

THE NORC WALSH CENTER FOR RURAL HEALTH ANALYSIS

CONTACT

Michael Meit, MA, MPH
Co-Director, Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis
(301) 634-9324
meit-michael@norc.org

Alana Knudson, PhD
Co-Director, Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis
(301) 634-9326
knudson-alana@norc.org



About NORC and the Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis

NORC at the University of Chicago is an independent research institution that delivers reliable data and rigorous analysis to guide critical programmatic, business, and policy decisions. Since 1941, NORC has conducted groundbreaking studies, created and applied innovative methods and tools, and advanced principles of scientific integrity and collaboration. Today, government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world partner with NORC to transform increasingly complex information into useful knowledge.

NORC's health research group includes prominent health policy makers, nationally recognized health services researchers, and leading experts in survey design and implementation. The staff expertise spans a broad multidisciplinary spectrum including economics, sociology, public health, medicine and biological sciences, policy, epidemiology, social work, statistics, and political science.

Part of the NORC health group since 2003, the Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis is the home for rural health research, evaluation and program support. The Walsh Center studies policy issues affecting public health and health care in rural America, including payment and delivery models, access to health care services, public health systems, regional disparities, frontier care, rural Veterans health, and emergency preparedness.

Sample Projects

Rural Health Outreach Tracking and Evaluation Program.

For the HRSA Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, the NORC Walsh Center, in partnership with the University of Minnesota Rural Health Research Center, monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the six grant programs funded under the Outreach Authority of section 330A of the Public Health Services Act. Sample evaluation projects include the identification of common evaluation metrics across grant programs, evaluation of the network development planning grant program, and the use of evidence based practices among grantees.

Tribal Health Profession Opportunity Grants Program.

For the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), in partnership with Abt Associates, NORC is leading a second round of evaluation of the design, implementation and outcomes of the five Tribal Health Professions Opportunities Grants. Activities include reviewing documents and curricula, conducting site visits and interviews with grantee administrative staff and partners, interviewing local employers, conducting focus groups, and analyzing program operations data as part of this evaluation.

Cohort Analysis of Rural Health Programs. For the HRSA Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, in partnership with the University of Minnesota, NORC is conducting an evaluation of four 330A Outreach Authority programs to evaluate and analyze their process, outputs, and outcomes. This four-year project will culminate in a cohort analysis across all four programs in the final year. The programs being evaluated include the Outreach program, the Network Development program, the Quality program, and the Delta program. Both secondary and primary data collection is being conducted. The findings will be used to identify important outcomes of these cohorts and to document their expectations to improve these programs in the future.



Rural Health Care Coordination and Collaboration Strategies. For the HRSA Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, the NORC Walsh Center, in partnership with HSM Associates, and Georgia Health Policy Center, is conducting an environmental scan and focus groups to update the 2010 Manual on Collaboration among Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). We are also updating the comparison document of rural health clinics (RHCs) and FQHCs. Products will include reports and webinars showcasing innovative rural health collaborations.

Health Insurance, Rural Economic Development and Agriculture. In partnership with the University of Vermont and regional rural development centers, NORC Walsh Center is conducting a variety of activities for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) including: 1) Interviewing and surveying farmers and ranchers to understand their unique health insurance needs and decisions; 2) Hosting webinars to learn more about how extension and tax experts help farmers and ranchers make health insurance decisions; 3) Developing educational tools that will aid technical assistants and service providers as they help farm families make health insurance decisions, including a Smart Choice Health Insurance Farm Families curriculum; and, 4) Analyzing the impact of state and national policies related to health insurance on farm and ranch families

Maryland Rural Health Study. For the Maryland Health Care Commission and the University of Maryland, NORC Walsh Center is identifying rural healthcare delivery options and financing options. These research findings will inform the deliberations of the Maryland Rural Health Workgroups and Maryland state legislature

Rural Health Information Hub Community Health Gateway Project. This project supports the efforts of the HRSA Federal Office of Rural Health Policy in building the evidence base of promising and effective rural health programs and interventions on the Rural Health Information Hub Community Health Gateway. Through a subcontract with the University of North Dakota's Center of Rural Health, NORC Walsh Center staff support the on-going development of Rural Health Information Hub's Community Health Gateway by identifying exemplary rural health programs and interventions showcased in evidence-based toolkits and the Models and Innovations section.

Update of the 2014 Rural-Urban Chartbook. To illustrate trends in health and health care access among rural populations, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a report on the health of the nation titled Health, United States, 2001: Urban and Rural Health Chartbook. However, no update of this national rural-urban health comparison report was made until 2014 when the Rural Health Reform Policy Research Center, led by the NORC Walsh Center team, released the 2014 Update of the Rural Urban Chartbook. The 2014 Chartbook replicated the previous analyses using the most recent data available (2006 to 2011) from the same data sources, and serves as baseline to assess the impact of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 on the health status of rural residents. <http://www.norc.org/Research/Projects/Pages/2014-update-of-the-rural-urban-chartbook.aspx>

Exploring Rural and Urban Mortality Differences. As part of the Rural Health Reform Policy Research Center, the NORC Walsh Center team completed a study, Exploring Rural and Urban Mortality Differences, which examined mortality rates by rurality for the 10 HHS regions and for the Appalachian and Delta regions. This study builds upon the 2014 Update of the Rural-Urban Chartbook findings and other recent publications that indicate there are persistent differences in mortality between rural and urban residents. Study findings are available online in Excel spreadsheets, presentation slides, and through an interactive online data visualization application. <http://www.norc.org/Research/Projects/Pages/exploring-rural-and-urban-mortality-differences.aspx>

Other Projects

Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategies for Rural Health Departments Seeking Accreditation

Exploring the Implementation of Global Budgets for Rural Providers

Assessing the Quality of Hospice Care from the Perspective of Rural and Urban Bereaved Family Members

Rural and Urban Medicare Beneficiaries' Utilization of Health Care Services during the Last Six Months of Life

Long-term Care: A Comparison of Perceptions, Experiences, and Attitudes among Rural and Urban Americans

Learn more about NORC and the Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis at www.norc.org