



Fact Sheet

INFORMATION ABOUT RURAL HEALTH
AND RURAL VETERANS

National
Rural
Health Day
11/17/2011

The mission of the VHA Office of Rural Health (ORH) is to improve access and quality of care for enrolled rural*§ and highly rural Veterans by developing evidence-based policies and innovative practices to support the unique needs of enrolled Veterans residing in geographically remote areas.



Rural Veterans

- There are approximately 22 million Veterans living today with about 6.1 million living in rural areas.†
- Currently, 3.3 million rural Veterans are enrolled in the VA system. This represents 41% of the total enrolled Veteran population.
- Men and women from geographically rural and highly rural areas make up a disproportionate share of service members and comprise about one-third (31.9%) of the enrolled Veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) and Operation New Dawn (OND); many of these soldiers are returning to their rural communities.‡
- Since its inception in 2007, the Office of Rural Health (ORH) has supported well over 500 projects/programs, bringing care closer to home through telemedicine, new clinical facilities, transportation programs, expansion of home-based primary care into rural areas, training of rural CBOC providers, rural outreach and health literacy programs, new models of health care delivery and expansion of mental health programs into rural areas.

Rural Veterans

- Only 9% of all physicians and 12% of all pharmacists practice in rural communities.
- Only 10% of all psychologists/psychiatrists and 20% of masters-level social workers work in rural areas.
- There are only have as many specialists per 100,000 residents in rural areas compared to urban areas.

Health Insurance Accessibility

- Approximately 21.9% of residents in remote rural counties are uninsured, compared to 17.5% in rural counties adjacent to urban counties and 14.3% in urban counties.
- Rural residents spend more on health care out-of-pocket compared with the urban share of one-third. One in five rural residents spends more than \$1,000 out-of-pocket in a year.

State Offices of Rural Health (SORH)

- All 50 states maintain a State Office of Rural Health (SORH).
- SORHs serve as a clearinghouse of information and innovation approaches to rural health services delivery; coordinate state activities related to rural health in order to avoid duplication of efforts and resources; and identify Federal, State and nongovernmental programs that can provide technical assistance to public/private nonprofit entities serving rural populations.

*"Rural" is defined by the U.S. Census as "Territory, population, and housing units not classified as Urban." "Urban" is defined by the U.S. Census as "comprising all territory, population, and housing units in urbanized areas and in places of 2,500 or more persons outside urbanized areas."

Unless otherwise noted, all data above is from VHA Support Service Center (VSSC), Rural Health Briefing Book.; †VA National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics; ‡VHA Office of Rural Health, Strategic Plan 2010-2014.

We are on the Web! Visit us at
www.ruralhealth.va.gov

