

RUPRI Center for Rural Health Policy Analysis

Rural Data Brief

Brief No. 2020-10

February 2021

<http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/rupri/>

Pharmacy Vaccination Service Availability in Nonmetropolitan Counties (V3)¹

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Report

Retail pharmacies will play a significant role in the public distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. On February 2, 2021 the White House announced the launch of the first phase of the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program for COVID-19 Vaccination.² The “public-private partnership with 21 national pharmacy partners and networks of independent pharmacies” is designed to “expand equitable access to vaccines”. Since 2007 the RUPRI Center has tracked pharmacy closures and the availability of pharmacy services in rural areas. This brief explores the availability of rural pharmacies that might be able to provide vaccination services.

Data

The National Council for Prescription Drug Programs (NCPDP)³ is an ANSI-accredited, standards development organization. The NCPDP provides every licensed pharmacy in the U.S. a unique, national identification number used by processors, pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), carriers, manufacturers, health plans, State and Federal government entities, and State Pharmacy Boards. The attendant NCPDP database provides an array of information on pharmacy characteristics, including classifications, location(s), ownership, and services provided (including some level of on-site immunization capability).⁴ All data is self-reported by pharmacies. The January 2021 version of the database provides data on the 81,871 pharmacy entities in the 50 states and the District of Columbia that did not indicate that they would close prior to 2/1/2021.

A significant number of the entities represented in the NCPDP data will be unlikely to provide vaccination resources because of the nature of their business. Distribution sites for mail-order pharmacies not offering in-person services and businesses specializing in providing durable medical equipment or home health supplies have been excluded from this analysis. Similarly, pharmacies directly associated with existing health care facilities (such as clinics or hospitals) may not be positioned to provide additional personnel to a vaccination program beyond the health care facility staff already providing vaccinations and were also excluded from this analysis. Classes of pharmacies retained for this analysis include independent, chain, franchise, and government pharmacies. The vast majority of these are community/retail pharmacies, but they also include Indian Health Service, managed care organization, and Department of Veterans Affairs pharmacies. The final dataset contained data on 62,432 pharmacies that might be likely to contribute to actual administration of vaccine. In this report, we refer to these as “eligible” pharmacies. Pharmacies affiliated with all 21 of the ‘partner’ organizations were identified in the NCPDP data⁶.



#1U1GRH07633. The information, conclusions and opinions expressed in this policy brief are those of the authors and no endorsement by FORHP, HRSA, HHS is intended or should be inferred.

This project was supported by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under cooperative agreement/grant



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Nonmetropolitan status was based on the March 2020 Office of Management and Budget delineation⁵ of the county of a pharmacy's physical location. Counties (or equivalent) designated as either micropolitan or with no designation are both included as nonmetropolitan for this report.

