

Rural Health Clinics (RHC)

RHCs are defined in section 1861(aa)(2) of the Social Security Act (the Act) as facilities that are engaged primarily in providing services that are typically furnished in an outpatient clinic. To be eligible for certification as an RHC, a clinic must be located in a non-urbanized area, as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau, and in an area designated or certified within the previous 4 years by the Secretary, Health and Human Services (HHS), in any one of the four types of shortage area designations that are accepted for RHC certification. The statutory requirements for RHCs are found in section 1861(aa) of the Act. Many of the regulations pertaining to RHCs can be found at 42 CFR 405.2400 Subpart X and following, and 42 CFR 491 Subpart A. In addition to the location requirements, an RHC must:

- Employ a Nurse Practitioner (NP) or Physician Assistant (PA);
- Have an NP, PA, or Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM) working at the clinic at least 50 percent of the time the clinic is operating as an RHC;
- Directly furnish routine diagnostic and laboratory services;
- Have arrangements with one or more hospitals to furnish medically necessary services that are not available at the RHC;
- Have available drugs and biologicals necessary for the treatment of emergencies;
- Meet all health and safety requirements;
- Not be a rehabilitation agency or a facility that is primarily for mental health treatment;
- Furnish onsite all of the following six laboratory tests:
 - Chemical examination of urine by stick or tablet method or both,
 - Hemoglobin or hematocrit,
 - Blood sugar,
 - Examination of stool specimens for occult blood,
 - Pregnancy tests, and
 - Primary culturing for transmittal to a certified laboratory;
- Not be concurrently approved as an FQHC; and
- Meet other applicable State and Federal requirements.