



Health Professional Shortage Area Fact Sheet

Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs):

A HPSA is an area that has been determined to have too few primary care, dental care, and/or mental health care providers to meet the needs of the population. The Utah Primary Care Office (PCO) assesses the primary care and workforce needs of the state and submits applications to the Health Resources and Services Administration, Shortage Designation Branch, for specific areas to be designated as HPSAs.

HPSA Types:

There are three types of HPSAs:

- Geographic: a high population to provider ratio in a rational, geographic area, or lower ratio with a high need demonstrated by specific health indicators.
- Population: a large percentage of a specific, high-risk population group (e.g. low-income, homeless, etc.) within a geographic area and a high population to provider ratio.
- Facility: a public or private non-profit facility that serves high needs populations (e.g. correctional facility, federally qualified health centers, and state mental hospitals)

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Benefits of HPSA Designation:

A HPSA designation allows resources to be prioritized to the areas of highest need in order to address healthcare and workforce needs in those areas. Many state and federal programs rely on HPSA designations.

- National Health Service Corps (NHSC): NHSC administers student loan repayment and scholarship programs to healthcare providers who work in federally designated HPSAs.
- Conrad State 30/J-1 Visa Waiver Program: this allows foreign physicians to waive the requirement of returning to their home country for two years upon completing their residency. A physician needs to be working in a HPSA or a facility that serves patients living within a HPSA to qualify.
- Medicare Bonus Payment: if a facility is located in a geographic HPSA, Medicare will pay a ten percent bonus for all services provided by physicians to Medicare beneficiaries.
- Rural Health Clinic (RHC) Certification: a facility in a rural, designated shortage area can be certified as an RHC. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services will provide financial incentives for all eligible providers in RHCs.