

Rural Health Clinic FAQ

What is a Rural Health Clinic (RHC)?

A Rural Health Clinic (RHC) is a clinic certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Health to receive special Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements. The purpose of the RHC program is to improve access to primary care in underserved rural areas. RHCs are required to use a team approach of physicians and mid-level practitioners (nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and certified nurse midwives) to provide services. RHCs may also provide other health care services, such as mental health or vision services, but they **may not** be reimbursed for those services based on their allowable costs.

Are there location requirements for RHCs?

Yes. RHCs must be located in rural areas with current health care shortage designations. RHCs must be located in a rural area. Any area that is not in a U.S. Census-designated "urbanized area" is considered rural. You can use this [U.S. Census Bureau reference map](#) as a first step to see if your location qualifies. Scroll down below the U.S. map and enter the street address for your clinic's location, then click on Go. A map will be generated for your area. To make the urbanized areas easier to see, you can go to the **options menu** in the blue bar and select **boundaries**. Uncheck all the options **except** for State and 2000 Urban Area, then click **update**. The map will refresh showing just the urbanized areas. The map will also show urban clusters, but you can ignore those. Just make sure that your location is not identified as an urbanized area (UA).

The final determination of rural status is made by the Pennsylvania Department of Health (the state agency responsible for RHC certification) **and** the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Region III Office. Please contact the Department's Division of Home Health at (717) 783-1379 if you have further questions or would like further verification of your location status.

RHCs must be located in a shortage area that has been designated within the last three (3) years. There are three (3) types of shortage areas that qualify:

- Federally designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA)
- Federally designated Medically Underserved area (MUA), or
- State Governor designated underserved area.

Below are some other resources that may help you, they are:

- For state designated areas, please contact the Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health by [clicking here](#) to find out if there are any designated shortage areas.
- [How to Apply for HPSA Designation](#)

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Are there special staffing requirements for RHCs?

RHCs must be staffed by at least one (1) Nurse Practitioner (NP), physician assistant (PA), or certified nurse midwife (CNM). The NP, PA, or CNM **must be** on-site to see patients at least 50% of the time the clinic is open. A physician (MD or DO) must supervise the midlevel practitioner in a manner consistent with state and federal law.

What types of services do RHCs provide?

RHCs must provide out-patient primary care services and basic laboratory services. They can also offer other services such as mental health services and vision services, but those services **may not** be reimbursed based on allowable costs.

If you have further questions, please contact the Division of Home Health at (717) 783-1379.