



Rural Health Challenges in the Era of COVID

National Rural Health Day

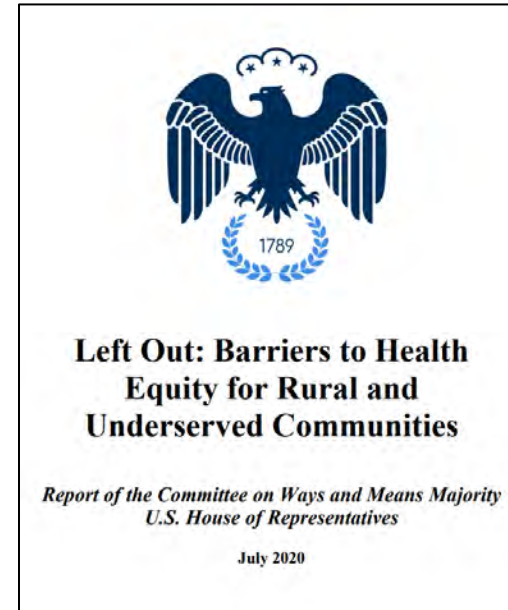
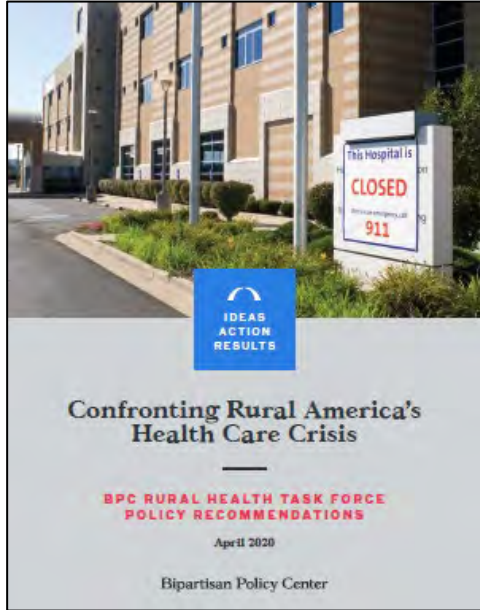
November 19th, 2020

Tom Morris – Associate Administrator
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP)

