

## PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

*For more than four decades, HRSA has helped fund, staff and support a national network of health clinics serving millions of people who otherwise would have little or no access to care.*

### KEY FACTS

More than 1,100 health center grantees operate more than 7,900 community-based clinics in every state and territory, giving geographically isolated or economically distressed people access to preventive and primary health care.



HRSA-supported health centers treated nearly 19 million people in 2009, approximately two-thirds of whom are members of minority groups.

Forty percent have no health insurance;  
a third are children.



On February 17, 2009, soon after taking office, President Obama signed the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, which committed \$2 billion over 2009 and 2010 to finance major growth in the health center network. The additional funds will expand services and operating hours, pay for capital improvements and buy new equipment — including health information technology. One of every 18 people living in the U.S. now relies on a HRSA-funded clinic for primary care, including nearly a quarter of the nation's homeless, migrant, and seasonal farmworkers.



The National Hansen's Disease Program is the major source of direct patient care, clinician training and research in the field of Hansen's Disease and related leprosy conditions.



The Free Clinics Medical Malpractice Program insures physicians and other clinicians who contribute free health care services in the communities, relieving them of the burden of paying for private liability coverage.

### OVERVIEW

HRSA's Primary Health Care Programs have their roots in the Migrant Health Act of 1962 and the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which established funding for the first community-based clinics that were to become today's Health Center Program. The National Hansen's Disease Program, formerly the National Leprosarium, was established in 1921. More recently, the Free Clinics Medical Malpractice Program was established in 2004.

### HEALTH CENTER PROGRAMS

Health Centers are community-based and patient-directed organizations that serve people with limited access to health care. These include low-income patients, the uninsured, those with limited English proficiency, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and those living in public housing.

HRSA-supported clinics provide comprehensive, culturally competent, quality primary health care to a broadly diverse patient base that includes increasing numbers of veterans.

Services include pharmacy, mental health, substance abuse and oral health treatment, as well as supportive services (education, translation, transportation and case management) that promote access to health care and ensure patient well-being.

Health centers are required to be located in or serve a high-need community (a "medically underserved" area or population) — and to make their services available to all patients on a sliding scale, with fees based on ability to pay.



By law, health centers must be governed by community boards with majority patient representation.

### FREE CLINICS MEDICAL MALPRACTICE PROGRAM

Free clinics play a significant role in meeting the health care needs of the uninsured, particularly at a time when private physicians may be less likely to provide free care in their offices.

These clinics are typically small organizations with annual budgets of less than \$250,000, making them less able to afford the growing cost of malpractice coverage for those clinicians who might otherwise be willing to donate their time.

The Free Clinics Program serves HRSA's overall policy aim of expanding treatment capacity for the disadvantaged by assuring health professional volunteers that they will be protected against medical malpractice claims. To date, over 3,700 health care providers have been given federal indemnity through the program.

### NATIONAL HANSEN'S DISEASE PROGRAMS

The National Hansen's Disease Programs have been providing care and treatment for Hansen's Disease (leprosy) and related conditions since 1921.

The programs provide health care to those affected by the disease through three means of service delivery: at HRSA-run facilities in Louisiana; via a payment to a Hawaii in-patient program; or at any of 11 regional outpatient clinics under contract to the agency.

The programs also support scientific research and training for health professionals at the world's largest and most comprehensive laboratory dedicated to Hansen's Disease.

The programs are the only dedicated source of expertise, treatment and continuing education on the disease in the United States.