

# Rural Promising Practices



**The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Rural Health (ORH) supports innovative pilot programs to address challenges rural Veterans face when trying to access the care and services they have earned. These innovations are carefully evaluated and, beginning in 2014, the strongest are designated ORH Rural Promising Practices.**

The primary goals of the Rural Promising Practices initiative are to:

- ▶ Increase access to care and services for rural Veterans and their families in the communities where they live;
- ▶ Share operational and clinical knowledge with professional providers and staff who serve rural Veterans;
- ▶ Mentor new program champions to implement these Rural Promising Practices; and
- ▶ Contribute to long-term improvements in rural care and services delivery.

ORH-funded pilot projects are monitored and evaluated throughout their lifecycle to track their effect on the health and well-being of rural Veterans. When an innovation demonstrates outstanding performance and addresses a gap in rural care and services delivery, it may be nominated to ORH as a Rural Promising Practice. Nominations undergo a rigorous review process to ensure the nominated project addresses each of the six ORH Rural Promising Practices criteria.

ORH Rural Promising Practices are made available to providers, practitioners and program advocates through the ORH dissemination process. Those who wish to adopt an ORH Rural Promising Practice will find all the necessary materials on the ORH website, including an adoption toolkit, contact information for subject-matter experts and the option to request technical assistance.

Some Rural Promising Practices are also selected for mentored implementation, wherein ORH project managers work directly with subject-matter experts to assist sites in adopting ORH Rural Promising Practices. This technical assistance includes funding during the adoption period, training, technical site visits when required and continuous

## ORH Rural Promising Practice criteria:

- ▶ *Improvement in access to care*
- ▶ *Evidence of improved direct program impact or clinical results for rural Veterans*
- ▶ *Patient, provider and/or caregiver satisfaction*
- ▶ *Return on investment via reduced costs of care, but not at the expense of quality*
- ▶ *Operational feasibility and replicability at other facilities or service sites*
- ▶ *Strong partnerships or working relationships that maximize efficiency or effectiveness*

performance monitoring while bringing the Rural Promising Practice to life in VA facilities across the country.

Rural Promising Practice subject-matter experts share what they've learned from their pilot phase and connect participants in a mentoring network. Rural Promising Practices encourage collaborative open-source learning among stakeholder participants.

### **Spotlight: Telephone-Based Cardiac Rehabilitation**

Studies show that people who complete a Phase 2 cardiac rehabilitation program can increase their life expectancy by up to five years and have 27 percent lower cardiac death rates, 25 percent fewer fatal heart attacks, 21 percent fewer nonfatal heart attacks and an improved quality of life. However, many rural Veterans cannot participate in a cardiac rehabilitation program due to the geographic, transportation and other barriers that often affect rural Veterans and their families. To overcome these obstacles and to provide life-saving cardiac rehabilitation, an ORH pilot in the VA Iowa City Health Care System pioneered rehabilitation at home using VA-provided supplies and monitoring equipment, along with professional telephone-based lifestyle and activity coaching. Compared to in-facility rehabilitation, this program showed higher completion rates and greater patient satisfaction, all for similar costs. Telephone-Based Cardiac Rehabilitation became ORH's first Rural Promising Practice in fiscal year 2015, expanding from four sites to 11, and, in fiscal year 2016, will be active at additional VA health care sites across the country.

### **Rural Promising Practice Samples**

- ▶ *COVER to COVER: Connecting Older Veterans (Especially Rural) to Community or Veteran-Eligible Resources*
- ▶ *Using Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) to Provide Comprehensive Care to Rural Veterans with Multiple Sclerosis (MS)*
- ▶ *Geriatric Scholars Program*
- ▶ *Training Community Clergy Partners to Improve Access to Care for Rural Veterans*
- ▶ *Telephone-Based Cardiac Rehabilitation*
- ▶ *Telehealth Collaborative Care for Rural Veterans with HIV Infection*

Office of Rural Health (ORH) implements a targeted, solution-driven approach to increase access to care for the 3 million Veterans living in rural communities who rely on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for health care. As VA's lead advocate for rural Veterans, ORH works to see that America's Veterans thrive in rural communities. To accomplish this, ORH leverages its resources to increase rural Veterans' access to care and services. To learn more, visit [www.ruralhealth.va.gov](http://www.ruralhealth.va.gov).



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs