

Please Support Rural Care – Protect WI HPSA Status

- Around 25 Wisconsin hospitals are still at risk of losing their HPSA benefits, due to HRSA changing how it calculates a HPSA.
- HPSAs give health care providers enhanced payments and better access to loan repayment, foreign-born physicians, and grants.
- WHA workforce data shows that health care workforce shortages are still much worse than they were when the current HPSAs were created.
- States like Wisconsin that have been most proactive in submitting updated data appear to be at risk for losing an unduly high number of HPSAs compared to other states.

WHA Ask:

Please ask HRSA to maintain their pause and not withdraw Wisconsin HPSAs at this time.

WHA Staff Contact

Jon Hoelter
VP Federal & State Relations
jhoelter@wha.org

October 2023

Protect Rural Health Care: HPSA Redesignation

HRSA's new rules for HPSA redesignation will exacerbate workforce woes

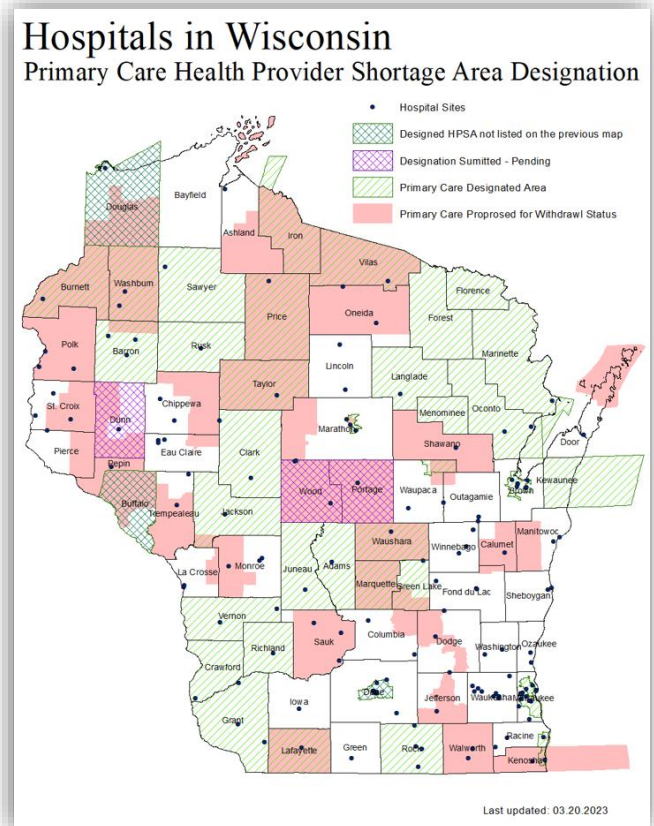
The federal Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) is in charge of designating Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) which identify local areas and population groups where a shortage of health care providers exist. In 2021, HRSA altered how they calculate HPSAs, leaving a higher amount than typical to be proposed for withdrawal.

While HRSA paused plans to withdraw HPSAs in 2022, they have announced they will withdraw them in 2024, **with around 25 WI hospitals slated to lose their HPSA status!**

Impact on Health Care Providers

HPSAs provide a number of important benefits to health care providers including:

1. **Medicare Bonus Payments** – Physicians (including general surgeons) in geographic-based HPSAs receive a 10% Medicare bonus payment for covered physician or psychiatrist services.
2. **Medicaid Bonus Payments** – Providers in all HPSAs receive a 20% Medicaid bonus payment. This includes physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants for primary care and emergency department services, and an enhanced 50% bonus payment for OB services.
3. **CONRAD-30 J1 Visa waivers** – This program allows hospitals to host foreign-born medical students after they complete their residency, without them having to return home for 2 years before applying for immigrant status to the U.S.
4. **Loan Repayment** – Providers who practice in a HPSA are eligible for loan repayment through the National Health Service Corp or Wisconsin Office of Rural Health.
5. **Grants & GME** – Both graduate medical education slots and state and federal grants often provide extra points for applications coming from HPSAs.



HRSA Must Protect Current HPSAs by Pausing Planned Redeterminations

While we respect HRSA's goals of updating the information that determines whether a HPSA exists or not, WHA continues to collect workforce data showing that shortages have not improved. Furthermore, Wisconsin seems to have an inordinately high number of HPSAs proposed for withdrawal compared to other states. Ironically, WI is being punished for doing a better job than other states of getting HRSA the data it has requested.

Please contact HRSA and ask them to continue their pause so that Wisconsin hospitals do not lose access to HPSA benefits!