

Rural Promising Practices

As part of its Congressional mandate, the Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Rural Health (ORH) develops, refines and promotes successful innovative programs that increase rural Veterans' access to quality health care services. ORH carefully evaluates rural health innovations and designates the strongest programs as Rural Promising Practices.

Rural Promising Practices are field-tested, innovative projects that demonstrate improved access to care for rural Veterans. These programs:



Increase access to care and services for rural Veterans and their families



Share clinical and operational knowledge among health care delivery professionals who serve rural Veterans



Mentor program champions so they can successfully implement strong practices



Contribute to long-term improvements in the rural health care delivery system

Rural Promising Practices begin their lifecycle at ORH's Veterans Rural Health Resource Centers (VRHRCs), which identify and study barriers to care access, design original or evaluate external pilots, and modify pilot program concepts as needed.

After programs are nominated by the VRHRCs, an objective review is conducted to ensure they meet the six ORH Promising Practice criteria:

- 1. Increased Access** – The approach generates measurable increases in access to care or services (for example, by reducing wait time or missed appointments)
- 2. Strong Partnerships** – The approach creates partnerships to maximize efficiency
- 3. Clinical Impact** – The approach positively impacts the health of rural Veterans
- 4. Return on Investment** – The approach reduces the per capita costs of delivering care or services while maintaining or improving outcomes
- 5. Operational Feasibility** – Implementation of the approach is feasible and strategies for success can be easily shared
- 6. Customer Satisfaction** – The approach demonstrated high levels of Veteran, provider, and partner satisfaction

VRHRC staff provide mentored implementation to help new sites establish Rural Promising Practices through training, supporting documentation, ongoing technical assistance and initial funding through ORH.

In FY 2020, ORH has six Rural Promising Practices in mentored implementation, spread to more than 90 sites across VA.

In addition to Rural Promising Practices that offer mentored implementation support, ORH also supports Rural Promising Practices that can be implemented directly without additional funds.

Promising Practice Highlights

Rural Promising Practices address ORH's key focus areas – such as health care workforce shortages, mental health, primary care and telehealth – highlighted by the following programs:

- ▶ **Community Clergy Training to Support Rural Veterans' Mental Health** educates rural community clergy on available VA health care resources and trains rural clergy to recognize common symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and readjustment issues in rural Veterans transitioning to civilian life
- ▶ **Geriatric Scholars Program** addresses the shortage of specialized geriatric skills and knowledge in rural VA clinical settings by training VA general clinicians in the treatment of older rural Veterans
- ▶ **Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Centers Connect** trains VA providers to manage medically complex cases through case-based conferences, electronic consultations, virtual meetings and clinical video telehealth
- ▶ **Home-Based Cardiac Rehabilitation** contacts patients weekly with guidance from a cardiac rehab professional on exercise prescription, heart healthy nutrition, tobacco cessation, stress management and medication adherence
- ▶ **Telehealth Collaborative Care for Rural Veterans with HIV Infection** uses video telehealth to deliver HIV specialty care to rural Veterans
- ▶ **Clinical Video Telehealth Comprehensive Care for Rural Veterans with Multiple Sclerosis (MS)** uses telehealth to deliver comprehensive rehabilitation care to rural Veterans with MS

Learn more about ORH's Rural Promising Practices here:

https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/providers/promising_practices.asp



Office of Rural Health

Congress established the Veterans Health Administration Office of Rural Health (ORH) in 2006 (38 USC § 7308) to conduct research, innovate new health care solutions, and disseminate best practices system-wide to benefit 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.