



## Colorado Rural Health Center

# Certified Rural Health Clinics

A Rural Health Clinic (RHC) is a primary healthcare clinic located in a non-urbanized area that has been shown to have a shortage of healthcare services or healthcare providers, and has been certified as a Rural Health Clinic under Medicare. The greatest benefit of the program is cost-based (enhanced) reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid.

### When were certified RHCs established?

In 1977, Congress passed the Rural Health Clinic Act, or Public Law 95-210, to address the lack of access to primary medical care in rural communities and to assist with the financial challenges faced by rural healthcare facilities. In addition, this law focused on increasing the utilization of mid-level practitioners in underserved areas.

### What is required to become a certified RHC?

A certified Rural Health Clinic must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be located in a non-urbanized area;
- Be located in a Medically Underserved Area (MUA) or Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) that was designated within the past 3 years;
- Provide outpatient primary care services;
- Utilize the services of at least one mid-level practitioner (Physician Assistant, Nurse Practitioner or Certified Nurse Midwife) at least 50% of the time the clinic is open;
- Have a physician to provide medical direction who is present for sufficient periods of time, at least once in every 2-week period to oversee patient care services, provide consultation and supervision, and be available through direct telecommunication; and
- Meet health and safety requirements set by Medicare and/or Medicaid.

### How many certified RHCs are there in Colorado?

As of May 2007, there were 44 RHCs in Colorado.

### How does CRHC assist certified RHCs in Colorado?

The Colorado Rural Health Center assists RHCs in a variety of ways, including hosting the annual statewide Rural Health Clinics Forum, publishing a Rural Health Clinics Tool Kit, and providing workshops and onsite assistance on a variety of topics, such as billing, coding, HIPAA compliance, and quality improvement. CRHC also provides support to clinics interested in becoming certified, and through a weekly email listserv, keeps RHCs informed on regulatory changes, funding opportunities, and policy updates.

"Enhancing healthcare services in Colorado by providing information, education, linkages, tools & energy toward addressing rural healthcare issues."

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