Vision: Healthy Communities, Healthy People

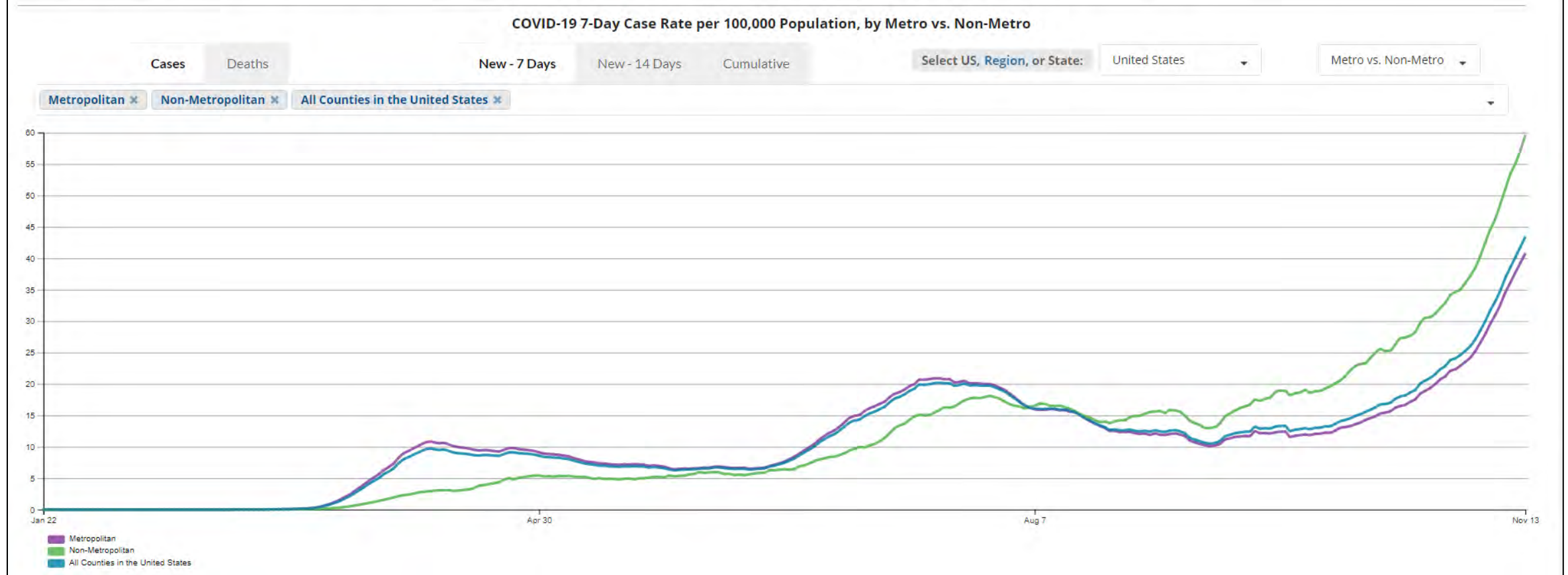


2020 & Rural Health



Rural Health Challenges in the Era of COVID

Trends in COVID-19 Cases and Deaths in the United States, by County-level Population Factors



Source: CDC COVID Data Tracker: https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#pop-factors_newcases



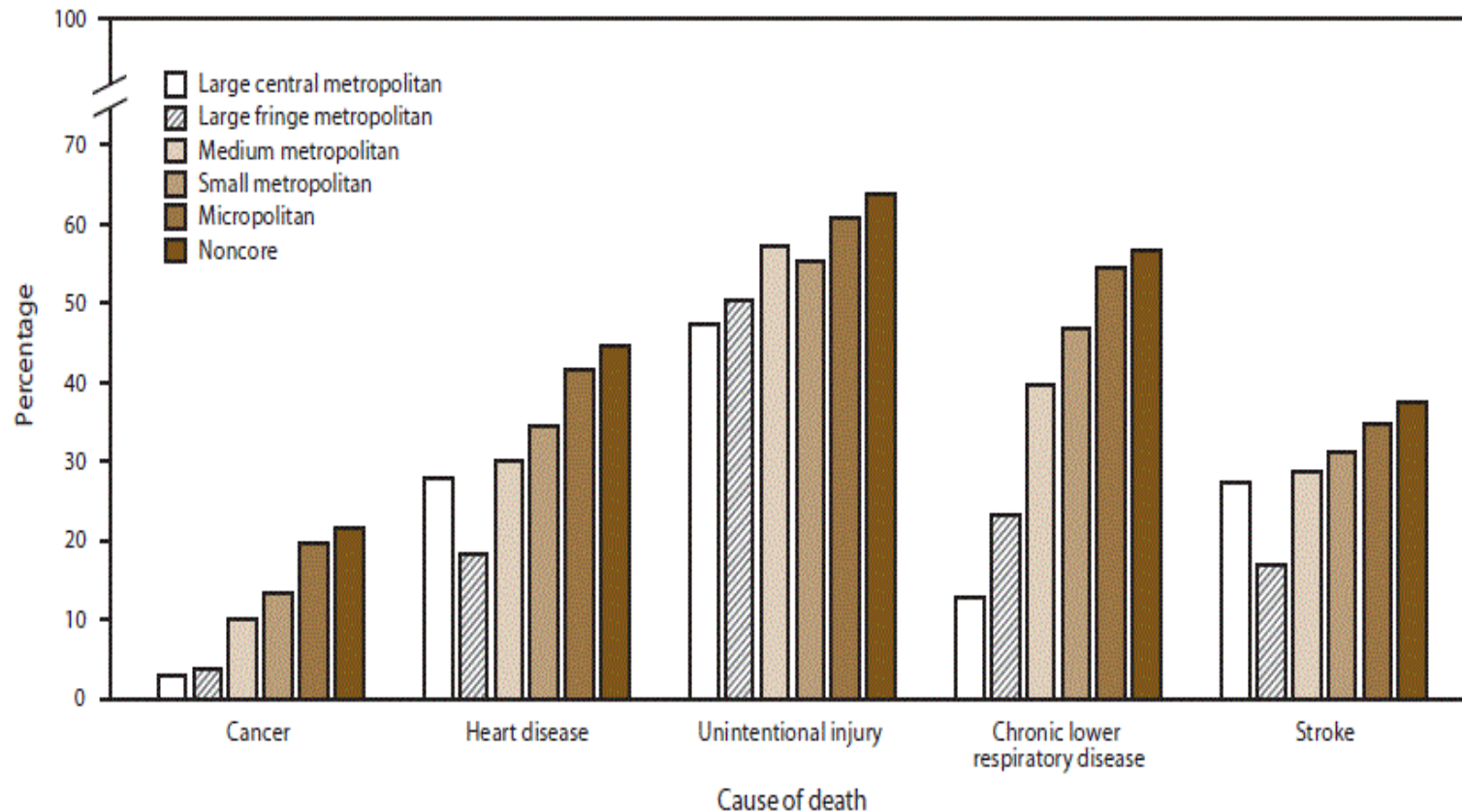
Rural Health Challenges in the Era of COVID



