

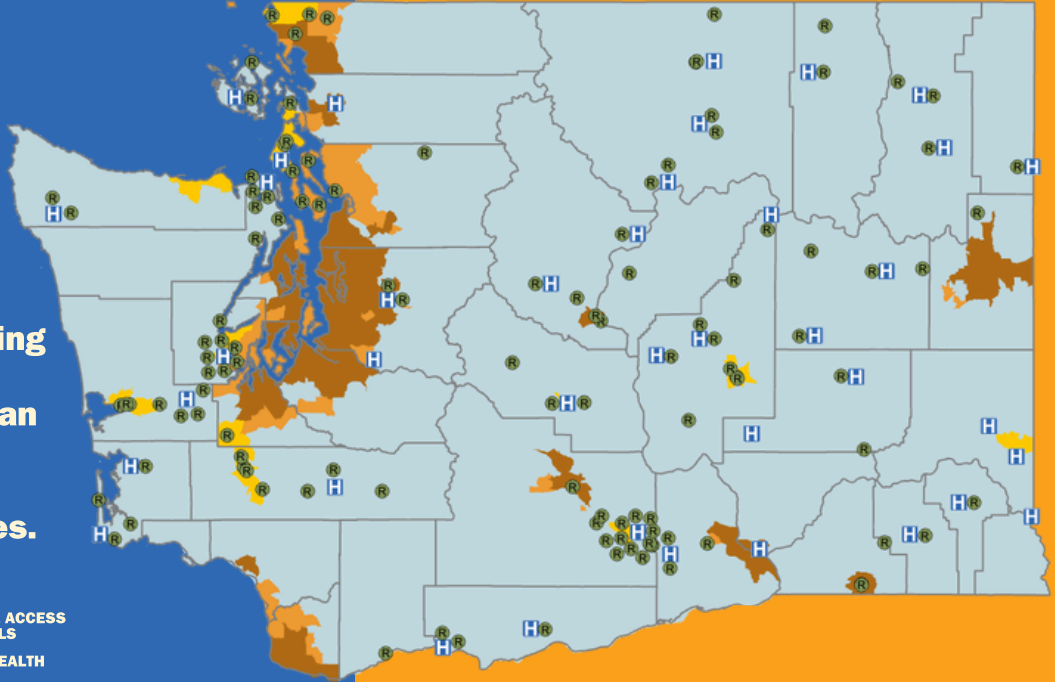


Rural Health

Rural Counties in Washington State

The DOH Rural-Urban Classification Scheme uses Rural-Urban Commuting Areas (RUCA) codes to create a four-tier rural-urban classification at the sub-county level using census tracts and zip codes.

RURAL URBAN COMMUTING AREAS



Mission Statement

The Washington State Office of Rural Health promotes timely and high-quality healthcare for all rural residents of Washington State by implementing strategic initiatives, fostering innovative programs, and providing dedicated support to healthcare facilities and professionals

Vision

To be a catalyst in rural healthcare transformation and innovation.

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State at a glance

State Population	% of population considered rural:
7,864,400	21%

Rural Health and Safety Net Service Sites

39	6	34
Critical Access Hospitals	Rural Hospitals	Tribal Clinics
127	44	88
Rural Health Clinics	Free Clinics	Rural Federally Qualified Health Centers

STATE OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH

Improving access to timely, high quality healthcare for rural residents where they live, work, and play.

Palliative Care Initiative

Integration of Palliative Care into rural health systems and communities to decrease transfer of patients to urban tertiary services, target patients with serious illness earlier and develop funding models for sustainable services.

4 cohorts representing
24 communities

Peer Learning & Networking Opportunities Provided



12

Telehealth Case Consultations



12

Palliative Care Open Office Hours



4

Round Table and Advisory Board Meetings



41

Sponsorships to attend Washington Palliative Care Meeting



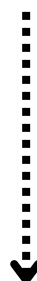
Improved

Patient, family, and health care experience
Quality of life



Decreased

Use of 911, ED and inpatient hospital
Total cost of care



Palliative care services reduces ED utilization by 35%



ED visit rates improved by nearly 60 percentage points over a span of 2 years

Over a 2 year span, there was a 250% improvement in inpatient stay reduction



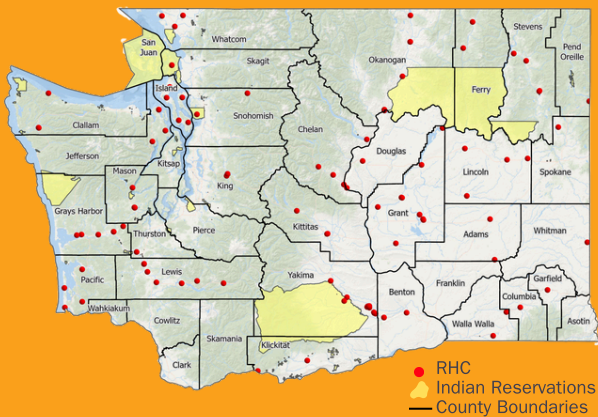
Palliative Care effectively prevents crisis-driven hospital visits



RURAL HEALTH SYSTEMS

Working with our rural communities to shape sustainable solutions.

