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National Shortage Designation Update Underway

When a county or a group of county subdivisions or census tracts have a shortage of primary care physicians, psychiatrists or dentists, the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) designates that area as a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). HPSA designation comes with benefits for health care facilities in those areas, intended to attract health professionals to work there; benefits such as loan repayment programs, Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement enhancements and eligibility for J-1 visa waivers. Every few years, HRSA reevaluates all the HPSAs in a National Shortage Designation Update (NSDU). Prior to 2017, HRSA performed reassessments on a rolling basis by region. The first nationwide reassessment was in 2017, repeated in 2021, and is now underway in 2025.

HRSA has released their initial assessment of counties, groups of county subdivisions or census tracts that no longer meet HRSA's criteria for HPSA designation. Areas designated as "Proposed for Withdrawal" are at risk of losing their HPSA status and the benefits that status brings. This initial designation will be reassessed by HRSA again in December 2025, with final official withdrawal of the designation to be completed by July 2026. This timeline gives organizations in an area "Proposed for Withdrawal" an opportunity to work to preserve HPSA status. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is actively monitoring the situation and is available to determine options that could be available if HPSA designation is changing.

WHA members can find shortage areas by address to determine if their HPSA status is proposed to change [here](#).

Contact WHA Senior Vice President of Workforce and Clinical Practice Ann Zenk or WHA Vice President of Federal Affairs and Advocacy Jon Hoelter if you have questions about HPSA benefits, the update process underway or to be put in touch with the appropriate DHS staff that work with hospitals and health care providers on Wisconsin shortage designations.

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EDUCATION EVENTS

Nov. 6, 2025

Hospital Board Education

Jan. 28, 2026

2026 WHA Health Care Leadership Academy

Mar. 13, 2026

2026 Physician Leadership Development Conference