

Michigan's Health Care Safety Net Providers:

Michigan's safety net providers are the last thread in the health care delivery system, the providers of last resort. They deliver a sizable amount of health care to the uninsured, underinsured, and other underserved groups. According to a report by the Institute of Medicine, core safety net providers have two distinguishing characteristics:

- Either by legal mandate or explicitly adopted mission, they offer care to patients regardless of their ability to pay for those services; and
- A substantial share of their patient mix consists of uninsured, Medicaid, and other vulnerable patients.¹

In addition, there are many safety net providers that may not meet the definition of a "core" safety net provider (such as private physicians), but nonetheless provide significant care to the uninsured.²

The health care safety net, at the national or state level, is not uniformly available. Michigan's safety net patchwork of providers and health coverage programs include: nonprofit hospitals that provide a disproportionate share of services to underserved groups, federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), rural health clinics (RHCs), local public health departments, free clinics/volunteer programs, school-based and school-linked health centers, community-based mental programs, tribal health centers, oral health programs, and community health plans.

Safety net providers serve a range of populations, including the uninsured, publicly insured, and the underinsured low-income population, as well as special populations such as migrant seasonal farm workers, homeless people, and legal and undocumented immigrants. Michigan safety net organizations provide an array of health care services to persons who otherwise could not get the health care they need. These services include: prescription drugs, urgent care, primary care, preventive care, mental health, dental, vision, and enabling services such as language interpretation, transportation and outreach. The goal of this paper is to provide a description of Michigan's health care safety net.

Hospitals

As of January 2010, there are 144 community hospitals located within the state of Michigan. Michigan's not-for-profit hospitals are an essential component of the safety net for the uninsured and underinsured, providing large amounts of unreimbursed care for Michigan residents. In 2008, Michigan hospitals provided more than \$240 million in charity care and more than \$557 million in uncollectible funds (bad debt) for treatment, totaling more than \$797 million in uncompensated care. They also provided \$111 million in community health improvement services such as health education, screening, immunizations, free clinics, and other services.⁴

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs)

"Health Center" is a broad term for a diverse range of public and non-profit organizations and programs that focus on improving the health of individuals and communities by

providing comprehensive, accessible, affordable, quality primary and preventive care. A Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) is a health center funded under Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act, while an FQHC “Look-Alike” is a health center that does not receive Section 330 funding but otherwise fulfills all FQHC requirements.⁵

There are three types of Federally Qualified Health Centers in Michigan: Community Health Centers (CHCs), Migrant Health Centers (MHCs), and Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) Centers. Thirty-one health centers provide primary health care for nearly 600,000 patients annually at 160 sites across the state of Michigan; of those 31 health centers, 28 are FQHCs, two are FQHC Look-Alikes, and one is both a FQHC and a FQHC Look-Alike.⁶ Five MHCs in Michigan and many other CHCs provide care to Michigan’s migrant/seasonal farmworker population. In addition, seven HCH Centers currently operate in Michigan to care for over 18,000 homeless patients.⁷

Rural Health Clinics (RHCs)

The Rural Health Clinic Program was established in 1977 “to address an inadequate supply of providers who serve Medicaid and Medicare beneficiaries in rural areas.”⁸ The purpose of the rural health clinic program is to increase primary care medical services in rural, physician shortage areas by utilizing physician assistants and nurse practitioners and to provide reasonable cost-based compensation for the care of Medicare and Medicaid patients.⁸ As of June 2010, there are 152 certified Rural Health Clinics in Michigan.⁹

RHCs can function as free-standing independent practices, or be affiliated with a hospital or other provider. These clinics offer significant amounts of care to the Medicaid and Medicare populations and are located in medically underserved rural communities. They also serve other vulnerable populations in rural areas, including the uninsured and migrant populations.⁸

