

# A Quick Guide for Rural Health Clinics

## National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Site Application Approval

Approximately 4,000 Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) nationwide provide access to primary care services in rural areas as certified by Centers for Medicare/Medicaid Services (CMS). Currently, we estimate **less than one third** of RHCs are NHSC-approved sites.

Recruitment and retention of primary care providers in rural communities is no easy task. Since 1970 the NHSC, through Scholarship and Loan Repayment Programs, has helped clinical sites recruit and retain primary care, oral and mental and behavioral health providers who are dedicated to working in underserved communities. The NHSC has provided the following guidelines to educate and assist RHCs in applying for NHSC site approval.

### 1. Confirm that you meet the basic eligibility criteria as outlined by NHSC.

- Before contacting HRSA, confirm that your site is certified as a RHC by [CMS](#). This is important because all CMS Certified RHCs are offered an Automatic Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) designation.
- Check to make sure your facility appears on this [list](#). This is the list the HRSA uses to verify that a site is eligible for an Automatic HPSA designation.
- All NHSC eligibility requirements can be found in the [NHSC Site Reference Guide](#). Key requirements include that NHSC sites:
  - Are located in a [HPSA](#).
  - Provide at least one of the following services: primary care, mental and behavioral health, or oral health services.
  - Offer services on a [discount/sliding-fee schedule](#).
  - Accept patients covered by Medicare, Medicaid, and Children's Health Insurance Program.
- Questions regarding your site's eligibility should be directed to NHSC's Customer Care Center at 1-800-221-9393.

### 2. Contact your State Primary Care Office.

- [State Primary Care Offices \(PCO\)](#) help clinical facilities apply for NHSC site approval. Your State contact must be notified of your intention to apply for NHSC site approval.

### 3. Complete an online application during the site application each year.

- Interested sites must first create a [Customer Service Portal Account](#) with the NHSC, which will allow them to apply online.
- Gather required documentation prior to applying. For a list of required documentation, please check the [NHSC website](#).
- Sites can then log into their [Customer Service Portal Account](#) and complete the online application. If an organization has multiple sites located in HPSAs and would like all sites to be NHSC-approved, each location must submit a separate site application and be approved individually.

### 4. Submit a renewal application every three years to maintain your NHSC approval status through your online Portal account.

