

# Health Center Program

## Overview

For more than 50 years, health centers have delivered affordable, accessible, quality, and cost-effective primary health care to patients regardless of their ability to pay. During that time, health centers have become an essential primary care provider for America’s most vulnerable populations. Health centers advance a model of coordinated, comprehensive, and patient-centered care, coordinating a wide range of medical, dental, behavioral, and patient services. Today, nearly 1,400 health centers operate more than 10,400 service delivery sites that provide care in every U.S. state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Pacific Basin.

A total of \$5.1 billion was appropriated for the Health Center Program in fiscal year 2016. This includes \$1.5 billion in discretionary funding and \$3.6 billion in mandatory funding.

## Increasing Access to Care

Health centers deliver care to the Nation’s most vulnerable populations, and now, more than ever, the Nation’s veterans.

More than 24 million people – 1 of 13 nationwide – rely on a HRSA-funded health center for affordable, accessible primary health care, including:

- One in three people living in poverty nationwide
- One in ten children nationwide and nearly four in ten children living in poverty nationwide<sup>1</sup>
- More than 8.4 million patients in rural health centers, across approximately 4,000 sites nationwide
- More than 305,000 veterans – a 5.6 percent increase from 2014 – which is expected to increase in 2016 as more health centers participate in the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act (“Veterans Choice Act”)



## Improving Health Outcomes

Health centers focus on integrating care for their patients across the full range of services – not just medical but oral health, vision, behavioral health, and pharmacy. Health centers also deliver crucial services such as case management, transportation, and health education, which enable vulnerable populations to access care.

<sup>1</sup> Census Bureau-Table 3. People in Poverty by Selected Characteristics: 2014 and 2015  
(<https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-256.html>)

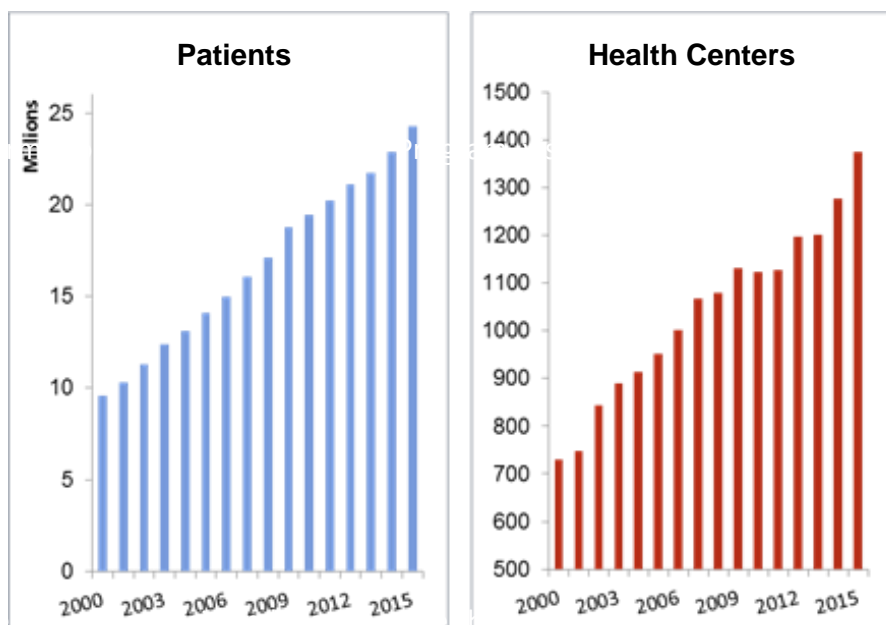
Health centers improve health outcomes by emphasizing the care management of patients with multiple health care needs and the use of key quality improvement practices, including health information technology. Approximately 70 percent of health center patients have their diabetes under control, exceeding the national average of 54 percent, and 64 percent of health center patients have their blood pressure under control, exceeding the national average of 52 percent.

## Reducing Health Care Costs

Health centers reduce costs to health systems; the health center model of care has been shown to reduce the use of costlier providers of care, such as emergency departments and hospitals.<sup>2</sup> A 2016 multi-state study found that health center patients had 24 percent lower spending as compared to non-health center patients across all services (e.g. 33 percent lower spending on specialty care, 25 percent fewer inpatient admissions, 27 percent lower spending on inpatient care); indicating that the Health Center Program provides a cost efficient setting for delivering quality primary care to Medicaid enrollees.<sup>3</sup>

## Health Center Program Growth: 2000 – 2015

Over 15 years (2000-2015), the Health Center Program has grown significantly in response to the need for affordable, high quality, comprehensive primary health care services in underserved communities. During this time, health centers have increased the total number of patients served by more than 150 percent (14.7 million additional patients).



**For more information on health centers, visit [bphc.hrsa.gov](http://bphc.hrsa.gov)  
To locate a health center, visit: [findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov](http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov)**

<sup>2</sup> 6 Laiteerapong, Neda et al. "Health Care Utilization and Receipt of Preventive Care for Patients Seen at Federally Funded Health Centers Compared to Other Sites of Primary Care." *Health Services Research* 49.5 (2014): 1498–1518.

<sup>3</sup> Nocon, Robert S. et al. "Health Care Use and Spending for Medicaid Enrollees in Federally Qualified Health Centers Versus Other Primary Care Settings" *American Journal of Public Health*. e-View Ahead of Print. (2016)