June 2026

The Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) newsletter is designed to share updates on program activities, progress across current initiatives and partner highlights, with the goal of promoting transparency, strengthening coordination and supporting meaningful collaboration across rural communities in Michigan.

RHTP Updates

RHTP continues to move forward with investments and partnerships aimed at strengthening access to care across rural Michigan. With more than $173 million awarded to Michigan for the first program year, work is underway across all pillars to support communities and build a more connected rural health system. Funding will be distributed through directed grants and MDHHS will offer proposal-based grants to reach critical rural health partners.

RHTP operates within a structured governance framework that ensures strong oversight, coordination and accountability. Executive leadership, cross-divisional teams and external partners work together to guide strategy and implementation. The Advisory Council serves as the primary external voice, connecting MDHHS leadership with rural providers, Tribal governments and community stakeholders to help ensure initiatives reflect local priorities and community needs.

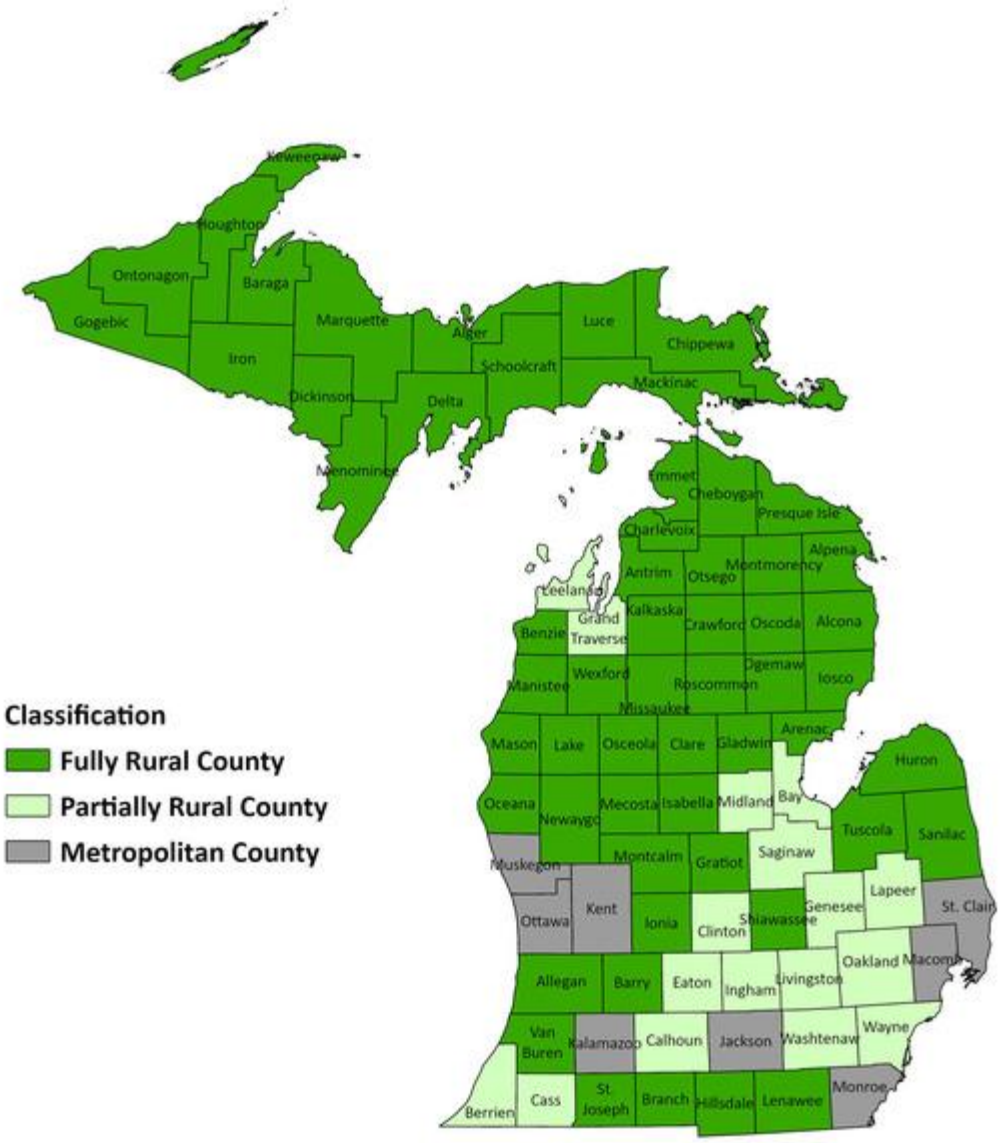
The RHTP Advisory Council held its inaugural meeting in April and representatives from across Michigan's rural health, academic and community sectors launched their work guiding the state's implementation of the federally funded initiative. Members received an overview of the program's vision, funding award, implementation progress and upcoming grant opportunities, and they reviewed the draft Advisory Council Charter in preparation for a formal vote later this summer. Breakout discussions highlighted shared priorities including transparency, sustainability, clear communication and well-defined roles as the council helps steer long-term strategy and community engagement. The meeting discussions also brought forth thoughtful questions around grant processes, data expectations and program timelines, which MDHHS will address through follow-up materials and future discussions. The Advisory Council will continue this important work with two additional meetings scheduled during the summer months to refine its structure, advance key priorities and ensure strong collaboration in support of improving rural health outcomes statewide.

Michigan's RHTP Counties

For determining rural and non-rural counties, MDHHS uses the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) county and census tract classifications. This includes all counties identified by FORHP as fully rural, as well as those designated as partially rural, regardless of the number of rural census tracts, which are county subdivisions outside densely populated urban areas. Consistent with the RHTP description outlined in the project narrative, funding decisions will follow a needs-based prioritization framework that focuses on counties experiencing high rates of chronic disease, limited access to hospitals and primary care, including OB/GYN and behavioral health, high Medicaid dependence, socioeconomic vulnerability and elevated levels of child poverty or aging populations.

MDHHS will further prioritize funding based on the percentage of the population living in U.S. Census-defined rural areas. This approach recognizes that rural residents in more populous counties may face additional access challenges due to geographic dispersion and service capacity limitations, which refer to the maximum threshold an operation can handle without compromising quality. Using this method, funding will be directed first to high-need rural areas with larger rural populations. Partially rural counties will be prioritized according to the share of residents living in rural census tracts, ensuring resources are allocated where they can have the greatest impact.

Michigan Rural Counties
HRSA/Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) Definition



Source: Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), as of September 2025. Map prepared by MDHHS Policy, Planning & Operational Support.
Notes: "Fully FORHP Rural" means that all census tracts within the county are defined as rural areas and non-metropolitan counties by FORHP. Partially rural means that at least one census tract within a metropolitan county is defined as a rural area by FORHP.

RHTP Subrecipient Awards

Michigan's RHTP supports innovative, community-driven solutions to improve health outcomes across rural communities. A key component of this work is funding subrecipients, including local organizations, providers and partners, that are implementing projects aligned with RHTP's strategic priorities.

Visit the website to view the organizations that have received RHTP funding* and to learn about the work they are leading across the state. By showcasing these subrecipients, MDHHS promotes transparency in how RHTP funds are distributed and supports collaboration among partners.

We anticipate releasing several Grant Funding Opportunities, also referred to as proposal-based grants, in July or August.

*Award amount is contingent upon review by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for final approval as a requirement of this grant. There may be additional adjustments to both the work plan and budget based on CMS's feedback. If revisions are recommended, the application will be sent back to the recipient to make the required changes.

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Rural Health Transformation Program Website

MDHHS
Michigan Department of Health & Human Services

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