- Limited Inpatient and ICU Capacity
- Workforce Shortages
- Supply Line Gaps
- Financial Vulnerability
- Ensuring Resiliency

Rural Health Challenges in the Era of COVID

Existing Rural Disparities Exacerbated by the Pandemic



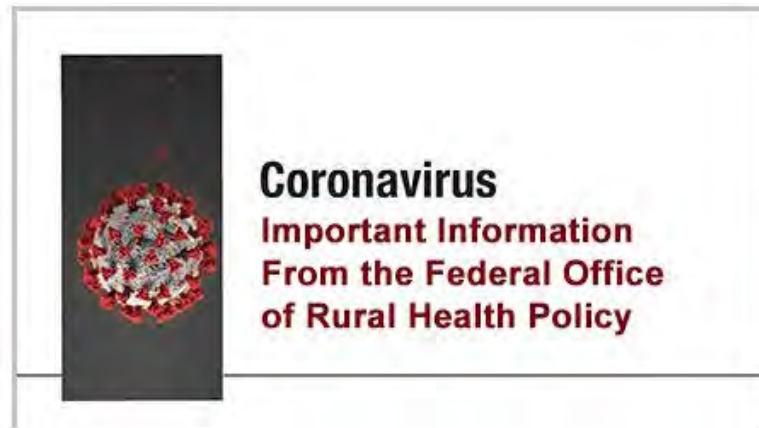
In 2019, CDC noted a higher rate of potentially excess deaths occurred among rural Americans than urban Americans from the 5 leading causes of death

Source: National Center for Health Statistics: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/ss/ss6810a1.htm#F1_down; Percentage of deaths that were potentially excess* among persons aged <80 years from the five leading causes of death, by urban-rural county classification — National Vital Statistics System, United States, 2017



Addressing Rural COVID Challenges

- Support for RHC COVID-19 Testing
- Provider Relief Payments to Rural Hospitals & Providers
- Funding to Support Tribes
- Expansion and Support for Telehealth



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 1, 2020

Contact: HHS Press Office
202-690-6343
media@hhs.gov

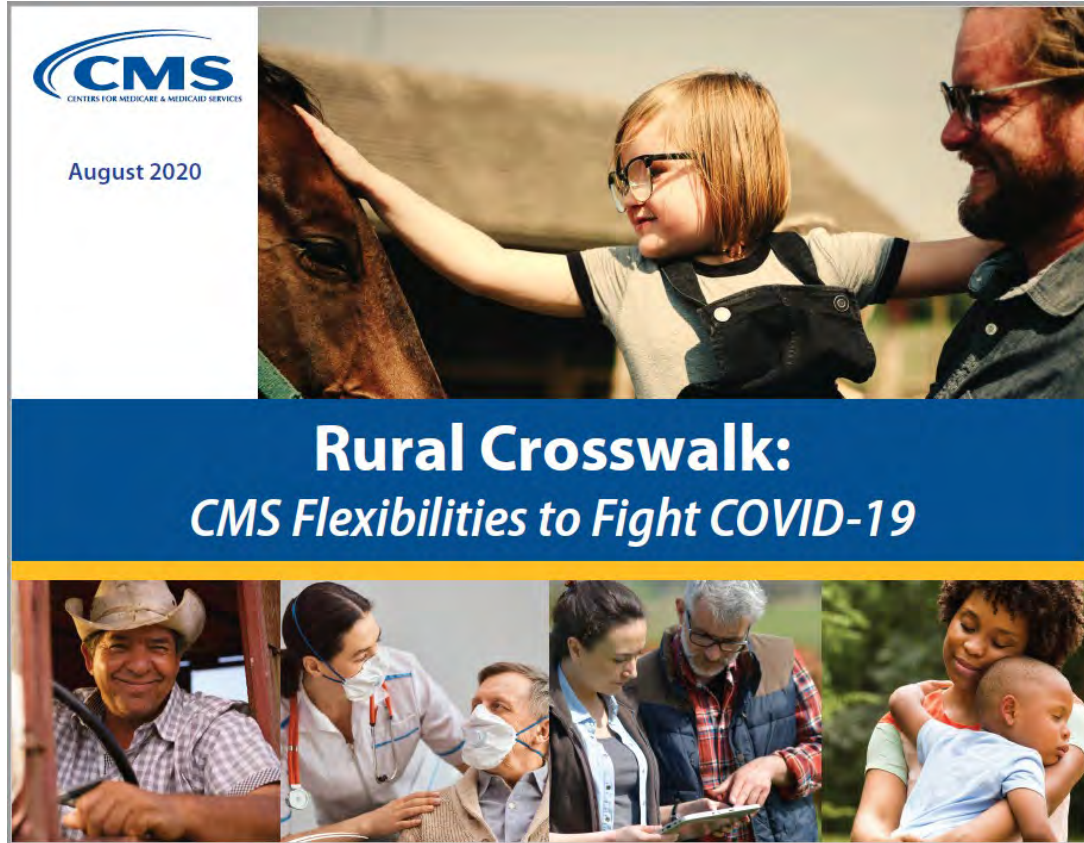
HHS Begins Distribution of Payments to Hospitals with High COVID-19 Admissions, Rural Providers

Today, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is processing payments from the Provider Relief Fund to hospitals with large numbers of COVID-19 inpatient admissions through April 10, 2020, and to rural providers in support of the national response to COVID-19.

"These new payments are being distributed to healthcare providers who have been hardest hit by the virus: \$12 billion to facilities admitting large numbers of COVID-19 patients and \$10 billion to providers in rural areas, who are already working on narrow margins," said HHS Secretary Alex Azar. "HHS has put these funds out as quickly as possible, after gathering data to ensure that they are going to the providers who need them the most. With another \$75 billion recently appropriated by Congress, the Trump Administration will continue doing everything we can to support America's heroic healthcare providers on the frontlines of this war on the virus."

COVID-19 High-Impact Distribution:

Addressing Rural COVID Challenges

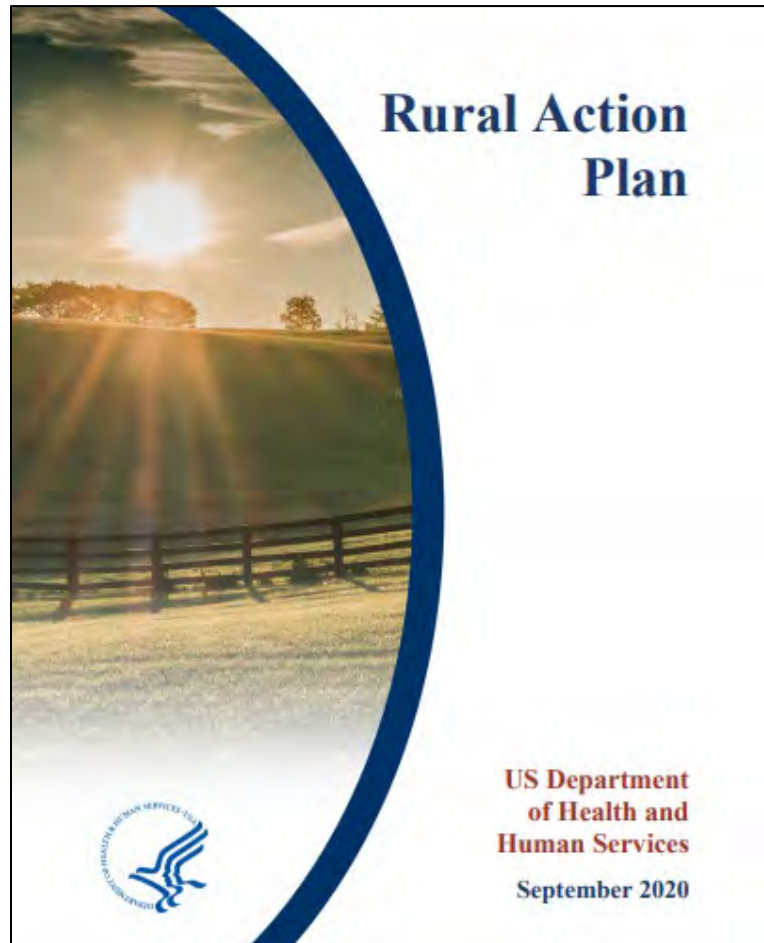


Regulatory Flexibilities During the Public Health Emergency

- Telehealth and Virtual Services
- Expansion of Service Sites
- Paperwork
- Workforce
- Payment
- Data Reporting

<https://www.cms.gov/about-cms/emergency-preparedness-response-operations/current-emergencies/coronavirus-waivers>

2020 & Rural Health



Key NIH Action Items from:

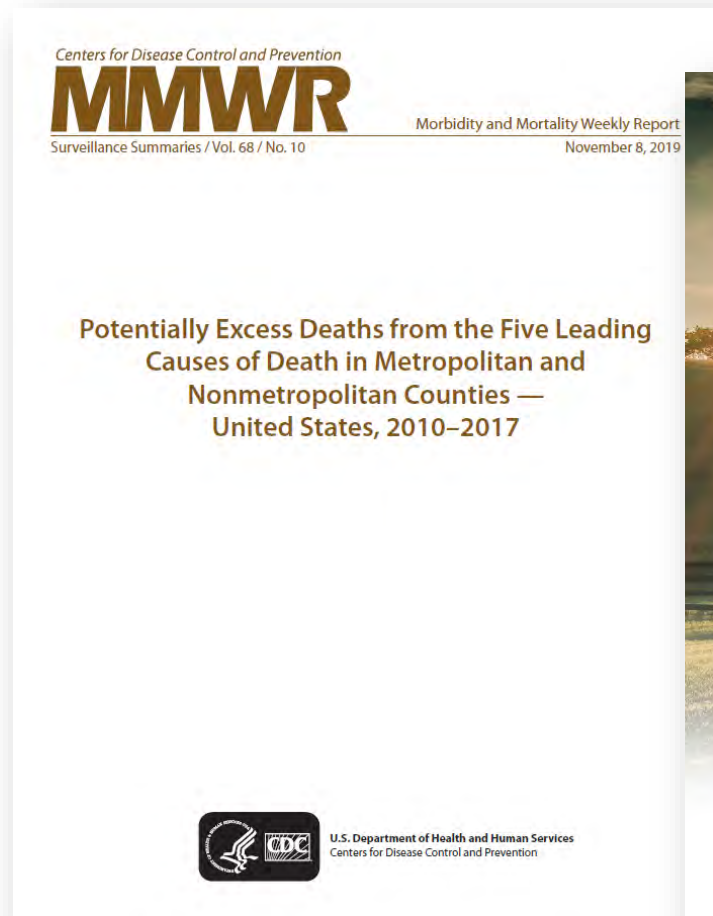
- National Cancer Institute (NCI)
- National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD)
- National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR)