Local Public Health Departments

Local public health is the focal point for responding to threats in the community such as communicable and chronic diseases, lack of access to health care, and failure to protect the environment. The 45 local public health departments (LPHDs) in Michigan are responsible for implementing proven strategies to improve population-based health outcomes.¹⁰

LPHDs are responsible for immunizations, communicable disease control, sexually transmitted disease control, on-site sewage management, drinking water supply, food service sanitation, hearing screening, and vision screening. In addition, health departments provide many other preventive health services including: family planning, Women, Infants, & Children, maternal and child health services, Children’s Special Health Care Services, and Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program. LPHDs also provide reliable, science-based information that is essential for people to make good choices regarding their own health decisions. Public health departments are also prepared to respond to bioterrorism, epidemics, and other public health emergencies.¹⁰

Free Clinics

Michigan has over 50 free clinics using volunteer health professionals to provide free health care services to Michigan's low-income, uninsured population.¹¹ According to data collected through the Michigan Department of Community Health Free Clinic Funding Program, the majority of free clinics provide services at no cost (either directly or through referral) including prescription assistance, lab testing, provision of glucometer strips, ongoing primary care, health education, x-ray, urgent care, mental health, assistance applying for Medicaid, referrals to specialty care, and dental care.¹²

Many of these non-profit clinics operate as part of or with sponsorship from a variety of organizations including charities, local medical societies, church groups, medical centers, and local government agencies. As a result of the variation in organizational backing, free clinics vary in range of services they offer, the patients they serve, the hours they are open, and the make-up of their staff. In aggregate, free clinics in Michigan offer free health care at a volume of more than 116,000 uninsured patient visits per year with the assistance of more than 3,700 volunteered hours per week.¹²

School-Based and School-Linked Health Centers

There are over 100 state, local, and privately funded centers and programs in Michigan serving close to 200,000 children of all grade levels in urban and rural schools and communities across the state. Also known as "child and adolescent health centers," these centers and programs are strategically located in medically underserved communities where access to health care for youth is an issue. Each center or program is designed to meet the unique needs of the students, schools, and communities they serve.¹³

County-Based Community Mental Health Programs (CMHSPs)

Mental health and developmental disability services in Michigan are organized and delivered through county-based community mental health services programs. The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) contracts with the 46 CMHSPs to establish a subcontracted provider network and/or directly operate services for adults with mental illness, children with serious emotional disorders, and persons with developmental disabilities.¹⁴

Tribal Health Centers

There are 12 tribal health centers in Michigan, one for each of the tribes recognized as sovereign nations. Operating under the authority of the Indian Self-Determination Act of 1976, Michigan's tribal health centers have a variety of primary care, mental health, and dental staff. Over the past four years, 40% of American Indians who live in Michigan (24,353 out of 60,675) have utilized services at tribal health centers at least once.¹⁵

Oral Health Programs

In Michigan, there are 51 local agencies conducting public health dental programs. Twenty-three federally qualified health centers in Michigan currently act as Medicaid dental service providers for 40 of Michigan's 83 counties. There are 17 local health departments that offer Medicaid dental services through a total of 27 clinics; these local health departments and their network of clinics serve 36 counties in Michigan. Four Native American dental clinics offer Medicaid dental services in Michigan; these clinics serve populations in nine counties. There are also seven hospital and university Medicaid dental providers in Michigan covering six counties.¹⁶

