

WHAT IS A HEALTH CENTER?

For more than 40 years, HRSA-supported Health Centers have provided comprehensive, culturally competent, quality primary health care services to medically underserved communities and vulnerable populations.

Health centers are community-based and patient-directed organizations that serve populations with limited access to health care. These include low income populations, the uninsured, those with limited English proficiency, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and those living in public housing.

Health Center Program Fundamentals

- **Located in or serve a high need community** (designated Medically Underserved Area or Population).
- **Governed by a community board** composed of a majority (51% or more) of health center patients who represent the population served.
- **Provide comprehensive primary health care** services as well as supportive services (education, translation and transportation, etc.) that promote access to health care.
- **Provide services available to all** with fees adjusted based on ability to pay.
- **Meet other performance and accountability requirements** regarding administrative, clinical, and financial operations.

Who Health Centers Serve

- **People of all ages.** Approximately 36 percent of patients in 2008 were children (age 19 and younger); about 7 percent were 65 or older.
- **People without and with health insurance.** The proportion of uninsured patients of all ages was approximately 38% in 2008, while the number of uninsured patients increased from 4 million in 2001 to over 6.5 million in 2008.
- **People of all races and ethnicities.** In 2008, 28 percent of health center patients were African-American and 33 percent were Hispanic/Latino--more than twice the proportion of African-Americans and over two times the proportion of Hispanics/Latinos reported in the overall U.S. population.
- **Special populations.** In 2008, health centers served more than 834,000 migrant and seasonal farm workers and their families; nearly 934,000 individuals experiencing homelessness; and nearly 157,000 residents of public housing.

Types of Health Centers

- **Grant-Supported Federally Qualified Health Centers** are public and private non-profit health care organizations that meet certain criteria under the Medicare and Medicaid Programs (respectively, Sections 1861(aa)(4) and 1905(l)(2)(B) of the Social Security Act and receive funds under the Health Center Program (Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act).
 - **Community Health Centers** serve a variety of underserved populations and areas.
 - **Migrant Health Centers** serve migrant and seasonal agricultural workers
 - **Healthcare for the Homeless Programs** reach out to homeless individuals and families and provide primary care and substance abuse services.

- **Public Housing Primary Care Programs** serve residents of public housing and are located in or adjacent to the communities they serve.
- **Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alikes** are health centers that have been identified by HRSA and certified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as meeting the definition of “health center” under Section 330 of the PHS Act, although they do not receive grant funding under Section 330.

Outpatient health programs/facilities operated by tribal organizations (under the Indian Self-Determination Act, P.L. 96-638) or urban Indian organizations (under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, P.L. 94-437).