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**Office of Primary Care  
and Rural Health**

November 17, 2022

#powerofrural

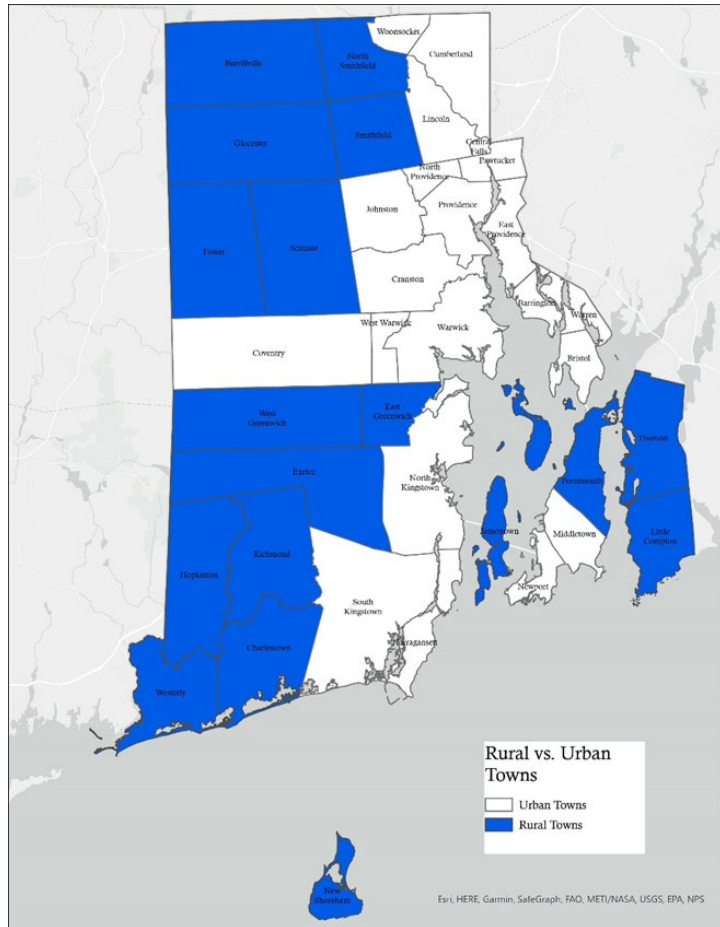
National Rural Health Day

Celebrating the Power of Rural!



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IT'S NOT JUST A DAY, IT'S A MOVEMENT.



# Block Island Health Services

Represented by Alison Warfel, ATC, MED,  
Chief Operating Officer

BLOCK ISLAND, RHODE ISLAND

Block Island Health Services (BIHS), led by Chief Operating Officer Alison Warfel, goes beyond providing exceptional healthcare for residents and visitors to the rural island. BIHS collaborates with stakeholders to make their community a safer place to live, vacation, and age in place.

DESCRIBE HOW YOU ARE DRIVING CHANGE IN THREE WORDS.

Sustainability.  
Accessibility.  
Education.



## Q&A

Q: What is the mission of the organization?

A: "We like to use the phrase "our mission, your health" to summarize our overarching goal. Like many rural facilities, we want to improve access to care and reduce barriers by providing as many in-house services as possible. We see our role in the community as a hub of health-related information. Currently, we host a rural family medicine and emergency medicine elective for medical students, residents, physician assistant students, and nurse practitioner students. For us, furthering rural education for all levels of providers is an important way we can contribute to improving rural healthcare."

Q: What has been the most challenging part of change for you during these past two years? How did you overcome it?

A: "The changing landscape of COVID-19 has been our biggest challenge, and we have had to constantly adjust to what testing and vaccination resources are available. Since we are the only facility on the island, we are the go-to for anything COVID-19-related. We worked together as a staff and with our community partners to establish boundaries that allowed us to provide services like testing and vaccinations while still being able to continue providing primary and urgent care with our staff of 10."

Q: What are some of your goals beyond 2022?

A: "We would like to officially become a Rural Health Clinic by 2023 and a hub for rural medicine education."

### SORH HIGHLIGHT

Rhode Island Office of Primary Care & Rural Health

The Rhode Island Office of Primary Care and Rural Health's (OPCRH) mission is to address health disparities created by lack of access to high-quality health care due to financial, cultural, and geographic barriers. It accomplishes this mission by facilitating the coordination of activities within our state and rural communities that relate to the delivery of primary health care services and the recruitment and retention of critical health care providers.

