

Rural Health Care Workforce Development

INFO SHEET

VHA | OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH

Across the United States, rural communities face a critical shortage of qualified health care providers. According to the National Rural Health Association, a 1-to-2,500 physician to patient ratio exists in rural communities, creating severe health care access challenges for residents.¹ These shortages can seriously affect the health and well-being of America's nearly 5 million rural Veterans.

To overcome these challenges and increase rural Veterans' access to quality health care, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Rural Health (ORH) devotes \$14 million to fund initiatives that provide training to rural clinicians nationwide.

Rural Health Training Initiatives

ORH training initiatives combine in-person and virtual learning to enhance rural providers' skills in specialty care areas including geriatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, nephrology, and psychiatry. This expansion of clinical skills helps offset the specialty care provider shortage in rural communities by focusing on provider and student learning.

Rural-focused health training programs include:

- ▶ **Suicide Prevention:** Through simulation-based learning, rural clinicians train and improve their identification, interaction with and treatment of rural Veterans at risk for suicide
- ▶ **Women's Health:** Rural clinicians receive onsite education from a mobile training team to provide fundamental women's care to Veterans, such as breast and pelvic exams
- ▶ **SimLEARN:** This distance learning initiative offers simulation-based training programs to rural clinicians regardless of location
- ▶ **Rural Faculty Development Initiative (RFDI):** This faculty development program provides teaching and training skills for rural clinical educators. These faculty then provide guidance to medical students training in rural VA facilities
- ▶ **Specialty Care:** Through VA's Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO) expansion, rural providers use telehealth technology to train on a wide variety of specialties, including treatment for chronic kidney disease, hepatitis C and pain management

¹ "Fixing the Medical Staff Shortage Problem in Rural Areas" <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/population-health/fixing-the-medical-staff-shortage-problem-in-rural-areas.html>



In FY18:

698

VA rural sites of care participated in ORH-funded training courses

6,795

ORH-funded CME and CEU credit training courses conducted

12,314

employees received ORH-funded training

Rural Workforce Incentives

Health care workforce recruitment and retention are instrumental in solving the rural clinician shortage. That's why VA is dedicated to promoting the multiple benefits of practicing medicine in a rural setting.

Clinicians enjoy several advantages in pursuing a rural health care career, including:



Leading-Edge Technology: VA's telehealth solutions empower clinicians with industry-shaping technology



Quality of Life: Rural clinicians enjoy less traffic, lower costs of living and reduced stress



Professional Training: VA offers rural clinicians unique residency and specialty training opportunities



Financial Incentives: VA programs can help reduce rural clinicians' financial burdens, such as student debt

To learn more about ORH workforce training and education initiatives, visit: www.ruralhealth.va.gov/providers/training.asp

Office of Rural Health

Congress established the Veterans Health Administration Office of Rural Health (ORH) in 2006 (38 USC § 7308) to conduct, coordinate, promote and disseminate research on issues that affect the nearly five million Veterans who reside in rural communities. The mandate also requires ORH to develop, refine and promulgate policies, best practices, lessons learned, and innovative and successful programs. Learn more at www.ruralhealth.va.gov.

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Rural Health

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Learn more about ORH at www.ruralhealth.va.gov