Findings

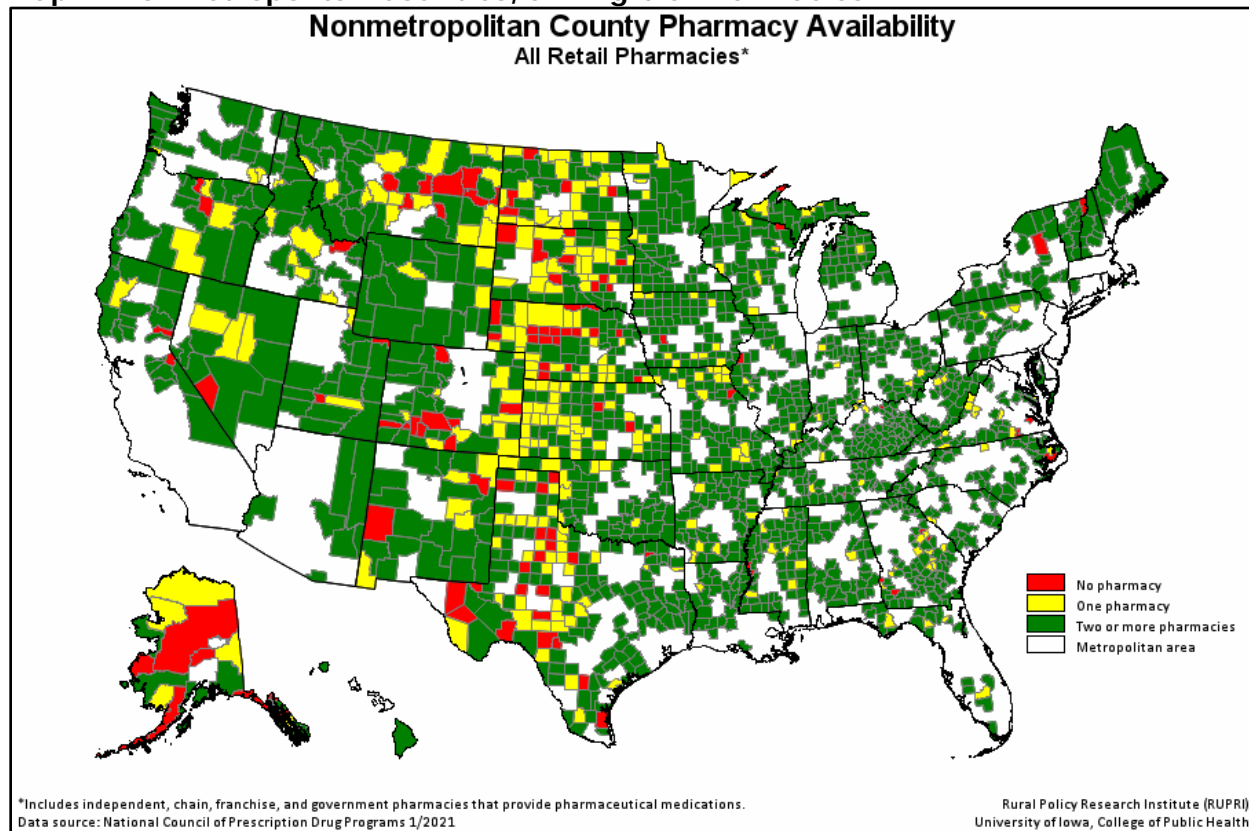
There are 9,828 eligible pharmacies operating in 1,962 nonmetropolitan counties. These represent 15.7% of all eligible pharmacies in the U.S. While the majority of nonmetropolitan counties (n = 1,544, 78.7 percent) have two or more eligible pharmacies, 111 counties have no eligible pharmacy. If only pharmacies affiliated with one of the 21 HHS partnership chains/networks⁶ are considered, the number of counties without an eligible pharmacy increases to 442. If the pharmacies in the partnership are supplemented by other pharmacies indicating that they provide on-site immunization service, 321 nonmetropolitan counties are without an eligible pharmacy. These findings are summarized in Table 1 and represented in Maps 1-3.

Table 1. Pharmacy Immunization Service Availability in Nonmetropolitan Counties

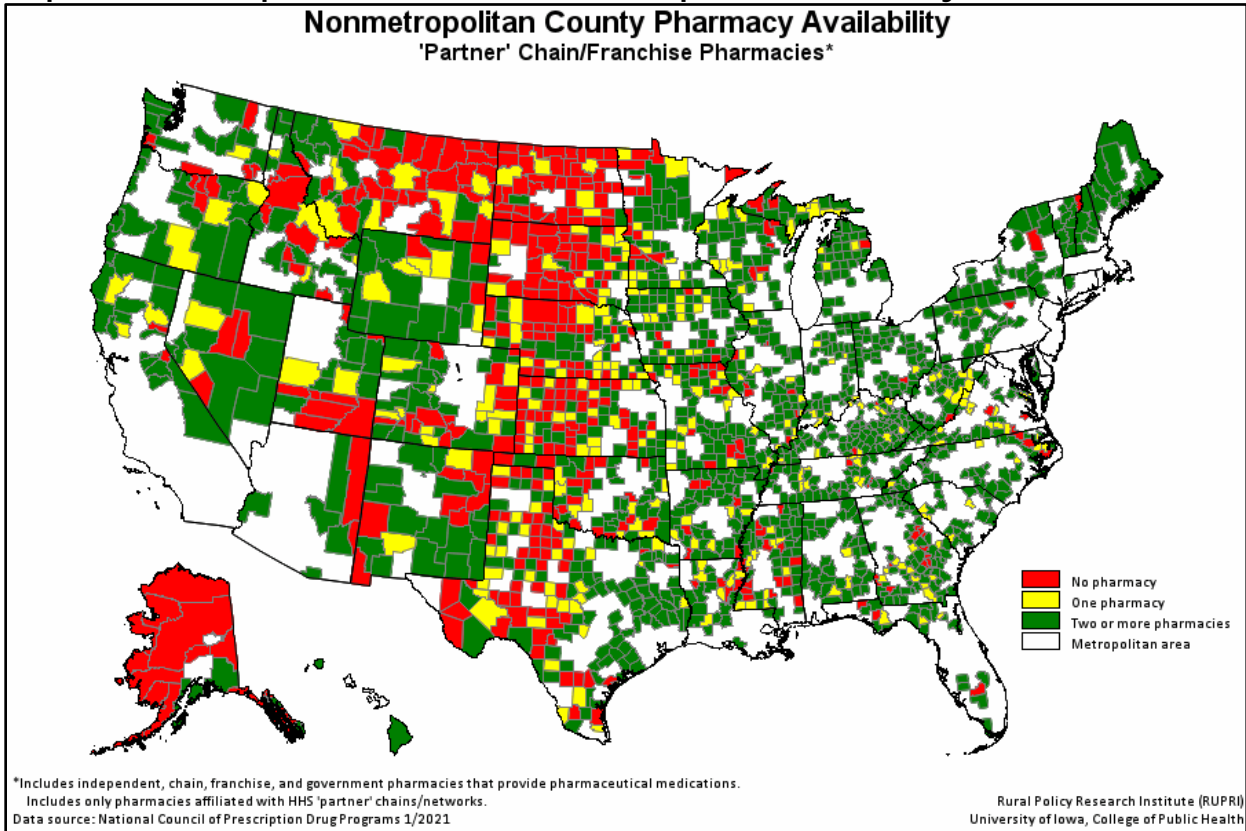
	All Pharmacies		'Partnership' Pharmacies ^a Only		'Partnership' Pharmacies ^a or other Pharmacies Providing Immunization Service	
	Counties	Population ^b	Counties	Population ^b	Counties	Population ^b
0 Pharmacies	111	265,683	442	2,456,300	321	1,472,703
1 Pharmacy	307	1,758,620	309	3,259,559	310	2,658,467
2+ Pharmacies	1,544	43,406,072	1,211	39,714,516	1,331	41,299,205