# Mission



The Rhode Island Office of Primary Care and Rural Health's (OPCRH) mission is to address health disparities created by lack of access to high-quality health care due to financial, cultural, and geographic barriers.

We accomplish this mission by facilitating the coordination of activities within our state and rural communities that relate to the delivery of primary health care services and the recruitment and retention of critical health care providers. The OPCRH links communities with state and federal resources and collaborates with public and private agencies to meet the need of Rhode Islanders and promote high-quality health services.



# What we do:

## **Workforce Recruitment and Retention**

As part of the State's efforts to increase access to care, the OPCRH recruits a diverse primary care workforce of medical, dental and mental health care providers through operation of the Health Professional Loan Repayment Program, the physician waiver program for holders of J-1 Visas, and coordination of National Health Service Corp programs.

The OPCRH provides free access to 3RNET, a workforce recruitment website, to non-profit providers in Rhode Island to post jobs and search for qualified job-seekers. Access to 3RNET is also free to all medical professionals in the state.



# What we do:

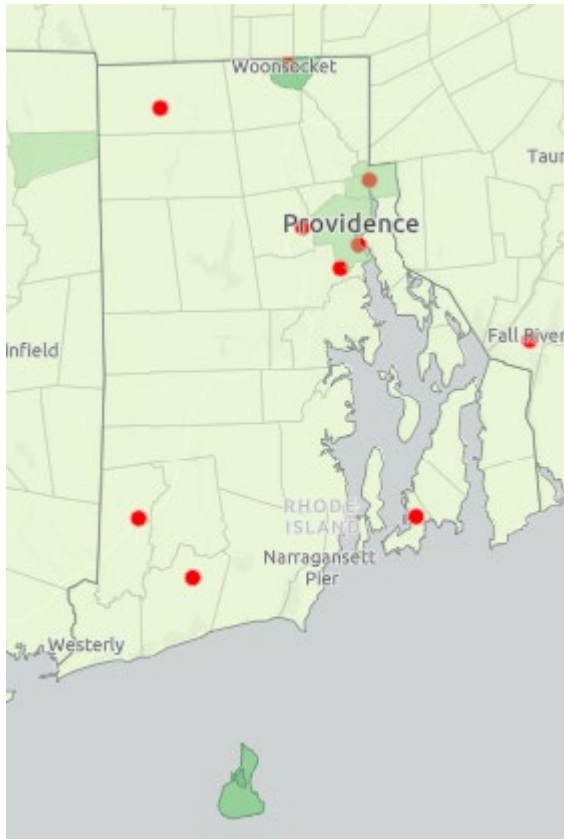
## Health Professional Shortage Areas

The OPCRH conducts needs assessments to determine the capacity of the existing workforce to meet the needs of Rhode Islanders for access to medical, dental and mental health services. Where need is identified, OPCRH staff works with federal and local community partners to apply for a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) designation.

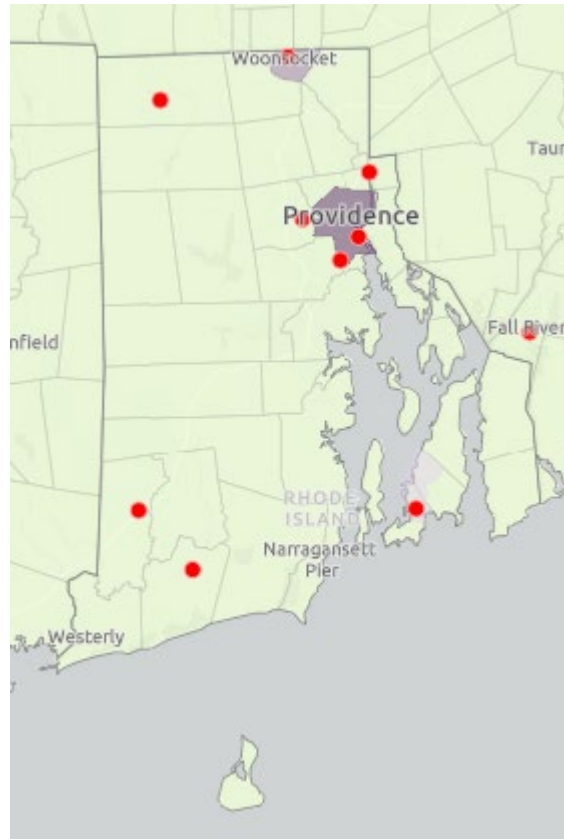
HPSAs are designated by Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as having shortages of primary care, dental care, or mental health providers and may be geographic (a county or defined service area), population (e.g., low income or Medicaid eligible) or facilities (e.g., federally qualified health centers, correctional facilities, etc.).

