



Primary Care Shortage Designations

There are four types of designations that are used as eligibility criteria for state and federal programs that support recruitment and retention of rural primary care providers in Iowa: Health Professional Shortage Areas, Iowa Governor's Designation for Rural Health Clinics, Medically Underserved Area, or Medically Underserved Populations.

Health Professional Shortage Area

Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) are geographic areas, population groups, or facilities designated by the Health Resources and Services Administration, as having an acute shortage of primary medical care, dental health care, and/or mental health care professionals.

The following state and federal programs and opportunities utilize the HPSA designations as eligibility criteria:

- [National Health Service Corps Scholarship Programs](#) (NHSC): Provides scholarships for health professionals who agree to serve in HPSAs or the private practice option
- [National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program](#): Provides loan repayment to health professionals who agree to serve in HPSAs
- Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and FQHC look-alikes
- Enhanced federal grant eligibility
- Higher Medicare caps for primary care billing
- [Rural Health Clinics Act](#): Provides Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement for services provided by physician assistants and nurse-practitioners in clinics in rural HPSAs
- Medicare Incentive Payments for Physician's Services Furnished in HPSAs: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) gives a 10% bonus payment for Medicare-reimbursable physician services provided in geographic HPSAs; does not apply to population group HPSAs.
- Higher "Customary Charges" for New Physicians in HPSAs: CMS exempts new physicians opening practices in non-metropolitan geographic HPSAs from new Medicare limitations on "customary charges"
- [Federal Employees Health Benefits Programs](#): Provides reimbursement for non-physician services in states with high percentages of their population residing in HPSAs
- [Iowa Primary Care Provider Loan Repayment Program](#): Provides loan repayment to health professionals who agree to serve in HPSAs
- [J-1 Visa Waiver](#): Supports waivers for health professionals who agree to serve in HPSAs

Medically Underserved Area/ Medically Underserved Populations

Medically Underserved Area/ Medically Underserved Populations (MUA/MUP) are geographic areas or population groups designated by HRSA as having too few primary care providers, high infant mortality, high poverty or a high elderly population.

The following benefits are available where MUAs are located:

- Rural Health Clinic (RHC) Certification
- Eligibility to develop Community Health Centers
- Migrant Health Centers
- Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and FQHC look-alikes
- Enhanced federal grant eligibility
- Higher Medicare caps for primary care billing

Iowa Governor's Designation for Rural Health Clinics

The Iowa Governor's Designation for Rural Health Clinics is a medically underserved area that supersedes requirements of MUA/MUPs in the case of high need situations and is a criteria for Rural Health Clinic certification.

Based upon data analysis conducted every four years, the following opportunities may apply: current designations can remain qualified; a new designation may be qualified, which allows for any RHC in that area to be eligible for certification; or area no longer qualifies as a designation. In this case, any associated Rural Health Clinic certification is sustained (grandfathered), but new RHCs established in the area are not eligible for certification. The Governor's designation process allows for enhanced Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement.