

# Challenges Confronting Rural Health Care

## Background

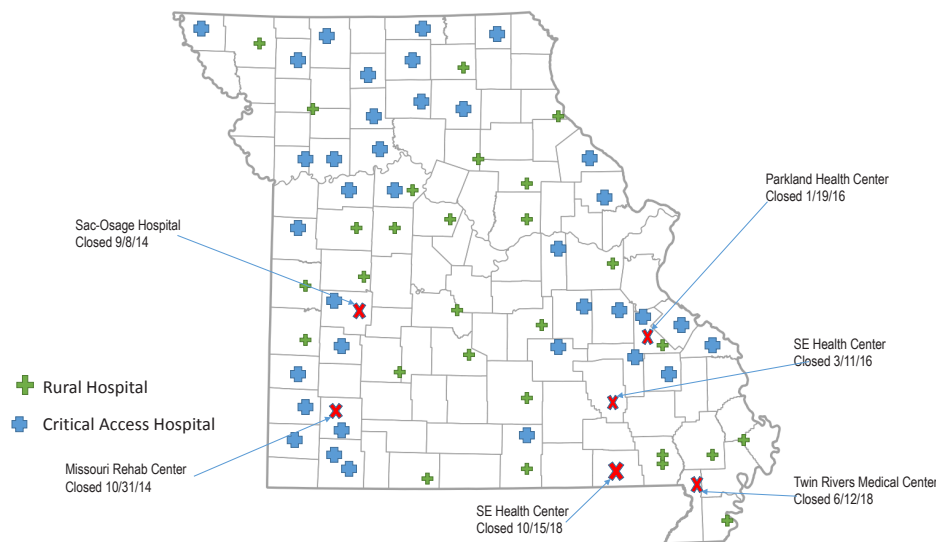
Rural Missourians, who make up nearly 38 percent of Missouri's population, face a number of health care challenges. Missouri's rural residents generally are older, poorer and sicker than their urban counterparts. Access to both facilities and providers is an issue for Missouri's rural population.

In many communities, hospitals are among the largest employers. A study in *Health Services Research* found that when a community loses its only hospital, per capita income falls by about 4 percent, and the unemployment increases by 1.6 percentage points.

The following data provide a snapshot of health care in rural Missouri. It describes the loss of Missouri hospitals, characteristics of Missouri's rural residents and the restricted access to care that many rural Missourians must incorporate into their lives.

## Shuttering Missouri Hospitals

St. Clair, St. Francois, Reynolds, Dunklin, Lawrence and Ripley counties all have lost hospitals throughout the last four years.



- **Southeast Health Center of Ripley County**, Doniphan, in 2018
- **Twin Rivers Regional Medical Center**, Kennett, in 2018
- **Southeast Health Center of Reynolds County**, Ellington, in 2016
- **Parkland Health Center**, Farmington, in 2015
- **Sac-Osage Hospital**, Osceola, in 2014
- **Missouri Rehabilitation Center**, Mount Vernon, in 2014

