

Critical Access Hospitals



The Value of Membership in the American Hospital Association

The Section for Small or Rural Hospitals adds value to American Hospital Association (AHA) membership through its many functions and services and provides a home for more than 1,650 AHA constituents including over 950 Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs).

Representation, Advocacy, and Policy Development

Recognized as the national advocate for hospitals and the communities and patients they serve, the AHA works with member hospitals, state and regional hospital associations, and other related organizations to shape and influence federal legislation and regulation to improve the ability of our members to deliver high quality health care. The AHA ensures that the unique needs of its many constituents are heard and addressed in creation of national health policy reforms, legislative proposals, regulatory comments, and administrative debates. Indeed, from its origins as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, the AHA has been a champion for the development and subsequent improvements and enhancements to the CAH program.

Advocating for Program Improvement on the Legislative Front

Taking Our Message to the Hill

The AHA works with Congress to achieve fair payment and increased administrative flexibility for CAHs and represents CAHs on Capitol Hill by working with committee leaders, providing testimony, and writing letters to Congressional leadership. The outcome: a more reasonable and equitable program for our small or rural hospitals and the communities they serve.

Under health care reform, working with our strategic partners and members, the AHA posted some significant victories for CAHs including:

- Expanding of 340B drug discount pricing to include eligible CAH outpatient services;
- Securing 101% cost-based reimbursement for CAHs for all outpatient payments under Method II as well as for qualifying ambulance services;
- Extension of the federal grant funding for the Medicare Rural Hospital FLEX Program;
- Extending the add-on payments for ground, air, and super rural ambulance services; and
- Reinstating the rural home health payment adjustment.

Pursuing Fairness in the Regulatory Arena

Having a Level Playing Field

The AHA represents the interests of small or rural hospitals to numerous federal agencies, but most notably the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Health Resources and Services Administration. The AHA advocates for flexible and fair rules for CAH payment and program participation. Our efforts have inspired changes to regulations for greater flexibility in treating CAH outpatients and payments to CAHs using the optional method. The AHA continues to track these and other issues such as the Independent Payment Advisory Board, a bundled payment pilot program, physician supervision of therapeutic services, payment of CRNA standby services, allowable costs of provider taxes, MedPAC studies on Medicare payments, negotiated rule making for determination of Health Professional Shortage Areas and Medically Underserved Populations, and fair implementation of the guidelines for CAH off-campus and co-location requirements and rebuilding.



Member Services

The AHA offers its members a variety of services ranging from education to technical assistance. At the core are the AHA's seven constituency sections, which provide a unique blend of forum and network, linking members with shared interests and missions. Through the sections, members place political, economic and market-driven issues on the AHA's agenda where they can help shape AHA services and policy.

The Section for Small or Rural Hospitals

A Seat at the Table for Over 1650 Member Hospitals

The Section and AHA ensure that the unique needs of this constituency are a national priority. Working side-by-side with state and regional associations and with advice from its governing council the Section represents, advocates, educates, and communicates with and on behalf of its membership. With input from its 18-member Governing Council, the Section identifies the issues and challenges facing its constituents, tackles public policy priorities, develops strategies, and designs solutions to their most pressing problems.

Communications, Education, and Member Relations

Expanding Knowledge through Dialogue and Instruction

The AHA is the field's primary resource for timely communication on the most critical information affecting CAHs. Member CAHs are solicited for their opinions through individual contacts or regular group calls and provide an important viewpoint on a variety of strategic issues including legislative, regulatory, quality, or other public policy initiatives. Through its *CAH Update* newsletter, Web site, and site visits the AHA reaches out and connects with CAHs across rural America. In addition, its bi-weekly *AHA News* and daily electronic *AHA News Now* publications deliver in-depth coverage of the issues that matter most to the hospital field.

The AHA is pre-eminent in educating its member CAHs. The AHA sponsors the Health Forum Rural Hospital Leadership Conference and cosponsors other national educational programs targeting CAHs. The AHA provides faculty for national and state association meetings and offers educational programming through Webinars and teleconferences. Each year a CEO from a member hospital is honored for their innovation and service by the Section with the Shirley Ann Munroe Rural Hospital Leadership Award.

Inter-Organizational Relations

Effecting Change through Collaboration

The AHA works closely with its many partners including the state hospital associations, American Academy of Family Physicians, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, The Joint Commission, National Rural Health Association, and others to combine resources to achieve change. By partnering with related organizations, the AHA has expanded its sphere of influence to improve the status of CAHs across the country.

Become a Member

Strength in Numbers

CAH program stability and improvement is a priority for the AHA. Securing the future of CAHs and the essential role they play in caring for rural America is of paramount importance. The AHA is vigilant in the face of legislative, regulatory, and policy proposals that threaten the local delivery of care and rural community health status. The AHA will continue to advocate on behalf of CAHs for fixes to payment and administrative limitations that constrain the efficiency and effectiveness of these essential health care providers.

To learn more about who we are, what we do, and how we add value please contact your AHA Regional Executive at 312-422-3000 or John Supplitt, senior director, AHA Section for Small or Rural Hospitals at 312-422-3306 or jsupplitt@aha.org.