



Glossary: Rural Healthcare Access

On average, rural residents have higher rates of uninsurance, particularly in states that haven't expanded Medicaid, and are more likely to face doctor and hospital shortages. As a result, rural residents delay or forego medical care at higher rates than urban residents and have poorer health outcomes. States are looking at a wide range of solutions to address these rural healthcare access problems. The following glossary defines common terms that you may encounter when reading about this issue.

Term	Acronym	Definition
Broadband		High-speed data transmission which enables a large number of electronic messages to be communicated simultaneously. Lack of broadband is a barrier to the widespread use of <i>telehealth</i> .
Community Health Worker	CHW	A frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has a close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as an intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.
Electronic Consultation	EC	A form of <i>telehealth</i> , electronic consultation refers to two-way communications between local primary care physicians and specialists, creating virtual communities for providers to share expertise and acquire new skills.
Federal Poverty Level	FPL	A measure of income used by the U.S. government to determine who is eligible for subsidies, programs and benefits.
Global budget		An alternative payment model in which a hospital is paid a lump sum to provide services for a given population for a specified period of time.
Health Professional Shortage Areas	HPSA	A geographic area, population or facility with a shortage of primary care, dental or mental health providers and services.
Interstate Medical Licensure Compact		A legal agreement among states that allows eligible physicians to provide telemedicine services across state lines.
Interstate Nurse Licensure Compact	NLC	A legal agreement among states that allows eligible nurses to provide telemedicine services across state lines.
Interstate Physical Therapy Compact		A legal agreement among states that allows eligible physical therapists to provide telemedicine services across state lines.
Medicaid		A free or low-cost health coverage program for people with low incomes, covering hospital stays, drugs, physician visits and more. It is financed jointly by the states and the federal government, but is administered by the states. Not all states provide Medicaid to <i>all</i> their low-income residents.

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Medically Underserved Area	MUA	Areas with a shortage of primary care health services for residents.
Medically Underserved Population	MUP	Specific sub-groups of people living in Medically Underserved Areas that may face economic, cultural, or linguistic barriers to health care. Examples include, but are not limited to, those who are: homeless; low-income; Medicaid-eligible; Native American; or migrant farmworkers.
National Health Service Corps		A federal program that offers scholarships and loan repayment for primary care professionals—including physicians, dentists, nurse practitioners and physician assistants—to practice in underserved regions.
Nurse Practitioner	NP	A type of mid-level practitioner trained to assess patient needs, order and interpret diagnostic and laboratory tests, diagnose illness and disease, prescribe medication and formulate treatment plans.
Physician Assistant	PA	A mid-level medical practitioner who works under the supervision of a licensed doctor (an MD) or osteopathic physician (a DO). Physician Assistants do not attend medical school (and therefore cannot use the title “Dr.”), but can practice medicine with varying degrees of physician oversight in primary or specialty care.
PipelineProgram		Programs to provide educational and career support to students belonging to racial/ethnic minorities or who have other challenges applying to or entering health professions programs.
Scope of Practice		Refers to the scope of services that various types of medical professionals are authorized by states to provide.
Telehealth		The use of electronic information and telecommunications technologies to support and promote long-distance clinical healthcare, patient and professional health-related education, public health and health administration. Telehealth can be used to facilitate both provider-to-provider interactions and patient-to-provider interactions electronically.
Telemedicine		A form of <i>telehealth</i> that connects patients to providers. Patients can communicate directly with specialists via live videoconferencing, “store-and-forward” transmission of images or information, and remote patient monitoring.
Social Determinants of Health	SDoH	The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age that ultimately impact their health.