
MODELS FOR PRACTICE

FOCUS AREA: ACCESS (PRIMARY CARE)

Program Name: Southern Rural Access Program

Location: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, West Virginia (Program Office in Hershey, Pennsylvania)

Problem Addressed: Access to Primary Care

Healthy People 2010 Objective: 1

Web Address: <http://www.hmc.psu.edu/rhpc>

SNAPSHOT

The program does not directly deliver services but provides grant funding to a variety of organizations that provide services.

The Southern Rural Access Program supports work to increase the supply of primary care providers in underserved areas, strengthen the health care infrastructure, and build capacity at the state and community level to address health care problems. The program does not directly deliver services but provides grant funding to a variety of organizations that provide services. Its activities target health care providers; policymakers; community leaders; academic medical centers; medical, dental and health professions students; government organizations; and several defined patient populations through specific 21st Century Challenge Fund projects. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), the National Program Office, and the National Advisory Committee review and fund proposals that build the institutional and leadership capacity necessary to improve access to basic health care.

The Southern Rural Access Program began serving underserved rural populations in eight southern states (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas and West Virginia) in December 1998 and was fully implemented in the fall of 2000. The program was reauthorized by RWJF in January 2002 for another four years. It is anticipated that \$32.8 million in grants will have been made by RWJF to the target states during the 1998-2006 grant-making period. The program's success is built on collaborative relationships among a wide array of local, state, and national organizations and individuals, including health care providers, community groups and leaders, faith-based organizations, businesses, state and local government entities, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Small Business Administration, philanthropic organizations, institutions of higher learning, and lending agencies. The Rural Health Policy Center houses the national office and is a unit of the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the Penn State College of Medicine in Hershey, Pennsylvania. The director and deputy director are employed as faculty members while the communications officer, program coordinator, and administrative assistant

are employed as staff. The national program office is funded in its entirety through a technical and assistance direction grant from RWJF.

The program is an effort to build the institutional and leadership capacity necessary to improve access to basic health care in eight of the nation's most rural medically underserved states. The grants awarded to the states:

- help establish health professions students committed to becoming leaders in rural health areas;
- recruit and retain family practitioners, nurse practitioners, and other primary care providers into underserved communities;
- develop rural health networks; and
- establish revolving loan funds to assist rural providers to secure capital financing at terms and conditions that best meet their needs.

The program also has a matching grants program, known as the 21st Century Challenge Fund, that supports innovative pilot access improvement projects.

PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

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