

DATA & ANALYSIS

The rural health safety net under pressure: Understanding the potential impact of COVID-19

<https://www.chartis.com/insights/rural-health-safety-net-under-pressure-understanding-potential-impact-covid-19>

For rural providers, the spread of COVID-19 across a vulnerable population has the potential to place a significant strain on existing resources (financial and operational), staffing, and expertise. By definition, Critical Access Hospitals have 25 or fewer beds, while Rural and Community Hospitals range between 26 and 200 beds. Nationally, the number of intensive care unit (ICU) beds in rural hospitals is 6,309.

One of the many precautions undertaken by hospitals and healthcare providers to limit the spread of the virus and reduce infection is to cancel or postpone non-essential tests, procedures, and other medical appointments. Today, 44 percent of rural hospitals operate in the red and the loss (or postponement) of outpatient service revenue compounds the potential impact of COVID-19. This updated analysis builds upon the findings of our vulnerability study to provide new insight into the stability of the rural health safety net amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

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