

From: Federal Office of Rural Health Policy <hrsa@public.govdelivery.com>
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Subject: FORHP Announcements - March 20

March 20, 2025

What's New

[Application Assistance for RCORP – Northern Border Rural Workforce](#) – Wednesday, March 26 at 2:00 pm Eastern. During this hour-long webinar, FORHP staff will give an overview and answer questions about applications for the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) – [Northern Border Rural Workforce](#). Goals of this funding include the development of training programs focused on placement of individuals in well-compensated behavioral health employment opportunities within the service area of the federal Northern Border Regional Commission. HRSA plans to make up to eight awards and grant recipients can receive up to \$400,000 per year over a four-year period of performance. Read more details about the [RCORP-Northern Border Workforce Notice of Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov](#) and apply by April 11. For questions, write to ruralopioidresponse@hrsa.gov. If you are not able to [join the technical assistance session via Zoom](#) (Passcode 5D4yZSgV), you can call in:

- Phone number: 833 568 8864
- Meeting ID: 161 412 5345
- Passcode: 42068165

[ERS Reports Rising Rural Mortality Rates](#). Yesterday, the Economic Research Service (ERS) at the U.S. Department of Agriculture released a report indicating worsening health for working-age adults in rural areas in the U.S. Using data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, researchers found that the gap in mortality rates between rural and urban areas grew from a rural lead over urban areas of 6 percent in 1999 to *a rural lead of 43 percent* in 2019.

[CDC Updates Urban-Rural Classification for Counties](#). Last week, the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the new NCHS Urban-Rural Classification Scheme for Counties. For this update, the NCHS used delineations of metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas from the Office of Management and Budget as well as estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau to classify

counties and county equivalents into six categories – four metropolitan and two nonmetropolitan. This scheme allows researchers, policy makers, and others to study the health of U.S. residents according to how urban or rural their county is. Read more about how [FORHP uses several federal data sources to define rural](#) for programs.



SEPTEMBER 17, 2024

NCHS Urban-Rural Classification Scheme for Counties

AT A GLANCE

- The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) has developed a system (scheme) for classifying U.S. counties by how urban or rural they are.
- Researchers can use the scheme to study issues like differences in health risk and health status between people living in urban and rural counties.



Overview

Announcement

NCHS has updated the NCHS Urban-Rural Classification Scheme for Counties based on the 2023 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) description of metro areas.

The [National Center for Health Statistics](#) (NCHS) has developed a six-level urban-rural classification scheme for U.S. counties and other jurisdictions that are the equivalent of counties in their area. NCHS has updated the scheme based on the [2023 Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\) delineation of metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas](#) [PDF](#) and information about all people living in each of the counties—its population—taken from Census' 2022 [postcensal estimates](#) of July 1, 2022. NCHS used these resources to classify U.S. counties and county equivalents into six categories—four metropolitan and two nonmetropolitan.

The NCHS scheme allows researchers, policy makers, and others to study American's health in relation to the urbanization level—more urban or more rural—of the place they live. They also can use NCHS data to monitor the health of people living in urban and rural areas.

2023 Urban-Rural Classification Scheme

The 2023 NCHS Urban-Rural Classification Scheme classifies 3,144 U.S. counties. The counties include county equivalents such as parishes in Louisiana, boroughs in Alaska, and planning regions in Connecticut. They do not include county equivalents in U.S. territories.

Definitions

Metropolitan counties

1. **Large central metro** counties in metropolitan areas of 1 million population or more that—
 - Contain the entire population of the largest principal city of the metropolitan area, or
 - Are entirely contained in the largest principal city of the metropolitan area, or
 - Contain at least 250,000 residents of any principal city in the metropolitan area
2. **Large fringe metro** counties in metropolitan areas of 1 million or more population that do not qualify as large central
3. **Medium metro** counties in metropolitan areas of 250,000 to 999,999 population
4. **Small metro** counties in metropolitan areas of 50,000 to 249,999 population

Nonmetropolitan counties

5. **Micropolitan** counties in micropolitan statistical areas
6. **Noncore** counties that did not qualify as micropolitan

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How We Define Rural

We define rural areas so that organizations can apply for rural health grants. Please read each funding opportunity for the specific eligibility for each grant.

Use the [Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer](#) to see if your location is in a rural area. You can also use the Analyzer to see if your service areas are rural using our definition.

This webpage explains the data sources and methods that we use to define rural areas. The [Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer](#) uses these data.

Our rural definition

We define the following areas as rural:

- Non-metropolitan counties
- Outlying metropolitan counties with no population from an urban area of 50,000 or more people
- Census tracts with RUCA codes 4-10 in metropolitan counties
- Census tracts of at least 400 square miles in area with population density of 35 or fewer people per square mile with RUCA codes 2-3 in metropolitan counties
- Census tracts with RRS 5 and RUCA codes 2-3 that are at least 20 square miles in area in metropolitan counties

Based on 2020 Census data, FORHP considers 20.3% of the population (62.8 million people) and 87.4% of the land area of the country to be rural.

See the sections below for an explanation of these terms and where they come fro