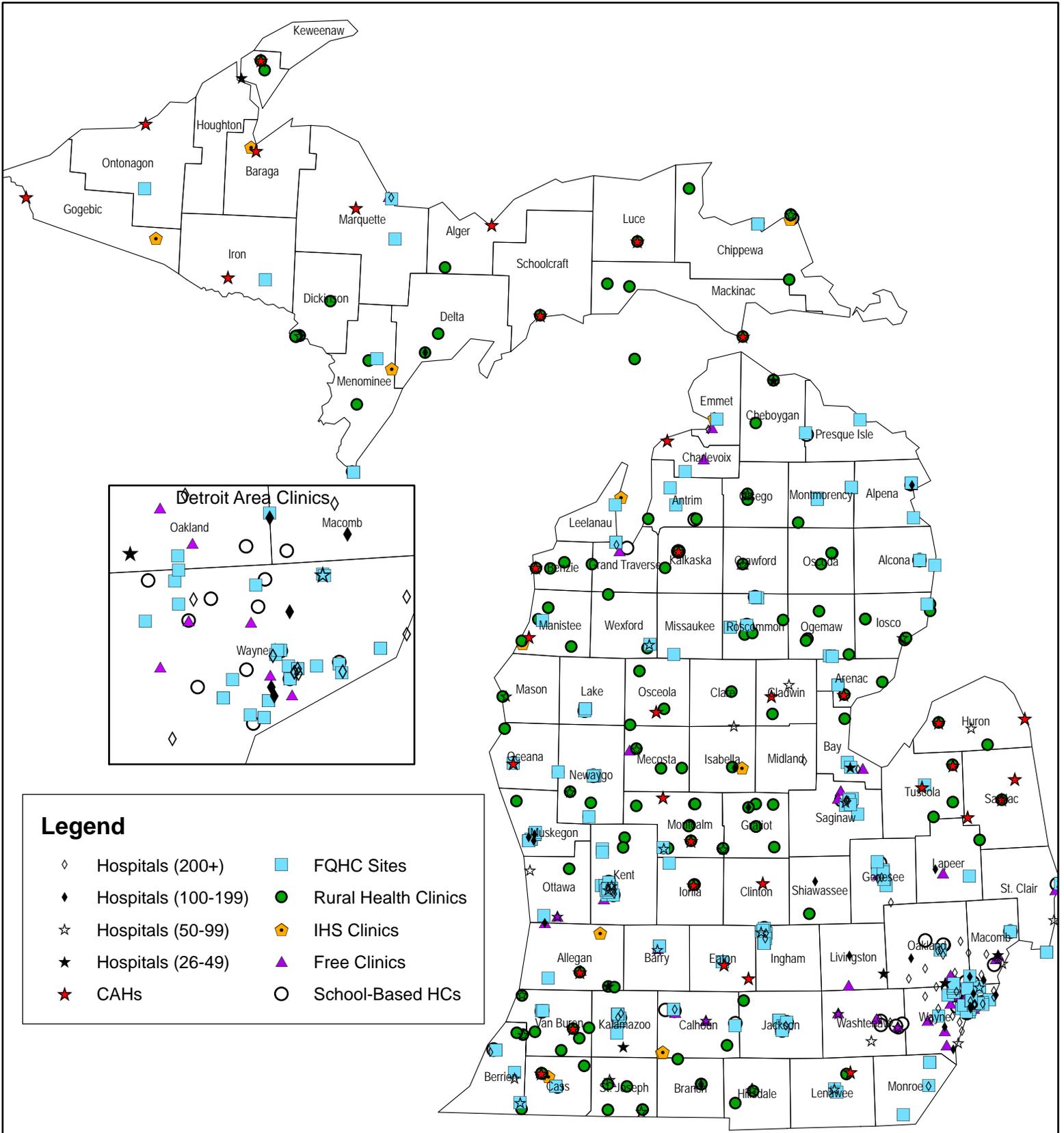
Community Health Plans

Seventy-three of Michigan's 83 counties have developed community-based initiatives called "County Health Plans."¹⁷ Supported by local, state, and federal funding, these county health plans offer health care coverage programs for the uninsured and the working poor in Michigan.¹⁸

