



Rural Health Disparities Summit to Focus on Health Challenges Among Rural Minority Populations

The National Rural Health Association (NRHA), American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), and American Heart Association (AHA) have united to find solutions to growing health disparities between rural and urban Americans during the third annual Rural Health Disparities Summit. This year's summit will focus on disparities within rural communities among minority populations. The summit will be held Thursday, Feb. 13 from 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the [Hilton Washington, D.C., National Mall](#) and is open to the press.

Limited resources, geographic isolation, low population density, rural hospital closures, and persistent poverty create unique barriers to care in rural communities. Rural Americans also experience higher rates of chronic disease – and because access to care is difficult, these diseases are often left untreated, leading to higher mortality rates and lower life expectancy.

At the Rural Health Disparities Summit, national experts will offer solutions on how to transform health care in rural America, including overcoming drastic increases in chronic disease and mitigating workforce and obstetric shortages among minority populations in rural America. This important event will conclude [NRHA's 31st Rural Health Policy Institute](#), the nation's largest rural advocacy event.

“Our partnership with AAFP and AHA is a significant and critical step to overcoming the grave inequalities and barriers that rural populations, especially minority populations, face in accessing health care,” says NRHA CEO Alan Morgan.

“The AAFP is committed to helping improve rural health care through a variety of initiatives,” says Julie Wood, MD, AAFP senior vice president for health of the public, science and interprofessional activities. “We know that disparities between health outcomes continue to increase for residents of rural areas. By cosponsoring this summit, we hope to start a conversation with other similarly focused organizations to collaborate and develop innovative ideas and workable solutions to reduce health inequities for rural America.”

“Rural communities have higher death rates from cardiovascular disease and stroke, higher maternal mortality rates due in part to cardiovascular causes, and higher risk factors for chronic disease than urban areas,” says Eduardo Sanchez, MD, AHA chief medical officer for prevention. “The American Heart Association's new call to action on rural health addresses inequities in health and health care resulting from the multiple challenges rural populations face, including disparities in income, education, housing, transportation, and food security. We are committed to working with partners including NRHA and AAFP to optimize health in rural America.”

Other speakers at the summit include representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Office of Minority Health within the HHS Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and the Grace Anne Dorney Koppel COPD Foundation.