

The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP), within the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), serves as the primary federal agency responsible for directly supporting rural communities through policy, research, and service delivery. FORHP advises the Secretary of Health and Human Services on the impact various policies may have on the delivery of health care to residents of rural communities. The Office also directly serves rural communities across the country to increase access to health care on Administration priorities such as growing and training the workforce and expanding maternal and behavioral health services.

Since its establishment in 1987, FORHP has supported innovative efforts to address health care needs and to achieve health equity in rural communities. In FY 2023, FORHP invested over \$335 million to continue to support HRSA's goal to achieve health equity by funding efforts to strengthen health care delivery systems, improve maternal health, reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with substance use disorder, and improve the financial viability of rural hospitals.

### ADDRESSING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

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**FUNDING:** \$145 million through the [Rural Communities Opioid Response Program \(RCORP\)](#)

■ **Goals:**

- To strengthen capacity of rural communities to plan for, and provide, behavioral health care services, inclusive of mental health and opioid and substance use disorder (OUD/SUD) prevention, treatment, and recovery services.
- To build the evidence base for behavioral health interventions in rural settings.

■ **Program Activities:**

- \$24 million to expand or establish new treatment sites for rural individuals to access medications to treat opioid use disorder.
- \$20 million to support interventions in rural communities to prevent, treat, and care for opioid-exposed infants and enhance broader systems of care and family support.
- \$14 million for rural communities to respond to their specific and immediate needs related to OUD, including distribution of life-saving overdose reversal medications.
- \$9 million to build, strengthen, and expand behavioral health services for children and adolescents aged 5-17.
- \$10 million for three Rural Centers of Excellence on SUD to continue to support the identification and dissemination of best practices related to OUD/SUD prevention, treatment, and recovery.
- \$15 million to evaluate the impact of RCORP initiative and provide technical assistance to RCORP grant recipients.

■ **Impact:**

- RCORP funding has reached more than 1,900 counties across 47 states and two territories.
- In FY 2021, RCORP grant recipients provided direct SUD prevention, treatment, and recovery services to 2,050,439 rural residents, and ensured that 112,456 rural individuals received medication-assisted treatment for SUD.

### EXPANDING RURAL HEALTH WORKFORCE

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The need for a well-trained, quality health workforce that reflects the diversity of communities in which health professionals practice is greater than ever. Over the past year, HRSA has made historic investments in the health care workforce to begin to turn the tide and better support the health care workforce and promote health equity.

Through the [National Health Service Corps Program](#), HRSA supports more than 7,400 providers serving in a rural community, which includes:

- Nearly 3,100 rural primary care clinicians
- More than 3,700 rural mental/behavioral health clinicians
- More than 600 rural dental clinicians

#### **HRSA-supported SUD Providers**

- More than 7,200 (including awardees of the Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery Loan Repayment Program (STAR LRP), with 2,666, or more than 1 in 3, providing care in rural communities.

#### **HRSA-supported Nurse Corps Providers**

- More than 3,900 Nurse Corps - More than 800 (or 21% percent) Nurse Corps participants serve in rural communities, which includes:
  - Nurse practitioners, registered nurses, nurse anesthetists, nurse midwives, and clinical nurse specialists serving in areas such as primary care, mental and behavioral health, women's health, and more.
  - Nine percent of rural Nurse Corps participants are teaching future nurses as faculty (9%).

**FUNDING: \$9.7 million through the fifth cohort of the [Rural Residency Planning and Development \(RRPD\) Program](#)**

- **Program Activities:**
  - Expand the physician workforce in rural areas through the development of new rural residency programs or Rural Track Programs in family medicine, internal medicine, general surgery, preventive medicine, psychiatry, or obstetrics and gynecology.
- **Impact:**
  - Through the RRPD Program, 38 programs have achieved accreditation and are projected to create 503 residency positions.
  - After achieving accreditation under the RRPD Program, 31 grant recipients participated in the 2023 National Resident Matching Program and matriculated 122 residents for the 2023 Academic Year.
  - Twelve RRPD grant recipients achieved program accreditation in FY 2023 for 157 approved residency positions in family medicine and psychiatry.