**38** percent of Missouri residents live in rural counties

**19** percent of the rural population is over age 65

**18** percent poverty rate in rural Missouri

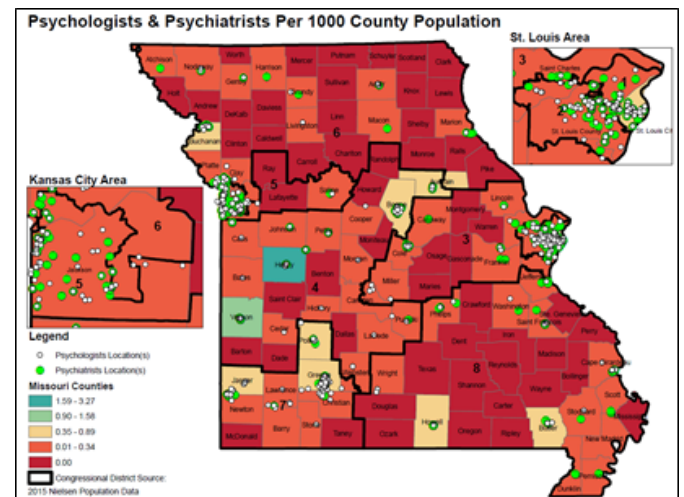
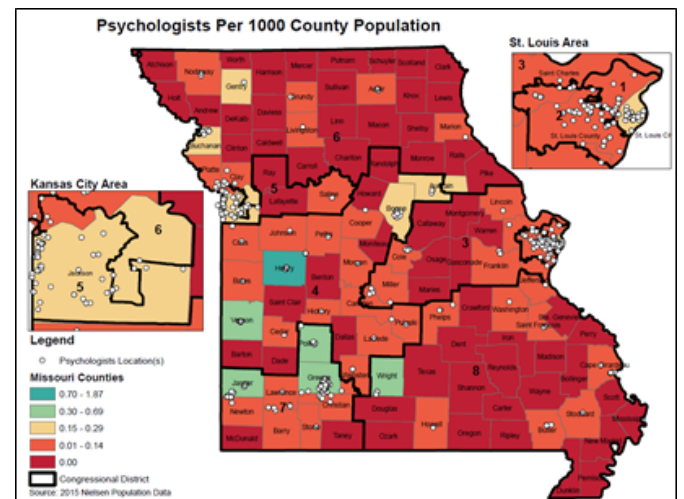
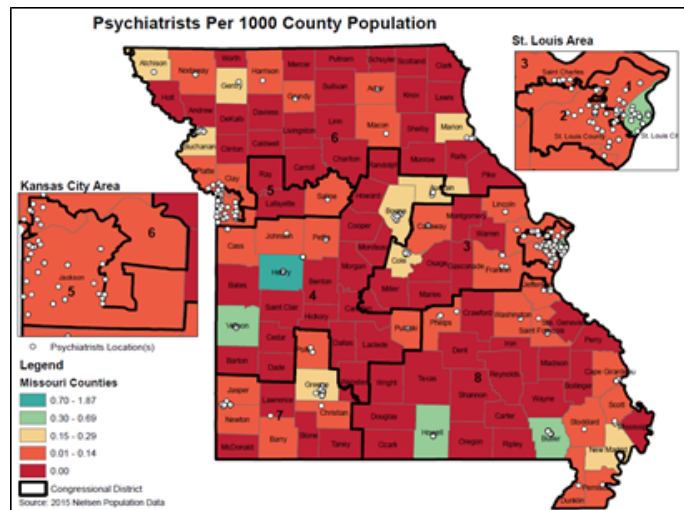
**44** rural counties in Missouri do not have a hospital

## Rural areas often struggle with the challenges of providing behavioral health care.

Lack of behavioral health care access in rural Missouri is driven by lack of access to behavioral health providers. The maps depict the distribution of psychiatrists and psychologists, both individually and jointly, by county. Large swaths of rural Missouri have little or no access to behavioral health providers.

Because of the lack of access to behavioral health providers in rural communities, patients who need care go to emergency departments. Many rural providers are challenged to provide appropriate treatment, stabilization, post-discharge placement and patient transportation.

## Distribution of Missouri Behavioral Health Providers






## Many rural communities struggle to have access to primary care providers.

- ▶ According to the 2016 Area Health Resource Files from HRSA, **six counties lack a primary care physician.**
- ▶ **There are 55.9 PCPs for every 100,000 rural residents,** compared with 139 per 100,000 for urban residents.
- ▶ The AHRF data from 2017 indicate that **1,441 nurse practitioners work in rural Missouri counties.\***
- ▶ According to the 2016 AHRF from HRSA, **71 rural Missouri counties lack obstetrics coverage.\***

\*Source: data.HRSA.gov

## Health & Primary Care Disparities: Rural and Urban Missouri

	 RURAL MISSOURI	 URBAN MISSOURI	
smoking rate	<b>24.9%</b>	<b>21.6%</b>	
obesity rate	<b>31.1%</b>	<b>29.9%</b>	
percent of population with no high school diploma	<b>14.2%</b>	<b>9.04%</b>	
life expectancy	<b>76.5 years</b>	<b>77.9 years</b>	
heart disease death rate per 100,000 [2005-2015]	<b>225.4</b>	<b>193.5</b>	
cancer death rate per 100,000 [2005-2015]	<b>190.3</b>	<b>180.3</b>	
total number of PCPs	<b>1,246</b>	<b>5,379</b>	
average age of primary care physicians [2018]	<b>60</b>	<b>54</b>	
percent and (number) of PCPs over age 50 [2018]	<b>60.6% (755)</b>	<b>52.7% (2,835)</b>	
percent and (number) of PCPs over age 70 [2018]	<b>8.7% (108)</b>	<b>6.3% (338)</b>	
percent and (number) of PCPs age 40 and younger [2018]	<b>15.8% (197)</b>	<b>19.6% (1,052)</b>	

\*Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Primary Care Physicians: Missouri Workforce Update, August 2018

