



USDA Leads the Interagency Effort to Reverse the Opioid Epidemic

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) is leading the interagency effort to address a serious crisis facing our nation—the heroin and prescription opioid epidemic. In 2014, more than 28,600 Americans died of overdoses related to opioids, a class of drugs that includes both prescription pain medications and heroin.

This epidemic of drug overdose (poisoning) deaths continues to get worse. Since 2000, the rate of deaths from drug overdoses has increased 137 percent, including a 200-percent increase in the rate of overdose deaths involving opioids (opioid pain relievers and heroin). More Americans now die every year from drug overdoses than from motor vehicle crashes.

Most people probably wouldn't think of USDA as the obvious choice for this role, but USDA is uniquely suited for the task, given its strong, longstanding relationship with rural America, where rates of overdose and opioid misuse are particularly high.

USDA Rural Development works to reverse the epidemic with the following programs:

Community Facilities (CF) Direct Loan and Grant Program

Since fiscal year 2014, USDA Rural Development has invested \$235 million in CF funds for mental health facilities in rural America.

- In September 2015, USDA approved a \$3.8 million CF direct loan to renovate and expand Royal Oaks Hospital, a psychiatric facility in Windsor, Missouri. This rural hospital provides services in family medicine/primary care, dental health and mental health/alcohol and drug treatment. The facility currently has 41 beds, and the project will add 14 more beds. The hospital is located in a targeted persistent poverty area.

Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grant Program

Since 2009, USDA Rural Development has provided more than \$213 million in grants for 634 DLT projects in rural areas nationwide, many providing mental health treatment.

- In December 2015, USDA provided a \$267,000 grant to Appalachian Regional Healthcare, Inc., serving Virginia, Kentucky and West Virginia, for a telemedicine network connecting 14 rural clinics to larger clinics to provide

specialist services to rural residents. The project addresses healthcare needs in rural central Appalachia, such as the shortage of physicians, backlog and time delays in receiving appropriate specialty care, unequal level of patient care in different locations, and additional financial expenses for patients and healthcare providers.

Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan (B&I) Program

Since 2009, USDA Rural Development has provided \$336 million through B&I loan guarantees for 80 healthcare-related projects in rural America.

- This year, the Pineville Community Hospital Corporation in Pineville, Kentucky, was selected to receive a \$3.1 million B&I Guaranteed Loan to build a new Geriatric Behavioral Health Unit. The 12-bed facility has been needed in the area for years and is already 75 percent full. Hospital officials hope the success of this program and unit will lead to more specialized programs in the community. This project is expected to save 338 jobs.

To learn more about USDA Rural Development programs, you may contact [your local office](#) for assistance. Additional forms, resources, and program information are at www.rd.usda.gov.

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