



# Fact Sheet

INFORMATION ABOUT THE VHA OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH AND RURAL VETERANS

May 2014

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 5.3 million (24%) living in rural † areas.‡
- Currently, 3.2 million rural Veterans are enrolled in the VA health care system. This represents 36% of the total enrolled Veteran population.\*
- Nearly 43% (2.6 million) of VA patients have a service-connected disability.\*
- 36% (960,000) of Veterans with 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 approximately 30% 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 over 1,870 projects/programs; bringing care closer to home through telemedicine, new clinical facilities, transportation programs, expansion of home-based primary care and mental health programs into rural areas, training and education of rural providers, rural outreach, health literacy programs, and new models of health care delivery.\*
- From October 2009 through April 2014, approximately 1,634,492 rural Veterans were impacted by ORH projects.\*
- ORH has supported the operation and opening of 65 community-based outpatient clinics (CBOC) as well as 61 outreach clinics in rural and highly rural areas.\*
- From October 2010 through May 2014, approximately 400,000 unique patients were seen at ORH-funded rural CBOCs.\*
- From October 2009 through February 2014, there were 19 million rural mental health visits.\*



We are on the Web! Visit us at [www.ruralhealth.va.gov](http://www.ruralhealth.va.gov)



‡ VA Office of the Actuary

† "Rural" is defined by the Rural-Urban Commuting Areas (RUCA) system as "Land areas not designated as as Urban or Highly Rural." "Urban" is defined by RUCA as "Census tracts with at least 30 percent of the population residing in an urbanized area as defined by the Census Bureau."

"Highly Rural" is defined by RUCA as "Sparsely populated areas - less than 10 percent of the working population commutes to any community larger than an urbanized cluster, which is typically a town of no more than 2,500 people."

\* unpublished VA data

‡VHA Office of Rural Health, Strategic Plan 2010-2014