

PL 111-163, Title III—Rural Health Improvements

On May 5, 2010, the President signed into law the “Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010”. Within this legislation, Section III is focused on rural health improvements. A summary of Section III contents by topic area:

CLINICAL PROVIDERS: Sec. 301 - Enhancements to VA’s Education Debt Reduction Program – raises the allowable maximum payments and removes the requirement to be “recently appointed” Sec. 302 - Visual impairment and orientation and mobility professional’s education assistance program establishes a scholarship program. Sec. 306 - Pilot program to incentivize physicians who assume inpatient responsibilities at community hospitals in health professional shortage areas

DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS Sec. 303 - *Demonstration* projects on Alternatives for Expanding Care for Veterans in Rural Areas, authorizing \$5M annually for ORH to carry out demonstration projects.

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MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR OIF/OEF VETERANS Sec. 304 - Provides peer support and outreach to provide readjustment and mental health care services to OIF/OEF vets. Also requires contracting with community mental health centers in areas where the VA is unable to provide mental health care

TRAVEL: Sec. 305 locks in the current travel reimbursement rate for disabled veterans who travel for health care at 41.5 cents per mile. Sec. 307 - Transportation grants for rural veterans service organizations authorizes the VA to award grants to Veteran service groups that transport veterans to their medical appointments in Highly Rural areas.

PL 110-387 PILOT PROJECT MODIFICATION: Sec. 308 - Modification of Eligibility for Participation in Pilot Program of Enhanced Contract Care Authority for Health Care Needs of Certain Veterans

To see the full text of the PL, go to:

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-111s1963enr/pdf/BILLS-111s1963enr.pdf>

Helpful Resources **Rural Assistance Center** - This website provides information about rural health-related programs, funding and research. The website is funded by HRSA’s Office of Rural Health Policy. Visit www.raconline.org to learn more.



Urban-Rural Comparisons of Outcomes for Informal Caregivers of Elderly People in the Community: A Systematic Review

As the age of the general population increases, the number of elderly people who need care is increasing. It has been suggested that rural caregivers may be disadvantaged compared to urban caregivers, but it is not clear what effect geographic location has on caregiving. This paper presents a systematic review of the literature on urban-rural comparisons on various outcomes for informal caregivers who provide care for elderly people in the community. Of 150 articles that were reviewed, eight articles were included with three themes in the outcomes for caregivers: service use, health promotion behaviors and psychological health (such as caregiver stress, burden or depressive symp-

toms). Overall, there were few consistent or statistically significant differences between urban and rural caregivers; however there is too little evidence to make valid comparisons and more research is needed in order to inform clinicians and policy makers. The literature search was limited to papers in the English language, involving quantitative methods and published in peer-reviewed journals.

For the full article, go to ORH’s website and click on “publications”. For information on VA Caregiver programs, go to www.caregiver.va.gov.

