

Office of Rural Health Operations

Congress established the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Rural Health (ORH) to address rural health care challenges through research, innovation, and dissemination of new models of care. The mandate states that ORH will:



Conduct, coordinate, promote, and disseminate research into issues affecting Veterans who reside in rural communities.



Develop, refine, and promulgate policies, best practices, lessons learned, and innovative and successful programs to increase access to care for rural Veterans.

ORH fulfills the mission of its mandate through the following activities.



Veterans Rural Health Resource Centers

Veterans Rural Health Resource Centers (VRHRCs) are ORH's field-based satellite offices located at VA medical centers in Iowa City, Iowa; Salt Lake City, Utah; White River Junction, Vermont; Gainesville, Florida; and Portland, Oregon.

As hubs for rural health care research, innovation, and the dissemination of best practices, VRHRCs:

- ✓ Improve understanding of the challenges faced by Veterans living in rural areas
- ✓ Identify disparities in the availability of health care to Veterans living in rural areas
- ✓ Formulate practices or programs to enhance the delivery of health care to Veterans living in rural areas
- ✓ Develop special practices and products for the benefit of Veterans living in rural areas and for implementation of such practices and products in the Department system-wide



Enterprise Program Funding

Each year, ORH manages a funding process that supports rural health initiatives in medical centers, health care systems, and clinics that serve rural Veterans. Rural Health Initiative funding is available to VA applicants for implementation of Rural Promising Practices and other evidence based Enterprise-Wide Initiatives that significantly improve rural Veterans' access, health, and well-being.



Partnerships

ORH partners with internal and external offices to develop innovative programs and elevate the rural Veteran voice to a diverse group of stakeholders.

For example, ORH collaborates with federal agencies, such as the Departments of Labor, Commerce, Transportation and Agriculture to expand access to care and services, including broadband internet.

ORH also administers and manages Memoranda of Understanding with the Indian Health Service (IHS). IHS and ORH partner to advance collaboration, coordination, and resource sharing to improve the health status of American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans.



The Office of Rural Health (ORH) works to see that America's Veterans thrive in rural communities. To support the health and well-being of rural Veterans, ORH and its Veterans Rural Health Resource Centers establish and disseminate initiatives that increase access to care for the 2.7 million rural Veterans enrolled in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' health care system. Key focus areas include programs that address workforce shortages, transportation, primary care, mental health, telehealth, and specialty care.