A HPSA designation confers access to additional federal resources to improve access to care.

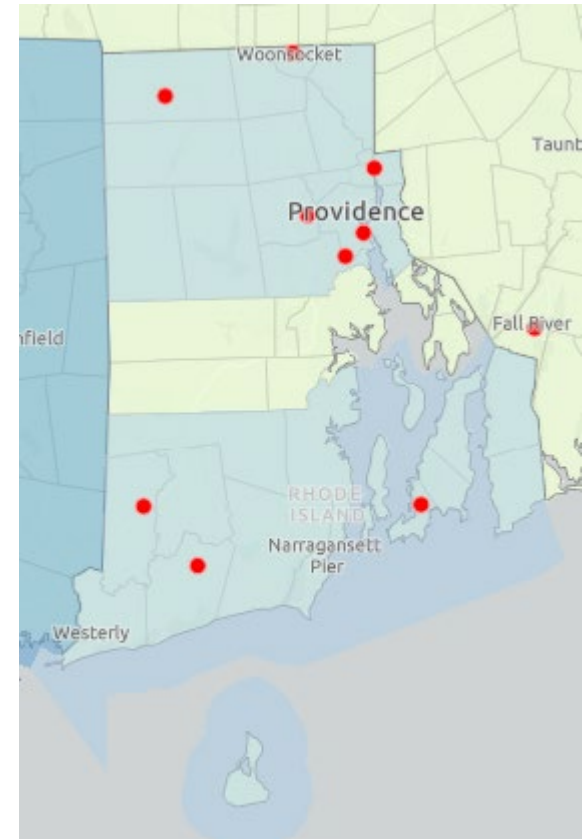
# Rhode Island HPSAs



**Primary Care  
Shortage Areas**



**Dental Health  
Shortage Areas**



**Mental Health  
Shortage Areas**

# Federal Program Dependencies



GCSA MUA/MUP HPSA  
Category Discipline

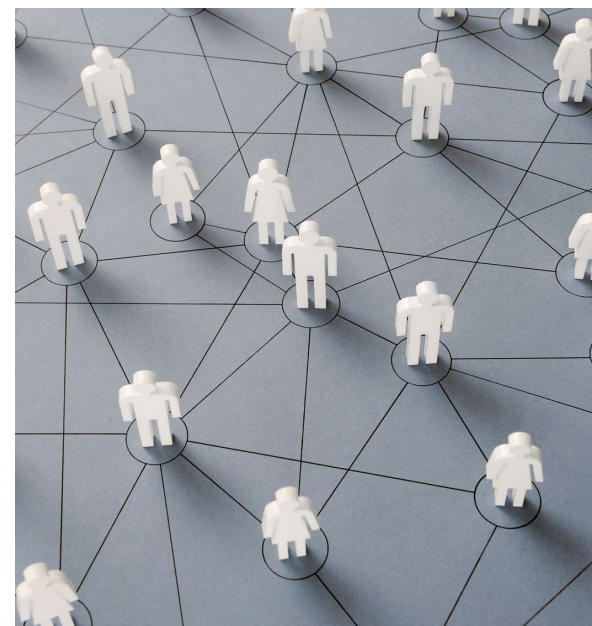
Shortage Designation Option	National Health Service Corps	Federally Qualified Health Ctr Program	CMS* Medicare Incentive Payment	CMS* Rural Health Clinic Program	J-1 Visa Waiver
Primary Care HPSA	X		X	X	X
Dental Care HPSA	X				
Mental Health HPSA	X		X		X
Geographic HPSA	X		X	X	X
Population HPSA	X			X	X
Facility HPSA	X				X
Exceptional MUP		X			X
Medically Underserved Area		X		X	X
Medically Underserved Population		X			X
State Governor's Certified Shortage Area				X	

# What we do:

## Collaboration

The OPCRH collaborates with organizations and facilities statewide on initiatives and programs that increase access to primary care services for all and reduce health disparities, especially those adversely impacting our rural RI communities.

