first MERGE resident physician and it was clearly a success. Our medical staff enjoyed having a physician young in her career eager to learn, but also eager to share her skills and knowledge. Residents appreciated her style and in a short time she was helpful in their care. I found it refreshing to be teaching and sharing what we within the DOC do to provide medical care to the incarcerated population here in Maine. I would say it was a successful two weeks."

Resident physician Dr. Emily Hill of the Central Maine Medical Center Family Medicine Residency recently participated in the Carceral Medicine rotation and said, "It was a really wonderful experience. It certainly did what MERGE intended it to do. Dr. McConnell and all the providers and staff at the DOC were inspiring to work with. They welcomed me without hesitation and were eager to incorporate me into their day-to-day work. As a Mainer who has returned to the state to train and develop my career here, it gave me significant exposure to DOC healthcare, job opportunity potential to contemplate as well as exposure to what some of my own clinic patients have experienced during their time incarcerated. I would recommend it in a heartbeat to others."

A Message from Dr. Kathryn Hoffmann, DIO Maine-Dartmouth Family Medicine Residency

Happy Match Week! This week thousands of medical students across the country will learn their Match results. Simultaneously, our four sponsoring institutions in Maine will learn which physicians will join us in July to start their training. It is a week of anxiety and celebration, and the outcome is critical to healthcare access in our state. Of the physicians who completed training between 2013-22, 57.1% practice in the state of their residency training;

in Maine we retained 60.2% of our graduates. Notably, only 7.8% of Maine physicians who graduated in this timeframe practice in a medically underserved area (AAMC Resident Report 2023). As our state faces historic physician shortages in rural areas, introducing our trainees to these communities is imperative to fostering connections to future practice sites and growing our rural physician workforce.