



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama to celebrate National Rural Health Day on Nov. 21

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rural communities have health care needs that differ from those of urban or suburban areas. To highlight access needs and to promote awareness, Alabama is joining in Celebrating the Power of Rural on National Rural Health Day Nov. 21.

For the third consecutive year, the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health and all 50 state Offices of Rural Health are joining with other local, state and national rural health care providers and stakeholders to celebrate National Rural Health Day.

Fifty-five out of 67 of Alabama's counties are considered rural, and 2 million residents or 43.6 percent of the entire Alabama population live in rural areas.

Seven rural counties (Bibb, Bullock, Coosa, DeKalb, Perry, Sumter and Wilcox) are among the 250 U.S. counties with the lowest per capita incomes among all 3,113 counties.

Alabama currently needs 156 strategically placed primary care physicians to eliminate all primary care shortages and 434 to provide optimal care. Only three of Alabama's 55 rural counties (Coffee, Marion and Pike) are not entirely or partially classified as primary care shortage areas. Eight rural Alabama counties do not have hospitals. In 1980, 46 of Alabama's 55 rural counties had hospitals performing obstetrics. Today only 19 of the 55 offer this basic service.

Dental care is also scarce in Alabama's rural areas. Alabama currently needs 262 strategically placed dentists serving the Medicaid population to eliminate all dental shortages and 363 to provide optimal care. All of Alabama's 55 rural counties are classified as dental shortage areas for the Medicaid population.

National Rural Health Day was launched in 2011 to increase awareness of the unique health care issues facing rural Americans and highlight the efforts of state offices of rural health and others in addressing those issues.

In Alabama, the State Office of Primary Care and Rural Health and the Alabama Rural Health Association are celebrating National Rural Health Day by providing celebration posters to rural hospitals and rural health clinics, and through social media posts on Twitter and Facebook.

Everyone is invited to join in this important event by looking at their community's health status indicators and supporting activities to make the community a healthier place to live. These health indicators, along with a list of available services to help increase health care access in rural communities, and contact information for assistance, can be found on the web at: <http://www.adph.org/ruralhealth>.

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