



Rural Healthcare

Out of the Woods: A Roadmap to Rescue Rural Healthcare

In New Hampshire, 84% of the landmass is considered rural, and these vast expanses of sparsely populated counties are home to nearly half of all Granite Staters. Such geographically dispersed communities pose a variety of complex public health challenges. As New Hampshire's only academic health system and largest private employer, Dartmouth Health plays a crucial role in ensuring the stability and overall quality of life for people throughout the region, including the 40% of our patients who live in Vermont. We recognize the mission critical need for health equity and a roadmap to deliver care to the predominately rural communities we serve.

Steps in the Right Direction

In 2022, Dartmouth Health joined forces with regional community leaders to launch a Center for Advancing Rural Health Equity (CARHE). This system-level commitment consists of interdisciplinary teams and coalitions focused on urgent and long-term solutions for rural healthcare. By addressing long-standing rural health disparities, we hope to eliminate unjust variations in health outcomes, and create greater alignment of health delivery, education, research, and community. To advance rural health equity in northern New England, we must acquire new knowledge, new ways of collaborating, new skills, and renew outreach. With the hope that it may inform your approach to public health policy, we urge you to review the <https://www.dartmouth-health.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/carhe-strategic-framework-2022-2027.pdf>

Last year, Dartmouth Health received a grant from the National Institutes of Health, as part of the Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) program. The grant, totaling \$11,560,812 over five years, will fund a new Center for Rural Health Care Delivery Science and support faculty to conduct research that will advance the understanding of healthcare delivery in a rural setting: go.d-h.org/threads

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Facts

AT-A-GLANCE:

New Hampshire is the US state with the **2nd oldest** population.



States with OLDEST POPULATIONS:

1. Maine
2. New Hampshire
3. Vermont

In New Hampshire, **20% of the population is 65+**

This percentage is expected to increase significantly over the next several decades.



HOUSING & TRANSPORTATION are the **top concerns** for New Hampshire seniors.

According to a 2022 report by the New Hampshire Commission on Aging, affordable housing remains a major factor in recruiting and retaining the workforce required to take care of New Hampshire's aging population.

Currently only **20% of New England homes meet basic standards for seniors.**

including step-free entryways and bedrooms/bathrooms on entry levels.

—US Census Bureau



Of all credentialed US physicians, **only 9% work in rural areas.**



What is health equity?

Health Equity exists when all people, regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic status, geographic location, or other societal constructs have fair and just access, opportunity, and resources to achieve their highest potential for health.

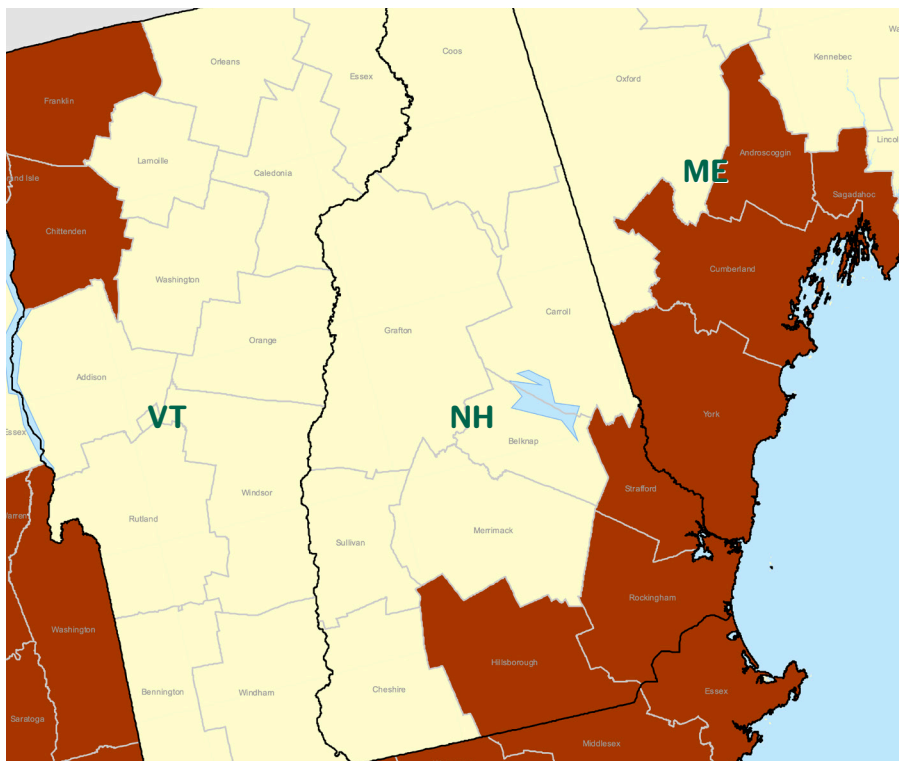
Why are the social and political determinants of health as important as access to healthcare?

When it comes to health outcomes, your zip code should not matter as much as your genetic code. Health equity is a measure of overall physical, social, and mental health status. By focusing on public health equity, we make a positive impact in numerous ways including:

- disease prevention
- early detection, diagnosis, and treatment of illness
- quality of life
- avoiding preventable deaths
- life expectancy

Healthcare Roadblocks for Rural Residents

- financial resources to pay for services.
- means to reach and use services, such as transportation, ability to take paid time off work to use services.
- confidence in their ability to communicate with healthcare providers, particularly if the patient is not fluent in English or has limited health literacy.
- trust they can use services without compromising privacy.
- confidence they will receive quality care.
- healthcare workforce shortages.



Dartmouth Health, New Hampshire's only academic health system and the state's largest private employer, serves patients across northern New England. Dartmouth Health provides access to more than 2,000 providers in almost every area of medicine, delivering care at its flagship hospital, Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center (DHMC) in Lebanon, NH, as well as across its wide network of hospitals, clinics and care facilities. DHMC is consistently named the #1 hospital in New Hampshire by U.S. News & World Report, and is recognized for high performance in numerous clinical specialties and procedures. Dartmouth Health includes Dartmouth Cancer Center, one of only 56 National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers in the nation, and the only such center in northern New England; Dartmouth Health Children's, which includes the state's only children's hospital and multiple locations around the region; member hospitals in Lebanon, Keene and New London, NH, and Windsor and Bennington, VT; Visiting Nurse and Hospice for Vermont and New Hampshire; and more than 30 clinics that provide ambulatory and specialty services across New Hampshire and Vermont. Through its historical partnership with Dartmouth and the Geisel School of Medicine, Dartmouth Health trains nearly 400 medical residents and fellows annually, and performs cutting-edge research and clinical trials recognized across the globe with Geisel and the White River Junction VA Medical Center in White River Junction, VT. Dartmouth Health and its more than 15,000 employees are deeply committed to serving the healthcare needs of everyone in our communities, and to providing each of our patients with exceptional, personal care.