

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, there are just over 3.4 million rural Veterans enrolled in the VA system. This represents 41% of the total enrolled Veteran population.
- Nearly 43% (2.27 million) of Veteran patients and 15% (914,000) 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 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 Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) providers, rural outreach and health literacy programs, new models of health care delivery and expansion of mental health programs into rural areas.
- From October 1, 2009 to December 31, 2010, approximately 416,132 rural veterans were impacted by ORH projects.
- Over the last few years, ORH has supported the opening of 51 Community-Based Outpatient Clinics and 41 Outreach Clinics in rural and highly rural areas.
- From Fiscal Year 2010 to Fiscal Year 2011-1st Quarter, approximately 57,191 unique patients were seen at ORH-funded rural Community-Based Outpatient Clinics.
- The number of rural health outpatient mental health visits increased from 3.4 million in Fiscal Year 2009 to 3.9 million in Fiscal Year 2010.

*"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."

SOURCES:

Unless otherwise noted, 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



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