

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee**

September 2022 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Conduct a Study to Assess VA Human Resources (HR) Hiring Processes in Rural VA Medical Centers and Community-Based Outpatient Clinics.

In collaboration with existing ORH efforts to assess rural workforce, fund an independent study team to complete a comprehensive study to assess VA's hiring process, focusing specifically on rural facilities and applicants. The study should begin by June 1, 2023, with a final report due by February 1, 2024.

VA Response: Non-concur.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is already engaged in an assessment of rural workforce recruitment and retention as directed by section 901 of the Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022, which will include an in-depth internal analysis of workforce and hiring data as well as a qualitative assessment by an independent research organization that will conduct focus group interviews to assess pain points, challenges and best practices. The Office of Rural Health (ORH) is funding the study. The results are expected by July 2023. VHA recommends against conducting another study until the results of this effort are reviewed.

Recommendation 2: Conduct a Study to Understand the Mindset of Healthcare Professionals

Fund an independent study team to complete a future of the healthcare professions workforce study that assesses healthcare trainees' and new employees' perceptions of VA and their likelihood to practice in a rural environment. The study should include a range of health professionals (e.g., physician, nurse, medical technologist, nursing assistant, etc.) The study should begin by June 1, 2023, with a final report due by February 1, 2024.

VA Response: Concur-in-principle.

The Office of Academic Affiliations is willing to work collaboratively with ORH and the sub-committee as described.

Recommendation 3: Enhance Rural Clinician Applicant Pipeline

Form a sub-committee to launch a strategic planning initiative that identifies innovative methods to enhance the rural health professionals (e.g., physician, nurse, medical technologist, nursing assistant, etc.) applicant pipeline. Strategies may include collaborating with academic partners or identifying relevant private sector initiatives.

VA Response: Non-concur.

VHA will be developing a national rural recruitment and hiring plan as directed by section 901 of the PACT Act that will be completed by December 2023. The hiring plan will include recruitment, retention and hiring strategies; a rural health recruitment strategy; and training for Human Resources staff to ensure best practices are implemented consistently. A congressional report to assess the plan will be produced annually as well. VHA recommends holding off on conducting the proposed study until the results of this effort are quantified and assessed.

**Department of Veterans Affairs
March 2023**