

# Protect Rural Health Care: HPSA Redesignation

HRSA's new rules for HPSA redesignation will exacerbate workforce woes

The federal Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) is in charge of designating Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) which identify local areas and population groups where a shortage of health care providers exist. In 2021, HRSA notified state Primary Care Offices (PCOs) that they would need to begin recertifying all existing HPSAs every two years, instead of every 3 years on a rolling basis (one-third every year) as part of an updated process.

**Due to this process change, WI DHS estimates 47 current HPSAs will lose their HPSA eligibility beginning July 2022.**

## Impact on Health Care Providers

HPSAs provide a number of important benefits to health care providers including:

- 1. Medicare Bonus Payments** –Physicians (including general surgeons) in geographic-based HPSAs receive a 10% Medicare bonus payment for covered physician or psychiatrist services.
- 2. Medicaid Bonus Payments** – Providers in all HPSAs receive a 20% Medicaid bonus payment. This includes physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants for primary care and emergency department services, and an enhanced 50% bonus payment for OB services.
- 3. CONRAD-30 J1 Visa waivers** – This program allows hospitals to host foreign-born medical students after they complete their residency, without them having to return home for 2 years before applying for immigrant status to the U.S.
- 4. Loan Repayment** – Providers who practice in a HPSA are eligible for loan repayment through either the National Health Service Corp or Wisconsin Office of Rural Health.
- 5. Grants & GME** – Both graduate medical education slots and state and federal grants often provide extra points for applications coming from HPSAs.

## HRSA Must Protect Current HPSAs by Pausing Planned Redeterminations

While we respect HRSA's goals of updating and improving the integrity of the information that determines whether a HPSA exists or not, even the best laid plans must be adapted due to unforeseen circumstances. It is clear health workforce shortages have sharply intensified due to COVID-19 and its ongoing impacts.

**Please contact HRSA and ask them to pause redeterminations to give providers more time to justify keeping HPSA areas intact. If no action is taken, WHA estimates 32 separate hospitals will lose HPSA tools that rural health care depends on!**

## Please Support Rural Care – Protect HPSA Status

- 47 parts of the state will lose their status as a health professional shortage area beginning in July – impacting 32 Wisconsin hospitals that will lose HPSA eligibility.
- HPSAs give health care providers enhanced payments and better access to workforce loan repayment, highly skilled immigrants, and grants.
- It is clear health workforce shortages have been exacerbated by COVID-19. More areas – not less – are experiencing workforce shortages.
- HRSA needs to pause and retool their HPSA redetermination process to align it with more current data given the disruption of COVID-19.

## WHA Ask:

***Please contact HHS and urge them pause the planned HPSA redetermination process.***

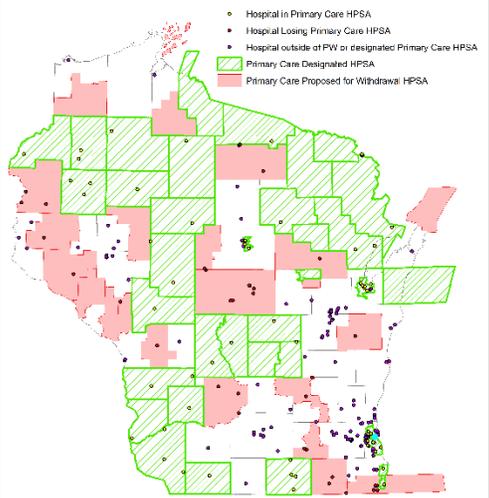
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### Hospitals in Wisconsin

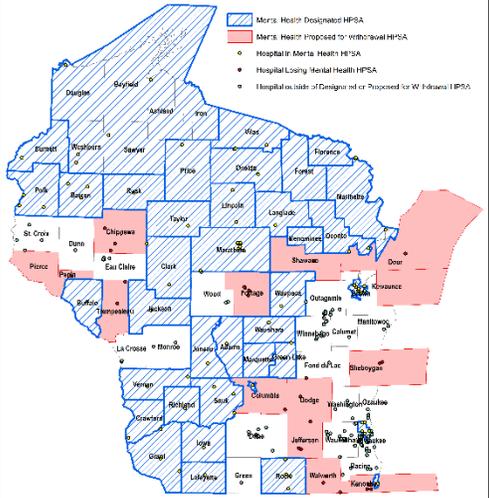
Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Area



Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association, Inc., updated on 4/11/2022

### Hospitals in Wisconsin

Mental Health Professional Shortage Area



Last updated on 4/18/2022