

Health Resources and Services Administration Publishes List of Health Professional Shortage Areas including UIOs

Category: Policy Blog

written by Alex Sampson | March 4, 2024

On January 2, 2024, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) [published a notice](#) informing the public of the availability of the complete lists of all geographic areas, population groups, and facilities designated as primary medical care, dental health, and mental health professional shortage areas (HPSA). The [complete lists](#) of HPSAs, which includes urban Indian organizations (UIOs), designated as of December 2, 2023, are available on HRSA's [Health Workforce Shortage Area website](#).

For further information on the HPSA designations listed on the website or to request additional designation, withdrawal, or reapplication for designation, please contact Anthony Estelle, Chief, Shortage Designation Branch, Division of Policy and Shortage Designation, Bureau of Health Workforce (BHW), HRSA, 5600 Fishers Lane, Room 11W16, Rockville, Maryland 20857, sdb@hrsa.gov.

Background

Section 332 of the Public Health Service (PHS) Act, [42 U.S.C. 254e](#), provides that the Secretary shall designate HPSAs based on criteria established by regulation. HPSAs are defined in section 332 to include (1) urban and rural geographic areas with shortages of health professionals, (2) population groups with such shortages, and (3) facilities with such shortages. Section 332 further requires that the Secretary annually publish lists of the designated geographic areas, population groups, and facilities. Using the statute and regulations, HRSA automatically designates UIOs as HPSAs.

HPSA designation offers access to potential federal assistance for healthcare facilities and providers. Public or private nonprofit entities are eligible to apply for assignment of National Health Service Corps personnel to provide primary medical care, mental health, or dental health services in or to these HPSAs. National Health Service Corps health professionals enter into service agreements to serve in federally designated HPSAs. Entities with clinical training sites located in HPSAs are eligible to receive priority for certain residency training program grants administered by HRSA's BHW. Other federal programs also utilize HPSA designations.

NCUIH Advocacy

As part of its advocacy, the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) [engages with HRSA to ensure that UIOs receive HPSA scores that accurately reflect the level of provider shortage for UIO service](#). UIOs have particularly highlighted how they are negatively impacted by the way their HRSA's HPSA scores affect their ability to hire and retain staff participating in various loan repayment programs. NCUIH continues to engage with HRSA regarding the need to develop HPSA scores which reflect the level of need in the Indian health care system, as opposed to general geographic data.