

In the United States, approximately 62 million people – one in five Americans – live and work in rural areas. Join forces with farmers, business owners, doctors, families and community leaders as they celebrate National Rural Health Day on November 17, 2016 to keep America growing strong.

Rural communities are wonderful places to live and work. Great things are happening there:

- Rural community leaders are ordinary people willing to step forward, share and implement a vision, and drive changes that benefit their neighbors.
- Millions of individuals and families visit rural and frontier areas to enjoy the beauty and peacefulness of America's natural resources located in national parks, wildlife refuges, forests, wilderness and military posts.
- Rural America is an often-overlooked economic engine which shapes the United States. Small businesses play a vital role in rural America by providing two thirds of rural jobs.
- Diverse economic, cultural, and recreational opportunities abound in rural America. Rural areas across the country are different. Rural New York differs from rural Arizona or rural West Virginia.
- Farm commodities, ranching, mining, oil, gas, and clean energy from rural America, provide a wealth of products and services.

Rural America's health professionals, hospitals, and clinics are dedicated to delivering high-quality and innovative care to underserved Americans:

- Health care professionals in rural America are able to focus on building personal relationships with patients and families.
- Rural doesn't necessarily mean "remote." Through growing telehealth and electronic health records initiatives, rural health professionals are able to coordinate care, stay connected with each other and urban tertiary care centers.
- Hospitals are the economic foundation of many rural communities. The 1,330 Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) provide essential health care to rural communities across 45 states and on average, bring 204 jobs to the local economy.
- The total time rural patients spend in the Emergency Room is 56 minutes faster in rural hospitals than in urban hospitals.
- New models for community health workers, community paramedics and oral health professionals have been incubated in rural America as a model throughout health systems.
- Of the 3500 certified Rural Health Clinics, 95% accept new Medicaid patients. Federally Qualified Health Centers are focal points for services to underserved rural populations and Veterans Health Administration Community Based Outreach Clinics work to improve the health of 40% of the nation's veterans.

Collaboration is crucial to address the barriers that remain:

- State Offices of Rural Health, rural healthcare providers and other rural health stakeholders continue to foster partnerships that improve the health status of the communities they serve.
- Critical Access Hospitals make up 30% of acute care hospitals but receive less than 5% of total Medicare payments to hospitals. More than 60% of CAH revenue comes from government payers. All payment reductions to Medicare or Medicaid have an immense impact on CAHs' ability to provide access in rural communities.
- Emergency medical services are mostly volunteer dependent but are vital in rural America where 20 percent of the nation's population lives and nearly 60 percent of all trauma deaths occur
- Rural workforce education and training programs are needed to help recruit, retain and increase the number of well-qualified medical providers for rural veterans.
- Federally Qualified Health Centers, CAH's and other health providers in rural areas are working with their local communities to design health delivery systems designed specifically for the population they are serving. In many cases they may be the only source of primary care in a community.

Celebrating the Power of Rural = Healthy Changes. Healthy Lives. Healthy Families. Healthy Communities. Make every day a rural health day!