



## HPSA Designation Methodology Fact Sheet

### **Rational Service Area (RSA):**

The first step to creating a HPSA is to determine the area the HPSA will encompass, called a rational service area (RSA). The RSA can be either a partial county, an entire county, or multiple counties; however, it must have a population less than 250,000. The RSA is selected based on a geographic area and/or the demographics of the area. Justification for the rationality of the area is required. The RSA is then analyzed to determine if it meets the minimum population to provider ratio. If it does, the system automatically selects a population center. From the population center, the furthest distance someone could travel in a given amount of time is determined, based on road accessibility and terrain. This is called the travel polygon. The amount of time assigned varies based on the HPSA discipline\* (i.e. primary care, dental, or mental health).

### **Contiguous Areas (CA):**

A contiguous area (CA) is any area that is not part of the RSA, but is within the travel polygon. Each CA is evaluated based on demographics and providers in the area to determine if services in that area would be accessible to people residing in the RSA.

### **For questions contact:**

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### **Nearest Source of Care (NSC):**

After all of the CAs have been analyzed, the nearest source of care (NSC), is designated. The NSC is the closest provider to the population center, outside the RSA, that is accessible to the population of the RSA. Accessibility is determined by population to provider ratio, in the CA the NSC is located in, and whether or not they serve underserved patients.

### **HPSA Scoring:**

Once all of the components of the HPSA have been analyzed, a score is then assigned, indicating the degree of the shortage. Several factors are considered when assigning the score: the population to provider ratio, the percent of the population at or below 100% of the federal poverty level, travel time to the NSC, and other factors that vary based on HPSA discipline\*. A higher score means a higher degree of shortage, and higher priority for federal resources to help address the issue.

### **Final Steps:**

Once all of these steps have been completed, the PCO submits a request to HRSA for approval as an official shortage designation. Upon approval from HRSA, the designation is official and HPSA benefits are then available.

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\*For more information about HPSA requirements based on type and discipline, please see HPSA Designation Guidelines [here](#).