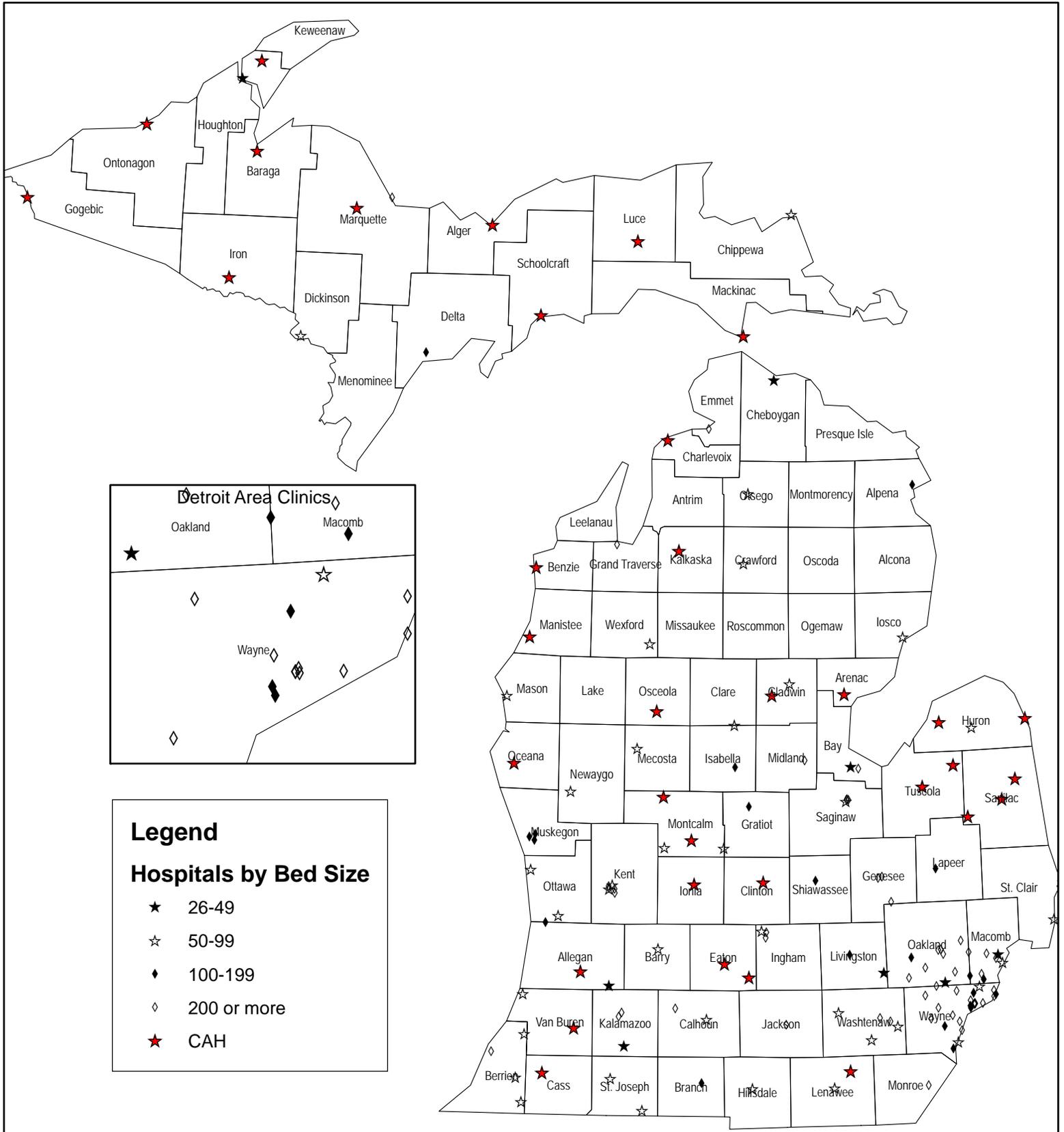
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