



# Rural Promising Practices

As part of its Congressional mandate, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) 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

## 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 conduct studies to identify rural health care disparities and improve understanding of the issues rural Veterans face in access to care and services.

The VRHRCs then formulate and pilot new practices or programs to address identified gaps in care. Successful programs are replicated and the best are nominated as Rural Promising Practices.

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

- 1. Improved Access** – The approach generates measurable increases in access to care or services (e.g., by reducing wait time or missed appointments)
- 2. Demonstration of Need/Evidence of Impact** – Indicators that the approach addresses a gap in care for rural Veterans and evidence that the approach positively impacts health
- 3. Customer Satisfaction** – The approach demonstrates high levels of Veteran, provider, and partner satisfaction
- 4. Potential for Sustainability** – 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. Strong Partnerships** – The approach creates partnerships with local, regional, and national collaborators to ensure successful implementation

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 fiscal year (FY) 2023, ORH had eight Rural Promising Practices in mentored implementation, spread to more than 120 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:

- **Rural Community Clergy Training Program** educates rural community clergy on available VA health care resources and trains rural clergy to recognize common symptoms of posttraumatic 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
- **Improving Access to Geriatric Care in Rural Areas: GRECC 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
- **Home-Based Delivery of Pulmonary Rehabilitation** uses telehealth to connect patients with a pulmonary rehab professional to deliver virtual counseling sessions on exercise prescription, nutrition, tobacco cessations, 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
- **Advanced Comprehensive Diabetes Care** leverages VA's Home Telehealth program to provide effective telemonitoring, self-management support, and medication management for Veterans whose type 2 diabetes does not respond to standard care

Learn more about ORH's Rural Promising Practices here: [https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/providers/promising\\_practices.asp](https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/providers/promising_practices.asp)

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.