



WEST VIRGINIA Rural Health Initiative



A cost-effective, state-based program
directed at meeting the needs of
West Virginia's communities



“ West Virginia needs the Rural Health Initiative – to recruit, train and retain healthcare providers in our rural communities and improve the health and well-being of our citizens. ”

*– Sarah Armstrong Tucker
West Virginia's Chancellor for Higher Education*

West Virginia Needs the Rural Health Initiative

“ Because the program allows us to live and work in underserved areas, we’re able to have a unique, immersive experience and become part of these rural communities. We build real relationships and get hands-on training that’s invaluable – and we want to stay and practice in these communities. ”

– West Virginia University Dental Student

“ The cultural insights that come from working within RHI programs have helped me better understand factors in rural areas that effect the health of residents. Those insights will make me a better doctor. ”

– Marshall University Medical Student



“ The opportunity to assess needs and lead service projects in rural communities brings us face to face with the people who need health care most, and allows us to work side by side with rural leaders to solve address community problems. These experiences will enhance my future practice as a physician in a rural community. ”

– WV School of Osteopathic Medicine Medical Student

RURAL HEALTH INITIATIVE GOALS

- 1** Increase the recruitment of healthcare providers to rural/underserved areas.
- 2** Increase the retention rate of healthcare providers in rural/underserved areas.
- 3** Develop pipeline programs to enhance student interest in rural/underserved healthcare careers.
- 4** Support the involvement of rural/underserved areas of the state in the health education process.

WHAT IS THE RURAL HEALTH INITIATIVE?

The purpose of the Rural Health Initiative (RHI) is to provide funding to support the recruitment and retention of Primary Care Physicians (PCPs) and Allied Health Professionals in rural, underserved areas of West Virginia.

The RHI is a statewide program directed by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission Division of Health Sciences (Division), which awards grants to three academic health centers – Marshall University, West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine and West Virginia University – and works with them to ensure robust rural health-focused opportunities. These institutions focus on recruiting and providing enhanced curriculum and special training to students who want to practice medicine, dentistry, nursing, pharmacy and allied health fields in the state's rural communities.

RHI program funding is also used to award smaller grants to other higher education programs, healthcare facilities and non-profit organizations to further advance RHI activities across the state.



Enabling special professional training emphasizing rural health

STUDENT BENEFITS

- **Rural/Underserved Rotations**
 - Community-Based Training & Enrichment
- **Unique Experiences/Activities**
- **Expert rural health care providers serve as mentors**
- **Student Housing**

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Immersive Community Experiences

Students live in rural communities, lead projects, volunteer, build relationships and more – to gain perspective that will make them better providers.

Communities Embrace Students

Members of our rural communities are very invested in showing students their unique communities, nuances and real daily life experiences that affect their health and well-being.

Uniquely-Trained Providers Stay & Practice

RHI encourages these highly-trained healthcare providers stay in-state and practice in the rural, underserved communities that they know so well.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Marshall University's Center for Rural Health is committed to innovative, intensive and high-quality educational experiences through rural initiatives, including:

- Health Career Pipeline Programs & Events – to stimulate students' interest and eliminate barriers (engages 2,000+ students/40 high schools on average annually)
- Premedical Intensive Summer Program / Virtual Summer Academy (due to pandemic)
- Accelerated BS/MD Program – allows high-performing WV high school students to complete college and medical school in seven years with tuition waivers for med school
- Residency Sign-On Incentive
- Rural Residency Program & Summer Residential Academy
- Rural Health Experience Activities for Residents
- Rural Health Fellowship Program
- Rural Health Scholars Program – residents are selected each year to work in rural clinical rotations, rural research, community-based initiatives and incentives
- Rural Research Grants – for rural community health issues such as opioid abuse and behavioral health



West Virginia University's Institute for Community and Rural Health proudly serves WV students, communities and professionals through a diverse mix of funding, programs, initiatives, partnerships and more.

- Rural Scholarship Fund – more than \$2 million to dental/medical students who committed to practicing in rural/underserved areas (since 2012)
- Pipeline Programs – including the Health Sciences & Technology Academy, Rural Health Day and the Rural Undergraduate Shadowing in Healthcare Program
- WV Area Health Education Centers Program (WV AHEC) – to recruit, train and retain health professionals committed to underserved populations
- WVU Rural Track Program – provides students more time in rural areas to increase the number of primary care providers who enter/remain in rural areas of West Virginia
- Rural Immersions – in-depth experiences in community health and disease processes while immersed in a rural community
- Rural Health Interest Group (RHIG) – a multi-disciplinary, student-led group who learn about rural health issues through guest speakers and activities
- Project Rural Education Alliance for Community Health (REACH) – a student-run program providing health education and screenings to thousands across the state



WEST VIRGINIA SCHOOL
of OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

With the goal of training uniquely-qualified D.O.s to practice in underserved communities across the state, West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine's Rural Health Initiative takes rural health clinical exposure to a new level of engagement through a variety of initiatives:

- State & National Leaders in Rural Community Student Rotations
- Residency Sign-On Incentive
- Rural Residency Program
- Mentorship Program – matching students with rural practitioners
- Green Coat Program – offers undergraduates a unique opportunity to gain exposure to clinical responsibilities in a hospital environment
- Annual Rural Practice Day – highlighting Wilderness Medicine, Women in Rural Medicine and Practice Management
- Exposure to the health care needs of those employed in Coal, Timber, Agricultura, and Oil & Gas Industries
- Academic & Community Collaboration – to improve distribution of healthcare professionals where they are needed most

RURAL HEALTH INITIATIVE - QUICK FACTS

The Division of Health Sciences at the Higher Education Policy Commission oversees the Rural Health Initiative, the statewide program directed at improving the recruitment and retention of healthcare providers to rural/underserved areas of the state.

The Commission grants the majority of funding to the Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine at Marshall University, the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine and the West Virginia University Health Sciences Center. In FY2019, each academic health center received \$587,000.

Primary care fields generally are the most needed in rural West Virginia – and primary care residencies include specialization in: family medicine, internal medicine, internal medicine/pediatrics, obstetrics/gynecology and pediatrics.

The Commission and medical schools, through the Rural Health Initiative and other programs, are developing innovative models and engaging underserved communities to help redistribute the primary care physician workforce in West Virginia to better serve the rural areas in the state.

Unique programs like the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine – AccessHealth Teaching Health Center Family Medicine Residency Program, West Virginia University – Harper's Ferry Rural Family Medicine Residency Program and the Marshall University – Lincoln Primary Care Center Rural Residency Program, allow residents to spend all, or a significant portion, of their residencies in a rural or underserved area of the state.

The Higher Education Policy Commission and Community and Technical College System are working together to double the number of associate's and bachelor's degrees earned annually in West Virginia by 2025 – and the Rural Health Initiative plays an important role in achieving this goal.

West Virginia's three state funded medical schools enroll more medical students (per capita) than any other state in the country, and in-state tuition at West Virginia medical schools is among the most affordable in the nation.



RECRUITMENT/PIPELINE PROGRAMS

High School

The RHI's award-winning high school pipeline programs offer students medical campus visits, real-time surgeries via teleconference, hands-on workshops and discussions with healthcare specialists to engage and recruit top students interested in healthcare practice in West Virginia.

Pre-Med/College

From accelerated BS/MD programs to mentoring, summer academies and funding support, RHI offers a variety of opportunities for high-performing students.

Post-Graduate

RHI and the medical schools maintain a variety of programs to support post-graduate interests for high-performing students interested in furthering their education in West Virginia.

Rural Practice

From the RHI Housing Support Program and financial support to immersive experience in unique rural communities across the state, there are a wide variety of programs and initiatives to ensure students receive specialized training in rural/underserved areas.

WHO QUALIFIES

Students in Health Professions Programs, including:

- Medicine
- Dentistry
- Allied Health Fields
- Nursing
- Pharmacy

Third- or Fourth-Year Students in Good Standing

HOW TO APPLY

For more information on how to apply for programs, financial support, housing opportunities and more, start by visiting:

Marshall University – Rural Health Initiative
ruralhealth.marshall.edu

West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine – Rural Health Initiative
wvsom.edu/programs/rhi/rhi-home

West Virginia University – Rural Health Initiative
hsc.wvu.edu/icrh



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