

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; and White River Junction, Vermont. As hubs for rural health care research, innovation and dissemination, VRHRCs:

- ✓ Collaborate with VA Health Services Research & Development to conduct research on health care disparities affecting rural Veterans
- ✓ Innovate new approaches to care coordination for dual use Veterans, including those who use Community Care programs
- ✓ Identify primary care provider recruitment and retention techniques to address rural provider shortages
- ✓ Develop innovative interdisciplinary treatment models to improve the quality and efficiency of care
- ✓ Use VA Telemedicine and Informatics tools to improve access to care
- ✓ Analyze data to identify patterns and characteristics of rural populations associated with suicide, suicide-related behavior and substance use disorder
- ✓ Use geospatial solutions to drive rural geographic database design, rural policy analysis, and strategic planning in support of rural Veteran health care





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. Funding is available to VA applicants through the Rural Health Initiative budget for implementation of evidenced-based programs and promising practices 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 partners with VA's Office of Connected Care to ensure rural Veterans have access to expert stroke care through the VA National Telestroke Program.



Outside VA, ORH collaborates with 25 federal agencies, such as the Departments of Labor, Commerce and Transportation, to expand access to care and services, including broadband internet.

ORH also administers and manages Memoranda of Understanding with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services offices, including:

Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA):

ORH works with HRSA to address issues related to improving the health care workforce, health care delivery and health outcomes for rural Veterans

Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP):

Through FORHP's Rural Veterans Health Access Program, state authorities in rural health collaborate with ORH's VRHRCs to increase access to health care services in rural communities

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

Office of Rural Health

As VA's lead advocate for rural 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 establishes and disseminates Enterprise-Wide Initiatives that increase access to care for the 2.8 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. To learn more, visit www.ruralhealth.va.gov.