**FUNDING: \$47.2 million through the [Rural Public Health Workforce Training Network \(RPHWTN\) Program](#)**

- **Program Activities:**
  - Expand public health capacity by supporting culturally competent and inclusive healthcare job development, training, and placement in rural and tribal communities through the establishment of formal networks addressing the four (4) workforce training tracks.
- **Impact:**
  - The RPHWTN Program expanded health care capacity in rural communities in Year 1 (August 1, 2022 – July 31, 2023) by training 1,256 allied health workers including but not limited to community health workers, peer recovery specialists, doulas, EMTs, paramedics, health IT specialists, certified nurse assistants, dental assistants, respiratory therapists, and case managers.
  - The 32 Rural Workforce grantees anticipate providing a total of 89 degree or certificate programs for their trainees including but not limited to certification for certified medical assistants, various levels of EMT (Basic, Intermediate, or Advanced), Community Paramedicine/Mobile Integrated Health certification for EMTs and A.S. to B.S. programs.

**FUNDING: \$4 million through the Rural Behavioral Health Workforce Centers**

- **Program Activities:**
  - Supported the continuation of four awards to improve behavioral health care services in rural areas through educating and training future and current health professionals and community members in treatment and interventions for behavioral health disorders, including substance use disorder (SUD). This includes developing

the next cadre of peer support specialists through individuals in recovery from SUD/OD.

**FUNDING: \$1 million through the Rural Telementoring Training Center Program**

- **Program Activities:**
  - Train academic medical centers and other centers of excellence to create telementoring learning for providers in rural and underserved areas.

**SUPPORTING RURAL HOSPITALS**

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**FUNDING: \$51.4 million to support small rural hospitals across the country with funding to states**

- **Program Activities:**
  - \$30.7 million through the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Program to work with states to assist Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) improve financial and quality performance.
  - Within Flex, there is a \$2 million initiative for six states to improve quality rural emergency medical service agencies over two years.
- **Impact:**
  - Through the Flex Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Project, 71% of CAHs improved in at least one quality measure.
- **Program Activities:**
  - \$20.7 million through the Small Rural Hospital Improvement Grant Program to enable states to support small, rural hospitals through investments in hardware, software, and training.

**FUNDING: \$13.6 million to build capacity for small, rural hospitals to provide high quality, efficient care**

- **Program Activities:**
  - Help hospitals and improve health care delivery located within the Mississippi Delta Region, as well as hospitals nationally to strengthen operations.
- **Impact:**
  - 65 small rural hospitals and rural health clinics received technical assistance to improve their finances and the quality of the care they provide.

**FUNDING: \$5 million to support technical assistance around the new Rural Emergency Hospital (REH) provider type**

- **Program Activities:**
  - Help hospitals explore REH to see if it is a feasible option for a rural community that cannot support inpatient services.
- **Impact:**
  - 168 organizations received technical assistance through the REH Technical Assistance Center.

**RURAL HOSPITALS AND 340B DRUG PRICING PROGRAM PARTICIPATION:**

- Rural hospitals benefit from the 340B Drug Pricing Program. There are currently 1,166 Critical Access Hospitals and 449 Medicare Prospective Payment System Hospitals located in FORHP designated rural areas that participate in the 340B Drug Pricing Program.

**INCREASING ACCESS TO CARE**

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More than 30.5 million people rely on HRSA-funded health centers for care, including 1 in 5 rural residents.

HRSA works to increase access to high quality healthcare for rural populations through grants to community-based providers.

**FUNDING: Nearly \$93 million through [Rural Health Outreach Programs](#) to increase access to high quality health care and expand the delivery of services in rural areas**

- **Impact:**

- Outreach grants provided direct services to over 430,000 unique individuals in the most recent data collection year (2021)
- Over 50% of grantees reported health status improvement in at least one clinical measure.

