

# Rural Veterans Health



Veterans living in rural areas may have difficulty accessing health services locally and be unaware of the benefits, services, and facilities available to them. Many rural veterans face poverty, homelessness, and substance use disorder, which can exacerbate health outcomes.



Nearly 4.5 million veterans enrolled in the Veteran's Health Administration live in rural areas

- 54% of enrolled veterans are 65 or older
- 31% earn less than \$35,000 annually
- 60% are affected by a service-related condition

10% of enrolled rural Veterans are minorities.



27% do not access the internet at home

According to the VHA Office of Rural Health, the most common diagnoses for rural veterans in outpatient settings include high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, acid reflux, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and depressive disorder, as well as one or more service-connected disabilities.

Service-related and other health issues experienced by rural veterans can be exacerbated by the lack of specialty care in rural areas, as well as other conditions such as poverty, homelessness, and substance abuse.



# NRHA Supported Legislation

**VA Clinician Appreciation,  
Recruitment, Education,  
Expansion, and Retention  
Support (CAREERS) Act**  
(S. 10 in 118th Congress)  
*Sen. Tester (D-MT) & Boozman (R-AR)*

Modernizes VA's pay system for physicians and other high-level clinicians, expands eligibility for healthcare professional education reimbursement, and collects data to help improve VA's hiring and onboarding process, all of which will bolster the workforce in hard-to-hire rural areas.

**Dental Care for Veterans Act**  
(H.R. 2413 in 118th Congress)  
*Rep. Brownley (D-CA-26)*

Authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide dental care to all veterans enrolled in the VA healthcare system. Specifically, this legislation would eliminate current statutory eligibility restrictions for VA dental care and make dental care part of the standard medical benefits package for veterans.

**Expanding Veterans Options  
for Long Term Care Act**  
(S.495 /H.R. 1815 in 118th Congress)  
*Sen. Tester (D-MT) & Moran (R-KS),  
Reps. Slotkin (D-MI) & Steil (R-WI)*

Aides help senior veterans live independently by creating a three-year pilot program for eligible veterans to receive assisted living care paid for by the VA.

**Veterans Patient Advocacy  
Act**  
(H.R. 449 in 118th Congress)  
*Sen. Stabenow (D-MI)*

Requires the Office of Patient Advocacy within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to ensure there is not fewer than one patient advocate for every 13,500 veterans enrolled in the VA health care system and that highly rural veterans may access the services of patient advocates.

**The Rural Veterans  
Transport to Care Act**  
(S. 3751/H.R. 7654 in 118th Congress)  
*Sen. Ossoff (D-GA) & Collins (R-ME)  
Rep. Davis (D-NC) & Murphy (R-NC)*

Improve how VA measures rurality, helping more veterans living in rural areas get transportation to VA or VA-authorized health care facilities.