

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.

- There are approximately 22 million Veterans living today with about 6.1 million (28%) living in rural\* areas.†
- Currently, 3.4 million rural Veterans are enrolled in the VA system. This represents 41% of the total enrolled Veteran population.
- Nearly 42% (2.35 million) of Veteran patients and 17% (961,000) of Veterans with at least a service-connected disability are from rural and highly rural areas.†
- 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 percent) of the enrolled Veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF); 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 1,000 projects/programs, bringing care closer to home through telemedicine, new clinical facilities, transportation programs, expansion of home-based primary care and mental health programs into rural areas, training of rural CBOC providers, rural outreach and health literacy programs, and new models of health care delivery.
- From October 2009 through June 2012, approximately 1,133,000 rural veterans were impacted by ORH projects.
- ORH has supported the operation and opening of 62 Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) as well as 60 Outreach Clinics in rural and highly rural areas. There is anecdotal evidence that as these new clinics open, the local economy receives a boost, due to increased patronage of surrounding businesses.
- From October 2010 through June 2012, 183,869 unique patients were seen at ORH-funded rural Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs).
- The number of rural health inpatient and outpatient mental health visits increased from 3.6 million in Fiscal Year 2008 to nearly 4.9 million in Fiscal Year 2011.



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

§VHA Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health (ADUSH) for Policy and Planning, Planning Systems Support Group (PSSG) Office

\*"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."