

Healthy Rural Aging

The rural population is aging more rapidly than in urban areas. For the first time, **older adults comprise one-fifth of all rural residents**. The number of rural residents aged 65+ grew from 7.4 million in 2010 to **9.7 million in 2023**.

Risk factors contributing to poor health for older adults:

- Limited access to health care
- Food insecurity
- Lack of social and emotional support
- Transportation challenges
- Poor housing quality

1 in 3 rural older adults report experiencing **at least one** of the selected risk factors contributing to poor health.

Older adults living in rural areas face higher morbidity rates due to elevated prevalence of:

- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Falls
- Cancer
- COVID-19

NRHA Rural Age-Friendly Priorities

- Align system-level, multi-sector, state and federal frameworks and resources on aging for the rural older adult.
- Promote the “Choosing Rural” concept to facilitate older adults aging in their rural communities.
- Address state and federal regulatory barriers that limit rural aging in place.
- Build a robust long-term care workforce to support rural aging in place, including use of Community Health Workers.

NRHA Supported Legislation

S. 2120: Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act

Sens. Cassidy (R-LA), Sanders (I-VT), Scott (R-FL), Gillibrand (D-NY)

Reauthorizes critical programs in the Older Americans Act that would expand access to nutrition programs, strengthen caregiver support, prioritize elder justice initiatives, enhance community-based care, and improve mental health services for older adults, all with the goal of promoting their well-being and independence.

Supporting Our Direct Care Workforce and Family Caregivers Act (S.1298 in the 118th Congress)

Sen. Kaine (D-VA)

Creates a national technical assistance center and grant program to support the direct care workforce and family caregivers through HHS funding.

S. 1816/H.R. 3514: Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act

Sens. Marshall (R-KS), Warner (D-VA) & Reps. Kelly (R-PA), DelBene (D-WA)

Establishes requirements with respect to the use of prior authorization under Medicare Advantage plans by streamlining prior authorization to reduce administrative burdens for providers and delays for beneficiaries.

H.R. 5055: Increasing Nutrition Access for Seniors Act of 2025

Reps. Riley (D-NY) & Lawler (R-NY)

Amends the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to simplify supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) access for elderly and disabled individuals.

S. 939/H.R. 2045: Medicare and Medicaid Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefit Act of 2025

Sens. Sanders (I-VT) & Reps. Doggett (D-TX)

Provides comprehensive Medicare coverage of dental, vision, and hearing care

H.R. 3747: Accelerating Access to Dementia & Alzheimer's Provider Training (AADAPT) Act

Reps. Balderson (R-OH), Barragan (D-CA), LaHood (R-IL), & Tonko (D-NY)

Reauthorizes the Project ECHO Grant Program to provide virtual training for primary care providers to diagnose dementia.