

June 8, 2021

HHS Announces Funding for Rural COVID-19 Response

See information on funding for rural health clinics, hospitals and communities, and how to apply for funding

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) recently announced [expanded COVID-19 response efforts in rural communities](#). Specifically, HRSA will increase the number of vaccines sent to rural communities, expand testing and other COVID-19 prevention services, and work to increase vaccine uptake. To achieve these goals, the agency will provide funding for the Rural Health Clinic COVID-19 Testing and Mitigation Program, Rural Health Clinic Vaccine Confidence Program, and existing grantees of the Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program. In addition, HRSA will also distribute vaccine doses through its Rural Health Clinic Vaccine Distribution Program.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT

Rural Health Clinic COVID-19 Testing and Mitigation (CTM) Program

HRSA plans to provide \$460 million in funding to more than 4,600 rural health clinics (RHCs) in June 2021. The agency will provide a one-time payment of up to \$100,000 per clinic site to promote testing education, establish alternative testing sites, arrange test result processing, engage in contact tracing and case investigation, and engage in other activities within the [CDC Community Mitigation Framework](#).

RHCs do not need to apply for funds for the CTM Program as payments will be distributed via a mechanism similar to the Provider Relief Fund. Organizations will receive payments based on the number of clinic sites they operate. For more information, visit the [HRSA CTM website](#). You can also join the RHC COVID-19 Testing Program [mailing list](#) or [email](#) your questions.

Rural Health Clinic COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence (CVC) Program

HRSA will make nearly \$100 million available in grants to eligible RHCs nationwide, funding up to \$50,000 per RHC. Organizations that operate multiple RHCs may apply per each clinic site. Funds can be used to increase vaccine confidence and support vaccine education efforts, such as information dissemination to reinforce messages about prevention and treatment of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, coordination efforts with public health partners to identify vaccine-hesitant populations, and other efforts around vaccine promotion.

RHCs must apply for this funding opportunity. Applications are due June 23, 2021. HRSA will fund all eligible RHCs who apply. For more information and the application, visit the [HRSA RHCVC website](#). You can also join the RHC Vaccine Confidence Program [mailing list](#) or [email](#) your questions.

Rural Health Clinic COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution (CVD) Program

This distribution program will provide vaccine doses directly to RHCs at no cost, including constituent products and ancillary supplies. These doses will be in addition to any vaccine allotment RHCs may be receiving from their state and/or local jurisdictions. Participation in the program will require reporting vaccine-related data to support implementation of the direct allocation program.

HRSA and the CDC will enroll interested RHCs to receive direct allocation of vaccines. For more information, visit the [HRSA RHCVD website](#). You can also [email](#) your questions.

Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP)

HRSA will also provide \$398 million to existing grantees of the SHIP to work with small rural hospitals on COVID-19 testing and mitigation. Eligible small rural hospitals are those with fewer than 50 beds and critical access hospitals, and will receive up to \$230,000 per hospital through the State Office of Rural Health.

For more information, contact your [State Office of Rural Health](#).

Eligibility

Eligibility for the RHC Testing and Mitigation, Vaccine Confidence, and Vaccine Distribution programs depend on RHC status. Eligible providers must:

- Be a Medicare-certified RHC or organization that owns and operates Medicare-certified RHCs, and
- Have an active CMS Certification Number (CCN) and be listed in the CMS Survey & Certification's Quality, Certification and Oversight Reports (QCOR).

To verify RHC eligibility, visit the CMS QCOR [website](#).

The AHA hosted a webinar on June 3 featuring Michael Fallahkhair, senior advisor for Federal Office of Rural Health Policy at the Department of Health and Human Services, and Lindsey Nienstedt, public health analyst at the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy at HHS, who discussed federal funding opportunities to assist rural hospitals and rural health clinics with efforts related to COVID-19 testing, mitigation and vaccination. [Listen to the replay here](#). For additional information and resources regarding COVID-19 response in rural communities through RHCs, please visit the HRSA coronavirus RHC [website](#).