- Washington County HEZ
- Tobacco Control
- Oral Health
- Rural Fire/EMS







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**Office of Primary Care  
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# **Our Programs**

# Conrad 30 Waiver J-1 Visa Program



Facilitate a diverse primary care workforce of medical, dental, and mental health care providers

J1 Visa program- This program is coordinated with the US Department of State, the state Department of Health, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Rhode Island participates in the Physician Visa Waiver Program with a focus on increasing access to rural and urban community patients for primary care and specialists, and we review and approve J-1 visa waiver applications. The US Department of State limits the waivers to 30 per state per federal fiscal year, starting on October 1

# J-1 Visa Program Cont.



- The OPCRH generally fill all 30 slots
- The program prioritizes PCP, spouses, and those already in RI (fellowship or residency)
- If you have a priority candidate in the summer, please reach out to “reserve”
- All program requirements can be found at:  
[https://health.ri.gov/programs/detail.php?pgm\\_id=155](https://health.ri.gov/programs/detail.php?pgm_id=155)
- For question about the J-1 Visa Program contact Jill D’Errico






# National Health Service Corps

- The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) offer many programs to support the recruitment and retention of health care providers dedicated to working in communities with limited access to care.
- NHSC programs are managed by the Bureau of Health Workforce within HRSA.
- Health professionals who participate in NHSC programs must typically commit to serving at NHSC-approved sites.
- The OPCRH review all NHSC-site applications for RI and works with the Director of Regional Operations to conduct site visits.



# WHICH ONE IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

PROGRAM TYPE	NHSC Loan Repayment Program	NHSC SUD Workforce Loan Repayment Program	NHSC Rural Community Loan Repayment Program
DISCIPLINES ELIGIBLE FOR ALL PROGRAMS	Physicians (DO/MD) • Nurse Practitioners (NP) • Physician Assistants (PA) • Certified Nurse Midwives (CNM) Health Service Psychologists (HSP) • Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) • Psychiatric Nurse Specialists (PNS) Marriage and Family Therapists (MFT) • Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC)		
DISCIPLINES ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIFIC PROGRAMS	 Dentists (DDS/DMD) Dental Hygienists (RDH)	 Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Counselors Pharmacists (PHARM) Registered Nurses (RN)	 Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Counselors Pharmacists (PHARM) Registered Nurses (RN) Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNA)
AWARD AMOUNT	UP TO \$50K full-time / UP TO \$25K part-time	UP TO \$75K full-time / UP TO \$37.5K part-time	UP TO \$100K full-time / UP TO \$50K part-time
SERVICE COMMITMENT	2 YEARS	3 YEARS	
NHSC HEALTH CARE SITE	✓ Any NHSC-approved site	✓ Any NHSC-approved SUD site	✓ Any rural, NHSC-approved SUD site

All programs use one application, **but you can only apply to one program.**

# State Loan Repayment



- The Rhode Island Health Professional Loan Repayment Program is managed by the OPCRH
- The program offers health education loan repayments to primary care, dentistry, and mental health professionals who commit to practice in medically underserved communities
- OPCRH Reviews and evaluate applications from healthcare professionals and sites to determine program eligibility based on regulations and the availability of funding



# State Loan Repayment Cont.

- The program provides award up to \$50,000 to qualified health professionals working in a Rhode Island HPSA.
  - Awards amount vary depending on the income to student loan debt ratio of the health professional
- Primary Care-Medical, Dental, and Mental/behavioral health professionals are encouraged to apply.
- The 2023 application cycle will open in December 2022
- Starting with the 2023 application cycle, the program requires an initial 2-year service commitment for both full-time and part-time providers
- Practice sites requirements:
  - The physical address of the site needs to be located within a HPSA
  - The site is a public or private not-for-profit out-patient facility
  - The site provide services on a free or reduced fee schedule to individuals at or below 200% FPL
  - The site must accept Medicaid and Medicare as a form of payment



# Assess Workforce Capacity

- 3RNET-National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network (3RNet) is a national nonprofit network that works through its 53 members to help rural and underserved areas find health care professionals looking for jobs and health centers who are looking to employ.
- Over time, 3RNet has expanded its efforts to include the recruitment and retention of a wide range of health care professionals.
- On a weekly basis, a report is generated by the OPCRH of all doctors that would like to work in RI. This list is then sent to all interested stakeholders in the state. We also work directly with doctors who contact us for help finding employment.
- 3RNet is also used by the OPCRH to assess workforce capacity gaps (need) by looking at the number and types of providers our members post on the site.





# 3RNet



- You can register and search providers at <https://www.3rnet.org/>
- There are also recruitment/ retention documents on the site
- This is a FREE service sponsored by OPCRH



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**Office of Primary Care  
and Rural Health**

**CONTACT US!**

**If you have any questions a member of our staff will always be happy to help!**

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