Other Key Action Items:

- Elevation of Telehealth in HHS
- Rural Maternity Pilot
- Healthy Rural Hometowns Initiative

Looking Beyond COVID:

The Health Rural Hometown Initiative (HRHI)



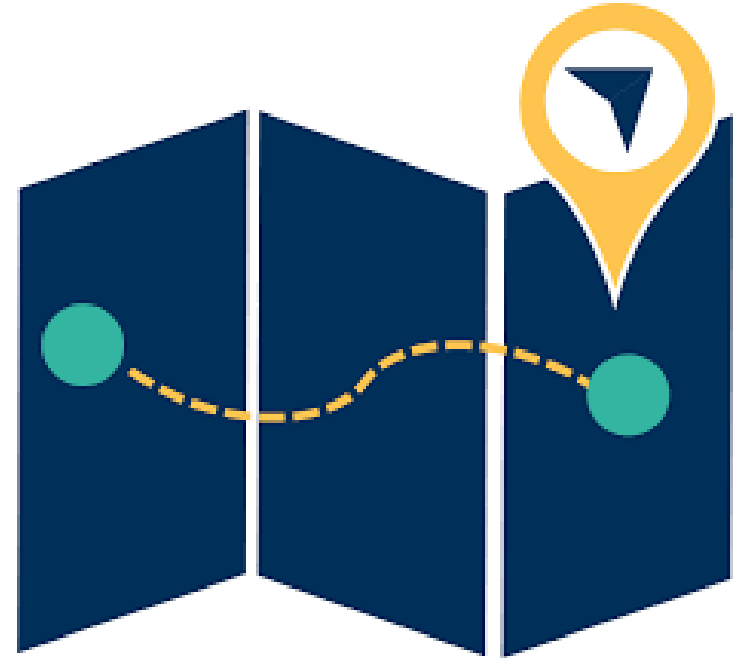
- **Healthy Rural Hometown Initiative**

The Healthy Rural Hometown Initiative is a five-year multi-program effort to identify strategies to address the underlying factors that drive growing rural disparities related to heart disease, cancer, unintentional injury, chronic lower respiratory disease, and stroke.⁹⁷ This initiative has two phases. The first is to align and target community-focused funding streams within FORHP to address the underlying factors that affect growing rural disparities related to these five causes of excess death.⁹⁸ Beginning in FY 2020, HRSA is implementing strategies to target approximately 20 percent of its rural community-based programs to focus on these disparities and encourage award recipients to include human service providers and state Medicaid stakeholders in their networks to both improve health and reduce long-term costs associated with treatment.

Rural Health - Opportunities for Collaboration

Looking to 2021 and Beyond

- Build on existing work with NHLBI, NCI and NCATS
- Identify potential collaborations on Healthy Rural Hometowns Initiative
- Collaborations on Rural Research



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Workforce

Research Findings

View publications, including policy briefs, working papers, and journal publications, on Workforce:

- [Research Products](#) - (98)
- [Journal Articles](#) - (32)

Recaps

View one-page summary [Recaps](#) of key findings from the Rural Health Research Centers on Workforce:

- [Rural Obstetric Services: Access, Workforce, and Impact](#)
Date: 04/2019
This resource presents current hospital-based obstetric closure rates and characteristics of rural communities without and losing obstetric services, as well as the impact of limited access on maternal and child health.

Webinars

Access information on upcoming or archived webinars on Workforce.

