

National Rural Health Day Key Messages

Approximately 62 million people – one in five Americans – live in rural areas. These community-minded people possess a selfless, “can do” spirit that has helped our country grow and thrive.

Rural communities are a wonderful place to live and work:

- They possess a strong sense of community where everyone has a voice – people know each other, listen to/respect each other and work together to benefit the community.
- They are wonderful places to start a small business and test your “entrepreneurial spirit.”
- They provide America with a wealth of worthwhile products and services (farm commodities, clean energy, tourism/recreation).
- They can offer an outstanding quality of life.

Surprising things are happening in Rural America:

- Rural America has a rich history of creativity and ingenuity.
- Rural America is the economic engine that helped the United States become the world power it is today.
- Rural doesn’t necessarily mean “remote” – diverse economic, cultural and recreational opportunities abound in rural America.
- Rural also isn’t just “farming” – agriculture is an important component of the economy, but so are small businesses and larger industries.
- Rural areas in each part of the country are unique – rural New York is not the same as rural Arizona or rural West Virginia. But that’s no different than urban parts of the country – southern California is not the same as southern Florida or southern Massachusetts.

Being a rural healthcare provider offers tremendous opportunities:

- Health care, like so many other things in rural America, focuses on relationships – healthcare providers get to know the people they care for.
- There is a more holistic, patient-centered approach to health care in rural communities – providers have the opportunity to provide more comprehensive care to their patients.
- Ambulatory and emergency medical services are especially critical in rural America, where 20 percent of the nation’s population lives but nearly 60 percent of all trauma deaths occur.
- Rural hospitals are sources of innovation and resourcefulness that are able to reach beyond geographical boundaries and deliver quality care. They are also typically the economic foundation of their communities – every dollar spent on rural hospitals generates about \$2.20 for the local economy.

Health care in rural America is unique:

- Rural health care is constantly evolving; it continues to tackle accessibility and health workforce issues while meeting the unique needs of aging and un-/underinsured citizens.
- Healthcare needs can’t be addressed through a “one size fits all” approach – because each community is different, programs and policies must be flexible enough to enable rural communities to identify and address the unique needs of their residents.

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