

Rural Veterans Health



Veterans living in rural areas may have difficulty accessing health services. Rural veterans may be unaware of the benefits, services, and facilities available to them or may have challenges accessing care locally. Rural veterans may face poverty, homelessness, and substance use disorder, which can exacerbate health outcomes.



4.4 million Veterans live in rural areas

10% of enrolled rural Veterans are minorities

61% of rural veterans are enrolled in the Veteran Affairs (VA) healthcare system

54% of enrolled veterans are 65 or older

60% are affected by a service-related condition

44% earn less than \$35,000 annually



27% do not access the internet at home



According to the VHA Office of Rural Health, the most common diagnoses for rural veterans in outpatient settings include high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, acid reflux, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and depressive disorder, as well as one or more service-connected disabilities.

Service-related and other health issues experienced by rural veterans can be exacerbated by the lack of specialty care in rural areas, as well as other conditions such as poverty, homelessness, and substance abuse.



NRHA Supported Legislation

VA Clinician Appreciation, Recruitment, Education, Expansion, and Retention Support (CAREERS) Act of 2023 (S. 10)

Modernizes VA's pay system for physicians and other high-level clinicians, expand eligibility for healthcare professional education reimbursement, and collect data to help improve VA's hiring and onboarding process, all of which will bolster the workforce in hard-to-hire rural areas.

Dental Care for Veterans Act (H.R. 2413)

Authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide dental care to all veterans enrolled in the VA healthcare system. Specifically, this legislation would eliminate current statutory eligibility restrictions for VA dental care and make dental care part of the standard medical benefits package for veterans.

Expanding Veterans Options for Long Term Care Act (S. 485)

Aides help senior veterans live independently by creating a three-year pilot program for eligible veterans to receive assisted living care paid for by the VA.

Veterans Patient Advocacy Act (H.R. 449)

Requires the Office of Patient Advocacy within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to ensure there is not fewer than one patient advocate for every 13,500 veterans enrolled in the VA health care system and that highly rural veterans may access the services of patient advocates.