- [Diminishing Access to Rural Maternity Care and Associated Changes in Birth Location and Outcomes](#)
Presented Thursday, April 26, 2018
- [Behavioral Health Workforce Supply](#)
Presented Tuesday, July 18, 2017
- [Obstetric Care Quality and Access for Rural U.S. Women](#)
Presented Wednesday, January 11, 2017
- [Ups and Downs: Trends in Rural Children's Access to Care](#)
Presented Thursday, October 13, 2016
- [Prevalence of Opioids and the Workforce to Provide Treatment in Rural and Urban Settings](#)
Presented Thursday, June 25, 2015

Related Topics




- [Allied health professionals](#)
- [International Medical Graduates \(IMGs\)](#)
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- [Physician assistants](#)
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Additional Resources

Access other FORHP-funded resources on this topic.

From the Rural Health Information Hub:

- [Community Health Workers in Rural Settings](#)
- [Education and Training of the Rural Healthcare Workforce](#)
- [Recruitment and Retention for Rural Health Facilities Topic Guide](#)
- [Rural Healthcare Workforce Topic Guide](#)
- [Rural J-1 Visa Waiver Topic Guide](#)
- [Scholarships, Loans, and Loan Repayment for Rural Health Professions Topic Guide](#)

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Rural Healthcare Workforce – Models and Innovations

These stories feature model programs and successful rural projects that can serve as a source of ideas and provide lessons others have learned. Some of the projects or programs may no longer be active. Read about the [criteria and evidence-base](#) for programs included.

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Promising Examples

High Plains Community Health Center Care Teams

Updated/reviewed February 2019


- Need:** Meeting health care demands in a region with a limited number of physicians, where recruiting additional providers is considered impractical.
- Intervention:** Using the additional support of health coaches, implementation of care teams consisting of 3 medical assistants to support each provider.
- Results:** More patients seen per provider hour, with improved patient outcomes and clinic cost savings.

Other Project Examples

Military Medics and Corpsmen Program

Updated/reviewed September 2019

- Need:** To help veterans transition into civilian healthcare careers.
- Intervention:** MMAC and healthcare employers in urban



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<https://www.ruralhealthresearch.org/>

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- ✓ Rural Research findings
- ✓ Policy updates from a Rural Perspective

To sign up: Email Michelle Daniels at
mdaniels@hrsa.gov



Announcements from the
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

August 22, 2019

What's New

Comments Requested: Rural Access to Health Care Services – October 9. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) seeks information from the public about measuring access to health care in rural communities. This Request for Information (RFI) supports the ongoing work of the [HHS Rural Health Task Force](#) that is seeking to identify the needs of rural communities, how to meet those needs, and what HHS policy changes can address those needs. Questions for public comment specific to rural communities include: what are the core health care services needed, what types and numbers of health care professionals are needed, what factors are important to identify core health services, and how should access to health care services be measured. People in rural communities [face a range of health disparities](#), including greater obesity and disease burden in children and adults, higher mortality rates, and shorter life expectancy. Rural areas also have [fewer health professionals per person](#) compared to urban areas.

Agrisafe: Nurse Scholar Distance Education Program – Early Registration Ends August 23. Calling all nurses serving rural communities! Get the tools necessary to help farmers and ranchers in your community, while earning 18 Continuing Nursing Education hours. The Nurse Scholar program is a distance learning opportunity available to rural nurses provided by experienced health and safety educators. Increase your knowledge base in prevention, identification, and assessment of diseases related to agricultural work exposures. Classes are in the form of webinars from September 4 – December 6, 2019 that can be viewed live or On Demand.

Funding Opportunities

Rural Health Network Development Program – November 25. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) announced a new Notice of Funding Opportunity for The Rural Health Network Development Program (Network Development). This program will support up to 46 applicant organizations, which are either public or nonprofit private rural entities who represent a network of three or more separate, existing health care entities. HRSA expects to invest approximately \$13 million for this program to support integrated rural health care networks that combine the functions of the network entities and include skilled, experienced staff, with a high functioning network board, to address the health care needs of the targeted rural community.

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