Rural Health Clinics



58 RHCs receiving consultation on federal regulation compliance

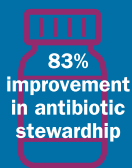


Direct technical assistance provided to rural health clinics addressing regulatory requirements, operational support, and quality improvement.

Rural & Critical Access Hospitals



750
hours of TA provided to rural and critical access hospitals addressing quality, finance, operations, and navigating state and national regulations



Supported by two Federal grants

Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Grant

Supports Critical Access Hospitals (CAH) by encouraging growth for:

- Sustainability
- Quality of care
- Financial improvement
- Operational efficiency
- Community health outcomes

Small Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP)

Assists rural hospitals to improve their capacity to deliver high-quality care in a sustainable way:

- Modernize systems
- Improve quality
- Remain financially viable in a changing healthcare environment



128

hospital proposals received funding and direct TA to plan, execute, & evaluate quality, financial, and community health outcome improvement projects



Rural Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Washington State has **461** licensed EMS services

There are **18,611** certified EMS providers in Washington State



21% are volunteers predominantly in rural communities

Between 2015 & 2024, the number of volunteers decreased **31%**

808 vouchers for rural EMS provider certification exam fees awarded

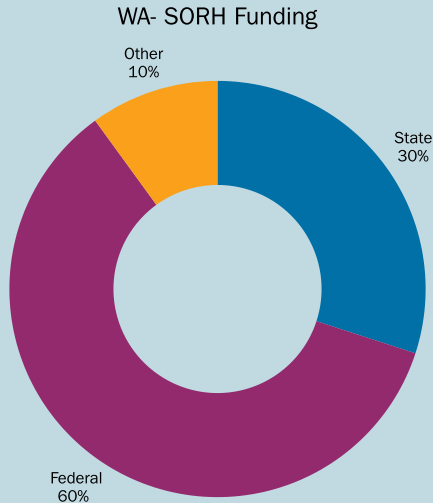
Improving Rural EMS Service Sustainability

- Assessed vulnerabilities and areas of improvement
- 12 rural EMS services participate in sustainability project
- Continue leading the statewide Rural EMS Learning Action Network
- Advance efforts to develop a statewide model that strengthens the sustainability of rural EMS systems.

GRANT FUNDING

The WA-SORH manages several federal grants, as well as state and private foundation funding.

The federal grants focus on dissemination of funds and information to rural healthcare systems quality improvement, financial stability, operational efficiency, innovative solutions to rural challenges, and improving community health outcomes.



- State Office of Rural Health (SORH)
- Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex)
- Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP)
- Rural Health Network Development Planning Program

Power of Rural

The WA-SORH sets aside the third Thursday of every November to celebrate the “Power of Rural”(powerofrural.org) on National Rural Health Day by showcasing the power of rural, and honoring the selfless, community- minded individuals that serve rural health.



Washington Rural Health Heroes

These awards recognize outstanding work by those who provide direct patient care, leadership, and teamwork within their rural health organizations.

The 2025 Rural Health Heroes of Washington:

LEADERSHIP

Ramona Hicks, Coulee Medical Center

DIRECT PATIENT CARE

Lindsey Tanaka, East Wenatchee Medical & Dental Clinic

TEAMWORK

Palliative Care Team, Forks Community Hospital

COMMUNITY STAR

Elise Cutter, Island Health



WA-SORH convened over 500 rural healthcare staff, partners, EMS providers, & organizations at our annual rural meeting

Top 5 RHC Identified Needs

- Leadership
- Development
- Recruitment & Retention
- Compliance
- Telehealth

Service Line Integration

274

Hospital staff participating in WA-SORH supported quality education, training, and hands on skill development.



Washington State Partners

- Association of WA Public Hospital Districts
- Grand Columbia Health Alliance
- Health Care Authority
- Health Facilities Planning
- NW Telehealth Resource Center
- The Rural Collaborative
- Rural Health Clinic Association of Washington
- WA DOH Suicide Prevention & 988 Crisis Line
- WA Rural Health Association
- WA State Department of Commerce
- WA State Department of Health and Social Services
- WA State Department of Veteran's Affairs
- WA State Hospital Association
- Washington Healthcare Access Alliance
- Washington State Hospice & Palliative Care Org



National Presence

WA-SORH has presented nationally on our programs, initiatives, and achievements over **50** times in the last decade



POWER OF RURAL

We celebrate the tenacity, resiliency, and “can do” spirit that prevails in rural Washington state.



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