



State Office of Rural Health

Ohio Rural Health Landscape

Tina Turner

State Office of Rural Health Administrator
Ohio Department of Health

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH)

is a state agency under the guidance of the Governor's Office of Health Transformation and its mission is to protect and improve the health of all Ohioans.

Its strategy is to focus on the following six pillars of public health: infectious disease, preparedness, health improvement and wellness, health equity and access, environmental health, and regulatory compliance.

Ohio SORH

is within the Health Access, Office of Health Policy and Performance Improvement and aims to strengthen the rural health care delivery system in Ohio by providing communities with State and Federal resources. It helps to develop long term solutions for rural health problems and strengthens the rural health delivery system by maintaining a focal point for rural health.

Rural Ohio is expansive and diverse

- 22.1% of Ohioans reside in rural areas statewide, based US Census Bureau, 2010 Census Urban and Rural Classification and Urban Area Criteria with a total statewide population of approximately 11.5 million.
- Rural Ohio spans varying landscapes, from the flat farmlands of northwestern Ohio to the rolling hills of Appalachia in southeastern Ohio.
- The majority (84%) of Ohio's 88 counties are rural or partially rural under the definition used by Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP), including 29 of the 32 counties within Ohio's largely rural Appalachian region.
- 50 of the 88 counties are considered rural in whole/entirety and 24 counties are considered partially rural (with a few to many census tracts defined as rural) according to HRSA eligibility tracker.

Rural Health Status:

- While Ohio's unemployment numbers have decreased significantly from 9.7% in 2011 to 5.7% in 2015, many areas of rural Ohio are still experiencing significant impacts.
- The overall unemployment rate is higher in rural Ohio (6.1%), in comparison to urban areas (5.7%), according to the USDA Economic Research Service (USDA-ERS, 2015).
- Poverty rates are also consistently higher in rural areas of the state, at 15.5% in fully rural counties, in comparison to 14.8% for Ohio and 14.3% for the U.S. (American Community Survey, 2007-2011).
- Persistently high poverty rates in the rural Appalachian region of southeastern Ohio, where 16.7% of residents earn incomes below the poverty level and 38% earn incomes below 200% of poverty, according to American Community Survey 2007-2011 estimates.

Health Status and Chronic Disease:

- According to “The Impact of Chronic Disease in Ohio: 2015”, Ohio Department of Health, Healthy Ohio, Ohioans have a higher prevalence of chronic disease compared with the U.S.
- According to 2012 data from the Ohio Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Ohioans age 18 and older had a higher prevalence of coronary heart disease (5.4%), stroke (3.1%), diabetes (11.7%), cancer (6.6%), Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) (8.6%), and arthritis (30%) compared with U.S. adults.
- Heart disease, cancer, Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease (CLRD), stroke, diabetes and kidney disease contributed to 62% of Ohio deaths in 2012.
- The county with the highest age adjusted death rate (678.8 per 100,000) was Scioto County and a rural designated county in its entirety.

Workforce/Recruitment and Retention:

- One of the major health care needs facing many rural areas in Ohio is a shortage of healthcare providers.
- Ohio recently ranked 19th in the nation when it comes to access to physicians, according to a survey compiled by physician search firm Merritt Hawkins in 2015.
- Within Ohio counties that are considered rural or partially rural by FORHP, forty-four contain primary care HPSAs, with twenty-two of these located within Appalachia; forty-eight counties contain dental HPSAs; and sixty-six contain mental health HPSAs.
- 1.1 million Ohioans reside in underserved areas for primary care, 1.4 million in underserved areas for dental care, and 2.7 million in underserved areas for mental health care (HRSA Geospatial Data Warehouse, Nov. 2012).

SORH supports with grant funding:

- **SORH grant** – focus on dissemination of rural health information to all stakeholders, RHC development, health care provider capacity building regarding quality, financial and operational improvements, and development of a State Rural Health Plan.
- **Flex grant** – focus specifically on CAH communities and improving quality, financial and operational performance measures and benchmarking in CAHs (Ohio CAHs are compared with other CAHs nationwide), Emergency Medical Services provider support and assessment, and other community health systems developments.
- **SHIP grant**- focus on small rural hospitals Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Project, benchmarking quality and safety measures, and providing training to hospital staff regarding quality improvement.

SORH Activities:

- Rural Health resource for the state and nationally.
- Participate in Ohio Quality Collaborative and Ohio Equity Institute.
- Disseminate rural health specific information to stakeholders through site visits, listserv, annual conference, and presentations.
- State Rural Health Improvement Plan activities.
- Rural Health Clinic and other clinic improvement projects.
- Ohio Guard Care activities.
- RHC designations - 42 counties as a Governor's Certified Shortage Area for the purposes of RHC program and 48 designated RHCs.
- Development of Ohio Rural Health Association.

Flex and SHIP Activities:

- CAH Quality, Financial and Operational Improvement Network since 2004.
- MBQIP reporting and benchmarking.
- Financial and Market Assessments.
- EMS survey and collaboration building.
- Community Health Needs Assessments.
- QIN activities.
- Flex Annual Meeting.

Contact Information

Tina Turner

State Office of Rural Health Administrator
Office of Health Policy and Performance Improvement

Ohio Department of Health
246 N. High Street, 7th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43226

Ph: (614) 752-5133

Fx: (614) 564-2432

Tina.Turner@odh.ohio.gov

www.odh.ohio.gov/SORH