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National Honors Spotlight Wisconsin's Leadership in Rural Healthcare

Each year, rural hospitals across the country are recognized for excellence through a structured evaluation process led by the Chartis Center for Rural Health and the National Rural Health Association (NRHA). Ranking more than 1,300 Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) nationwide, these designations highlight the highest-performing organizations in terms of quality, patient experience and operational strength.

The process begins with the annual release of the Top 100 CAHs, announced on February 11, 2026. These hospitals are selected based on the Chartis Rural Hospital Performance INDEX®, one of the most comprehensive assessments of rural hospital performance in the country. The INDEX evaluates hospitals across eight domains: inpatient market share, outpatient market share, quality, outcomes, patient perspective, cost, charge and finance. Together, these measures provide a balanced view of how effectively hospitals deliver care, manage resources and sustain operations in rural communities.

Wisconsin was strongly represented in the 2026 Top 100 rankings, with eight hospitals earning national recognition for their performance.

These organizations reflect the depth and consistency of high-quality rural health care and demonstrate strong performance across clinical, financial and patient-centered metrics.

From this Top 100 group, the NRHA selects the Top 20 CAHs, representing the highest overall performers in the nation. The 2026 Top 20 were announced on April 23, 2026, recognizing hospitals that achieved exceptional results across all eight domains of the INDEX. Wisconsin stood out prominently, with two hospitals earning Top 20 distinction. These organizations are among the best-performing CAHs in the country and exemplify excellence in delivering high-quality care while maintaining strong operational and financial performance in a rural setting.

"These recognitions reflect the dedication of our rural hospital teams to delivering high-quality, community-centered care," said WHA Chief Quality Officer Nadine Allen. "It's especially meaningful to see that commitment translating into strong performance that helps keep care close to home for Wisconsin communities."

In addition to the Top 20 awards, the NRHA also recognizes Best Practice recipients—hospitals that demonstrate exceptional performance in specific areas such as quality or patient perspective. In 2026, Wisconsin again received national recognition with one hospital being honored with a Best Practice in Quality designation. This award reflects top-tier performance in clinical quality measures and outcomes, highlighting the organization's commitment to delivering safe, effective patient-centered care.

Together, these recognitions underscore the strength and impact of Wisconsin's rural health care system. From broad representation in the Top 100 to standout achievements in the Top 20 and Best Practice categories, Wisconsin hospitals continue to demonstrate leadership, adaptability and a commitment to continuous improvement. These accomplishments highlight the ability of Wisconsin's CAHs to deliver high-value care while sustaining strong performance in an increasingly complex health care environment.



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EDUCATION EVENTS

May. 14, 2026

Substance Use Disorders (SUD) Management Boot Camp

Jun. 8, 2026

2026 Wisconsin Rural Health Conference

Aug. 4, 2026

Seeing the Real Market: Using Claims Enhanced Intelligence to Make Better Strategy, Access, and Growth Decisions