

## **CMS Rural Health Strategy**

### **Q: Why did CMS decide to develop a strategy?**

A: Rural Americans face several health-related challenges. Rural populations are more likely than urban populations to be living in poverty, unhealthy, older, uninsured or underinsured, and medically underserved. Understanding this, CMS sought to develop a strategy to help make health care in rural America accessible, affordable, and accountable.

### **Q: How was the strategy developed?**

A: Through a series of listening sessions with rural stakeholders and consumers, the CMS Rural Health Council sought input on the challenges, and local solutions associated with providing high quality health care in rural communities. This input informed the development of a strategic plan to improve health care in rural America.

### **Q: To whom does the strategy apply?**

A: The Rural Health Strategy is a CMS strategy and applies to all of the CMS' programs.

### **Q: What is the strategy intended to do?**

A: The strategy supports CMS' overall effort to reduce provider burden, and aligns with other CMS priorities. Through the implementation of the CMS Rural Health Strategy and continued stakeholder engagement, we will work to avoid unintended negative impacts of CMS policies, and help make health care in rural America accessible, affordable, and accountable.

### **Q: Where can we find the strategy?**

A: The CMS Rural Health Strategy can be found at [go.cms.gov/ruralhealth](https://www.cms.gov/ruralhealth).

### **Q: The Administrator has remarks on applying a rural lens to CMS programs. How is CMS planning on doing that?**

A: As new rules, regulations and programs are developed, CMS will ensure the goals of the rural health strategy are considered.

### **Q: How can rural stakeholders support or engage with CMS on the strategy?**

A: As part of the rulemaking process, there is a comment period during which stakeholders are invited to submit their feedback and ideas regarding CMS rules. CMS also hosts a Rural Health Open Door forum call with time set aside for stakeholders to ask questions. Additionally, CMS regional offices regularly meet with health care providers in rural areas and encourage input on a wide range of issues. Each CMS regional office has Regional Rural Health Coordinator stakeholders can contact to receive more information. Information about the Open Door Forums and a list of Rural Health Coordinators can be found on the cms.gov website at

<https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-andEducation/Outreach/OpenDoorForums/Downloads/CMSRuralHealthCoordinators.pdf>

**Q: How is CMS working with the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy in implement the strategy?**

A: CMS works closely with HRSA FORHP and other federal partners to identify and address rural health issues, and will continue to work closely with them in implementing the strategy.

**Q: What is CMS doing to support payment for telehealth services to support rural communities?**

A: To strengthen access to care, especially for those living in rural areas, CMS is transforming access to Medicare telehealth services by paying for more services and making it easier for providers to bill for these services. Improving access to telehealth services reflects CMS's work to modernize Medicare payments to promote patient-centered innovations.