**FUNDING: \$24.5 million to improve access to quality care in the Mississippi Delta Region**

- **Program Activities:**
  - \$12 million through the Delta States Rural Development Network Program (Delta States) to provide direct health care services and technical assistance to address health disparities in rural Delta communities.
- **Impact:**
  - The most recent Delta States cohort (project period August 2020 – July 2023) provided direct services to a total combined and unduplicated population of 942,914 people across the 212 counties/ parishes that they served.
- **Program Activities:**
  - \$10 million through the Delta Region Community Health Systems Development Program to provide technical assistance to enhance the healthcare delivery of small rural hospitals and rural health clinics in the Mississippi Delta.
  - 30 small rural hospitals and rural health clinics received intensive technical assistance to improve their finances and improve access to care.
- **Program Activities:**
  - \$2.8 million through the Delta Region Rural Health Workforce Training Program to enhance healthcare delivery by creating training programs for administrative support professionals in rural healthcare facilities in the Delta Region.
  - Currently, 52 trainees are enrolled in certificate and degree programs designed to build skills to fill critical business operations roles in hospitals with an additional 75 trainees expected to enroll in FY 2024.
- **Program Activities:**
  - \$2 million to the Delta Health Systems Implementation Program to improve healthcare delivery by implementing projects to improve the financial sustainability of rural hospitals.
  - 5 small rural hospitals received direct funding to complete projects to improve their financial stability.

**FUNDING: \$11.7 million through the [Black Lung Clinics Program \(BLCP\)](#)**

- **Program Activities:**
  - Reduce the morbidity and mortality of active and retired coal miners associated with occupationally related lung disease through the delivery of quality medical, outreach, educational, and benefits counseling services; includes \$125,000 in funding for the Black Lung Center for Excellence Program
- **Impact:**
  - In FY22, the BLCP served a total of 7,042 miners in Appalachia and the western United States. The program logged a total of 6,012 medical encounters, with 4,759 of those encounters being black lung screenings.

**FUNDING: \$2.9 million to increase capacity and improve access to quality care in the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) area**

- **Program Activities:**
  - The Rural Northern Border Region Healthcare Support Program provides technical assistance to enhance behavioral health, improve workforce recruitment and retention, and assist in health care value efforts, education, and training.

**FUNDING: \$8.9 million through the [Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies \(RMOMS\) Program](#)**

- **Program Activities:**
  - Increase access to maternal and obstetrics care in rural communities.
- **Impact:**
  - To date awardees have provided prenatal, labor and delivery, or postpartum care to approximately 5,000 rural RMOMS participants. The awardees also implemented telehealth, patient navigation, and direct service expansion initiatives to improve access to maternity care and support services.

**FUNDING: \$1.8 million through the Radiation Exposure Screening and Education Program (RESEP)**

■ **Program Activities:**

- RESEP grantees implement cancer screening and education programs, share information on radiogenic diseases and the importance of early detection, screen eligible individuals for cancer and other radiogenic diseases, provide appropriate referrals for medical treatment, and facilitate documentation of Radiation Exposure Compensation Act claims.

■ **Impact:**

- Since 2002, RESEP grantees have assisted almost 5,000 applicants file under RECA. During this period, claimants who sought assistance from RESEP grantees enjoyed an approval rate of 86%.

**FUNDING: \$1 million through the [Small Health Care Provider Quality Improvement Program](#) to increase benefits counseling activities among rural residents during the [Medicaid Unwinding](#)**

■ **Program Activities:**

- Support community benefits counseling activities and related work to meet community need in order to address potential coverage gaps and/or losses due to the expiration of the continuous coverage requirement for individuals enrolled in Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

**SUPPORTING RURAL RESEARCH, POLICY ANALYSIS, AND INFORMATION DISSEMINATION** \_\_\_\_\_

**FUNDING: \$7.4 million through the [Rural Health Research Program](#)**

■ **Program Activities:**

- Support policy-oriented health services research to increase the amount of publicly available, high quality, rural focused research.
- HRSA continues to track access to care, rural hospital financial viability, and [rural hospital closures](#).

■ **Impact:**

- 85 rural research products were released in FY 2023, and 21 of those products were articles published in peer-reviewed journals.

**FUNDING: \$11 million to the [50 State Offices of Rural Health](#)**

■ **Program Activities:**

- Link communities with state and federal resources, funding, and information.

**RESOURCES** \_\_\_\_\_

- [Federal Office of Rural Health Policy](#)
- [Federal Office of Rural Health Policy Funding Opportunities](#)
- [Rural Health Information Hub](#)
- [Rural Health Research Gateway](#)
- [FORHP Rural Eligibility](#)
- [HRSA Data Warehouse for Rural Health Investments and Grants](#)