

# PROTECT THE RURAL HEALTH CARE SAFETY NET

Rural health discretionary spending is relatively small but vitally important for maintaining access to care for individuals living in rural America. To better meet these needs, while simultaneously understanding the fiscal constraints demanded by Congress, NRHA requests a modest funding increase of 10 percent for most of our itemized requests (unless another amount has specifically been authorized by law).

	FY 2018 Omnibus	FY 2019 Minibus	FY 2020 Omnibus	FY 2021 NRHA Request
<i>HHS Programs for Rural Health</i>				
Rural Communities Opioid Response	100	135	110	121
Community Health Centers	3.8*	4.0*	4.0*	4.4*
Rural Outreach & Network Grants <sup>1</sup>	71.5	77	79.5	87.5
Rural Hospital Flexibility Grants <sup>2</sup>	49.6	47.4	53.6	59
Delta Region Community Health Systems <sup>3</sup>	4	8	10	11
Telehealth <sup>4</sup>	23.5	20.4	29	31.9
National Health Service Corps	105	120	120	132
State Offices of Rural Health	10	8.8	12.5	12.5
Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies Program <sup>5</sup>	-	1.8	9	9.9
Rural Research and Policy Analysis	9.3	6.2	10.4	11.4
<i>Title VII and VIII Programs of Particular Interest to Fund</i>				
Geriatric Programs	40.6	40.7	40.7	44.8
Area Health Education Centers	38.3	39.2	41.3	45.4
Rural Residency Development Program	14.9	20.2	10	11
<i>USDA Programs for Rural Health</i>				
Rural Hospital Technical Assistance <sup>6</sup>	0	0 <sup>6</sup>	1	1.1

All numbers are listed in millions of dollars, except those with asterisks (listed in billions).

1. Rural & Community Access to Emergency Devices is funded through this program.
2. The Rural Hospital Flexibility Grants must be reauthorized.
3. NRHA requests that the Delta Community Health Systems Program be replicated in other rural communities.
4. Reflects only telehealth funding for the Office for the Advancement of Telehealth, including the telehealth Network Grant Program, and the Small Rural Hospital Improvement Grant Program.
5. In 2019, HHS added funds to the appropriations allocation to increase the total to \$9 million for the RMOMS program. NRHA would like to see this program grow even more in FY21.
6. In late 2018, USDA developed a pilot of a technical assistance program for rural hospitals. For 2019 the program was funded with discretionary USDA funds at \$300,000 for a small number (10-12) of hospitals with existing USDA loans. The 2018 Farm Bill included committee report included language encouraging USDA to expand on this program. These funds will allow USDA to expand on this much needed program.



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# Rural Health Programs Breakdown

The **Outreach Grant Program** funds critical community-based projects that significantly improve access to care in rural communities. Typical projects address diabetes, obesity, screening, adolescent health, oral health, and mental health. More than 2 million people have benefited and more than 85% of grant programs continue to deliver services five years after federal funding has ended.

**Network Development Grants** address the business and management challenges of working with underserved rural communities, including helping to overcome the fragmentation of health care services in rural areas and to achieve economies of scale. The program provides funding to rural communities that are beginning to examine the benefits of building networks so they can initiate the process.

**Rural Health Research/Policy** funds the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP). FORHP administers rural health programs, coordinates activities related to rural health care, and advises the Secretary on access to care, the viability of rural hospitals, and the availability of physicians and other health professionals.

**Community Health Centers** provide essential community care, including primary care, oral health, and mental health, as well as other necessary services to medically underserved areas. Robust funding is necessary for their continued growth and to ensure they can provide quality, affordable care. NRHA supports legislation that stabilizes CHCs by providing five years of funding and increases of 10%.

**State Offices of Rural Health**, located in all 50 states, help rural communities build health care delivery systems by collecting and disseminating information, providing technical assistance, helping coordinate rural health state-wide, and by supporting efforts to improve recruitment and retention of health professionals.

**Rural Hospital Flexibility Grants** are used by each state to implement new technologies, strategies and plans in Critical Access Hospitals (CAH). CAHs provide essential services to a community. Their continued viability is critical for access to care and the health of the rural economy.

**EMS Sustainability Grants** are included under the Flexibility Grants program and build an evidence base for a sustainable rural EMS model, and are essential in the changing landscape of rural EMS. These grant programs offer the opportunity to develop and implement projects to ensure continued access to EMS in rural America.

**Rural Communities Opioids Response Programs** provide funds to support treatment for and prevention of substance use disorder, focusing on rural communities with the highest risk for substance use disorders.

**Telehealth** funding is for the Office for the Advancement of Telehealth, including the **Telehealth Network Grant Program**, which promotes the effective use of technologies to improve access to health services and to provide distance education for health professionals.

**National Health Service Corps** supports qualified health care providers by providing scholarship and loan-repayment programs for those serving medically underserved communities and populations with health professional shortages and/or high unmet needs for health services.

**Title VII and VIII programs, including Rural Physician Training Grants, Area Health Education Centers, and Geriatric programs**, provide policy leadership and grant support for health professions workforce development for shortage areas.

The **USDA's Rural Hospital Technical Assistance Program** was created in 2018 using discretionary funding in the USDA's Office of Rural Development. The program will provide technical assistance to rural hospitals with USDA loans to ensure their continued viability and financial success. NRHA requests Congressional support, building upon language in the 2018 Farm Bill, to slowly and responsibly grow this program as it demonstrates success to expand technical assistance to struggling rural providers.



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