



Effective Health Care

Closing Rural Hospitals

Next Steps

The nominator is concerned about transparency about the closure of rural hospitals.

Investigation into the reasons for closures of rural hospitals is outside the purview of AHRQ's Effective Health Care Program, which is focused on developing evidence reviews to inform healthcare decision-making about interventions and activities available to decisionmakers in the United States. No further activity will be undertaken on this topic.

Summary

Topic Name and Number: #822, Closing Rural Hospitals

Date: 9/27/2018

Key question(s) from the nomination:

What is the process for investigating the closure of a rural hospital?

- Small rural hospitals are many times the only available source of health care in some communities.
- According to HRSA hospitals in rural areas are closing more frequently than those in urban locations.¹
- Factors include low patient populations, high rates of uninsured, and physician shortages.¹
- The process for investigating the reasons for closure of a particular rural hospital is outside the purview of AHRQ's Evidence-based Practice Center Program. While we are unable to further assess this topic at this time, these references may be useful to the nominator:
 - The Health Resources and Services Administration's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy evaluates the impact of rural hospital closures.²
 - NC Rural Health Research Program has a website that has a list of closed rural hospitals.³

References

1. Hospital Closings Likely to Increase. Rockville, MD: Health Resources & Services Administration; 2017. <https://www.hrsa.gov/enews/past-issues/2017/october-19/hospitals-closing-increase.html>. Accessed on 27 September 2018 2018.
2. Rural Hospital Programs. Rockville, MD: Health Resources & Services Administration; 2018. <https://www.hrsa.gov/rural-health/rural-hospitals/index.html>. Accessed on 5 October 2018 2018.
3. 87 Rural Hospital Closures: January 2010 – Present. Chapel Hill, NC: The Cecil C. Sheps Center for Health Services Research. <http://www.shepscenter.unc.edu/programs-projects/rural-health/rural-hospital-closures/>. Accessed on 27 September 2018 2018.