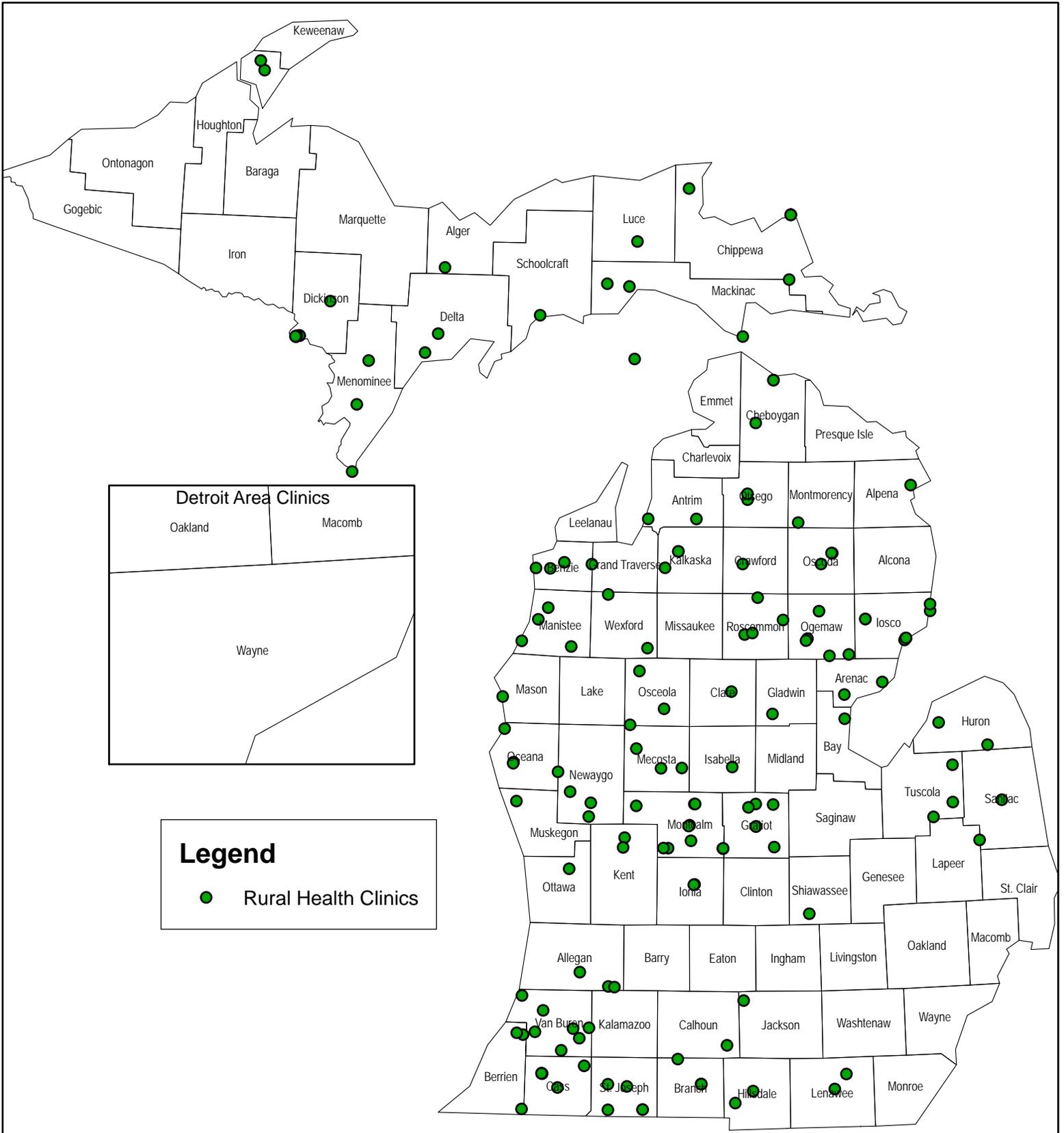
Michigan's Safety-Net Sites