- a. Includes only pharmacies affiliated with the chains/networks that are part of the HHS partnership.
 b. Population based on 2018 American Community Survey five-year population estimates.

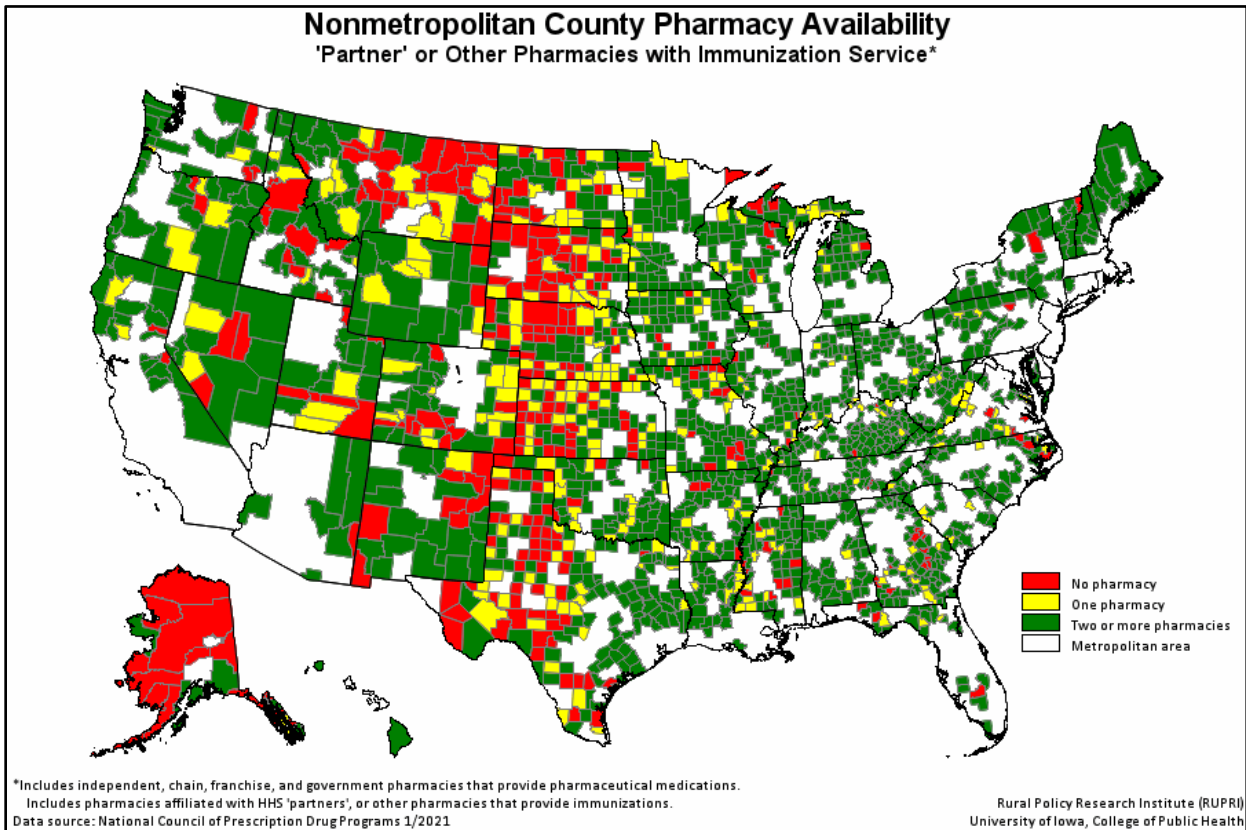
Map 1. Nonmetropolitan Counties, all Eligible Pharmacies



