The Basics of Rural Health

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The goal:
To ensure that everyone can access the services and treatments necessary to promote and maintain their definition of good health
What is Rural?

• Rurality occupies a spectrum

• Definitions are crucial for:
  – Government agencies awarding rural grant funds
  – Policymakers creating rural-specific programs & laws
  – Researchers studying rural issues require consistent data over time

• Definitions vary among federal agencies

• See RAC “What is Rural?” topic guide and “Am I Rural?” tool
Rural Health Is Different!

Three basic reasons:
1. Population demographics
2. Cultural differences
3. Geographic barriers
1) “No one lives there anymore.”


*Why it matters:*

The vitality of rural America is essential to the vitality of the U.S. economy. Healthcare is a critical component of rural infrastructure.
Common Myths about Rural America

2) Rural places are homogenous

*Reality:* rural America is diverse in many respects, and this diversity is increasing.

*Why it matters:*
Different demographic groups have different health care needs.
Rural Populations are Different

- Greater proportion of under- or uninsured
- Many work in hazardous occupations
- Significant health disparities among migrant farm workers, Native American populations located predominantly in rural areas.
Rural Culture Is Different

• Closely-knit communities, strong emphasis on self-reliance complicate patient privacy issues
• Social stigma is a major factor preventing rural residents from seeking help for sensitive medical issues
• Health care providers must often treat people they know personally
Rural Geography Is Different

- Access is often difficult
- Transportation concerns
- Lack of nearby facilities
- EMS infrastructure is an area of critical concern
Therefore…

Rural Providers are Different

• Lower volume and different case/service mix

• Special rural facility designations:
  – Critical Access Hospitals
  – Rural Health Clinics

• Workforce challenges
National Rural Health Infrastructure

• Senate Rural Health Caucus and House Rural Health Care Coalition

• National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services

• Office of Rural Health Policy
  – Rural Health Research Centers
  – State Offices of Rural Health
  – Rural Assistance Center (RAC)

• National Rural Health Association
The Rural Assistance Center
RAC Services

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- RAC Publications and Updates
RAC Electronic Updates

• **Rural Monitor newsletter**

  Bi-Monthly
  Over 5,000 subscribers

• **Primary Distribution:** over 5,400

Health Updates

Monthly

Over 5,000 subscribers

Human Services Updates

Monthly

Over 3,800 subscribers
Customized Assistance

What RAC Can Do to Help…

• Develop customized list of potential funding sources
• Locate statistics, data sources and maps
• Find print and electronic documents
• Connect users to organizations, experts, and colleagues
• Locate the right federal or state contact
Contact RAC

Phone 1-800-270-1898
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