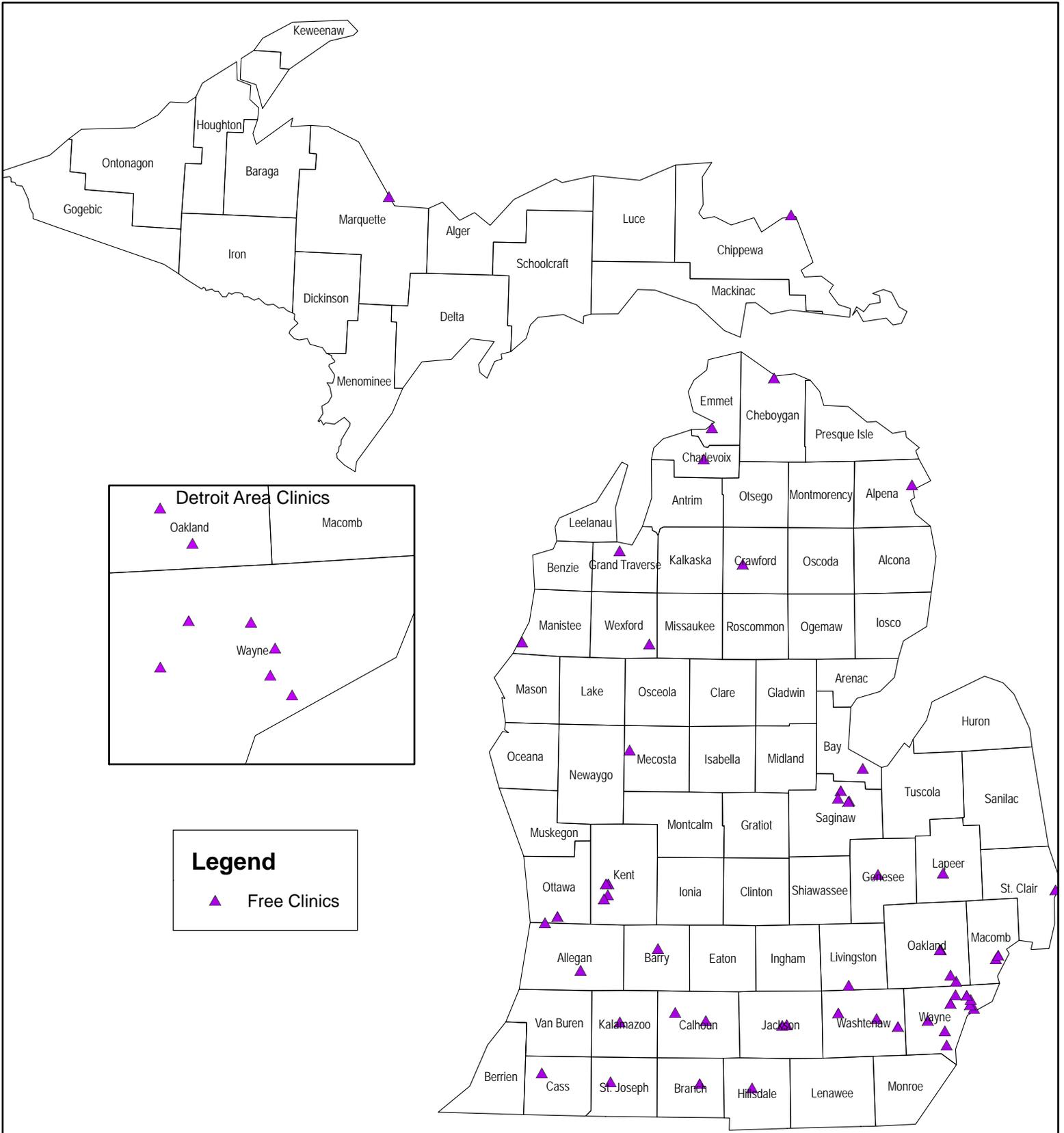
Michigan's Safety-Net Sites: Acute Care & Critical Access Hospitals



Michigan's Safety-Net Sites: Rural Health Clinics



Michigan's Safety-Net Sites: Free Clinics



Michigan's Safety-Net Sites: Indian Health Services Clinics