Map 2. Nonmetropolitan Counties, Partnership Pharmacies Only



Map 3. Nonmetropolitan Counties with Partnership Pharmacies or Other Pharmacies that Provide Immunization Service



Notes/References

¹ The brief was originally produced 12/14/2021 reporting on HHS ‘partner’ pharmacies announced 11/12/2020 (<https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2020/11/12/trump-administration-partners-chain-independent-community-pharmacies-increase-access-future-covid-19-vaccines.html>, accessed 12/9/2020). A revised version of that brief was released 1/12/2021 following receipt of data enabling identification of pharmacies affiliated with CPESN USA, LLC.

² The White House. “FACT SHEET: President Biden Announces Increased Vaccine Supply, Initial Launch of the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program, and Expansion of FEMA Reimbursement to States.” *The White House*. 02 Feb. 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/02/02/fact-sheet-president-biden-announces-increased-vaccine-supply-initial-launch-of-the-federal-retail-pharmacy-program-and-expansion-of-fema-reimbursement-to-states/>. Accessed 6 Feb. 2021..

³ National Council for Prescription Drug Programs. <https://www.ncdpd.org/>.

⁴ National Council for Prescription Drug Programs. DataQ™ Pharmacy Database File Standard, Implementation Guide Version 3.1, p7.

⁵ US Census Bureau. “Delineation Files.” *The United States Census Bureau*, 13 Apr. 2020, www.census.gov/geographies/reference-files/time-series/demo/metro-micro/delineation-files.html. Accessed 9 Dec. 2020.

⁶ Pharmacy chain and community-pharmacy networks that had signed to partner:

- Chain Pharmacies
 - Walgreens (including Duane Reade)
 - CVS Pharmacy, Inc. (including Long’s)
 - Walmart, Inc. (including Sam’s Club)
 - Rite Aid Corp.
 - The Kroger Co. (including Kroger, Harris Teeter, Fred Meyer, Fry’s, Ralphs, King Soopers, Smiths, City Market, Dillons, Mariano’s, Pick-n-Save, Cops, Metro Market)
 - Publix Super Markets, Inc.
 - Costco Wholesale Corp.
 - Albertsons Companies, Inc. (including Osco, Jewel-Osco, Albertsons, Albertsons Market, Safeway, Tom Thumb, Star Market, Shaw’s, Haggen, Acme, Randalls, Carrs, Market Street, United, Vons, Pavilions, Amigos, Lucky’s, Pak n Save, Sav-On)
 - Hy-Vee, Inc.
 - Meijer Inc.
 - H-E-B, LP
 - Retail Business Services, LLC (including Food Lion, Giant Food, The Giant Company, Hannaford Bros Co, Stop & Shop)
 - Winn-Dixie Stores Inc. (including Winn-Dixie, Harveys, Fresco Y Mas)
- Network Administrators
 - Topco Associates, LLC (including Acme Fresh Markets, Associated Food Stores, Big-Y Pharmacy and Wellness Center, Brookshire’s Pharmacy, Super One Pharmacy, FRESH by Brookshire’s Pharmacy, Coborn’s Pharmacy, Cash Wise Pharmacy, MarketPlace Pharmacy, Giant Eagle, Hartig Drug Company, King Kullen, Food City Pharmacy, Ingles Pharmacy, Raley’s, Bel Air, Nob Hill Pharmacies, Save Mart Pharmacies, Lucky Pharmacies, SpartanNash, Price Chopper, Market 32, Tops Friendly Markets, ShopRite, Wegmans, Weis Markets, Inc.)
 - CPESN USA, LLC
 - GeriMed (long-term care and retail pharmacies)
 - Good Neighbor Pharmacy and AmerisourceBergen Drug Corporation’s pharmacy services administrative organization (PSAO), Elevate Provider
 - Health Mart Systems, Inc.
 - Innovatix (long-term care pharmacies)
 - LeaderNET and Medicine Shoppe, Cardinal Health’s PSAOs
 - Managed Health Care Associates (retail and long-term care pharmacies)