

## Pharmacies' Role in Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP)

**ASK TO STATES:** Leverage community pharmacies, as the most accessible healthcare providers, to achieve your state's goals within the Rural Health Transformation Program. Specifically, include payment for pharmacist services, and commit to expanding pharmacists' scope of practice, within your state's upcoming application to CMS. Additionally, pharmacies should be included in states' efforts to modernize healthcare technology and advance data sharing to improve care coordination and efficiency.

*"[Rural Health Transformation] can also be used to tackle workforce challenges head-on [by] allowing professionals like pharmacists to take on greater roles in delivering care ... Without such measures, staffing shortages will continue to compromise access in too many rural communities."*

— Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Dr. Mehmet Oz, USA Today, Sept. 15, 2025

### PHARMACIES ARE MOST ACCESSIBLE

- Nearly 90% of Americans live within 5 miles of a pharmacy, and 97% live within 10 miles.
- Pharmacies offer extended hours, like evenings and weekends, when other providers are unavailable.
- 85% of Americans say pharmacies are easy to access, ranking them the most accessible healthcare destination.
- There are about 15% more pharmacies than physician practices in low-income communities.

### ASK 1: PAYMENT FOR PHARMACIST SERVICES

**Most Aligned RHTP Strategic Goals:** Innovative Care and Sustainable Access

- **Approved Use of Funds:** Payment for pharmacist services is an approved use of Rural Health Transformation funds as stated by CMS, "payments to health care providers for the provision of health care items or services," and "promoting evidence-based, measurable interventions to improve prevention and chronic disease management."
- **Proven Impact:** Research demonstrates that pharmacist-provided care improves access, quality, and health outcomes. For example, pharmacist-led chronic disease care improves A1c and blood pressure and yields cost savings.
- **Sustainable Access:** Pharmacy-based services offer lower cost care and convenience. Pharmacist-led care for chronic diseases, and testing and treatment for routine illnesses like flu, improve health outcomes, achieve cost savings, and help reduce unnecessary ER visits.

### ASK 2: COMMIT TO EXPANDED PHARMACIST SCOPE OF PRACTICE

**Most Aligned RHTP Strategic Goals:** Make Rural America Healthy Again and Workforce Development

- **Application Scoring Advantage:** CMS indicates that states can earn 100 points for pharmacists' full scope of practice authority. Also, states "will receive technical score credit for commitments made in your application." NACDS recommends states commit to full pharmacist scope of practice expansion in their applications, ideally to adopt a standard of care approach. Standard of care is a regulatory model, adopted by medicine and nursing, which is permissive and considers evolving evidence, education, and technology. At minimum, states should at least commit to authorizing pharmacists to administer medications, perform point-of-care tests, and independently initiate and adjust medication therapy, especially for routine illnesses, like flu, and to support chronic disease prevention and management.
- **Pharmacy Teams as Care Extenders:** Pharmacists can fill harmful gaps in healthcare access to improve rural health by providing routine healthcare services, like testing and treatment for routine illnesses, wellness screenings, and chronic disease care. Allowing pharmacy technicians to perform all technical tasks allows pharmacists to spend time more time with patients.
- **Pharmacist Expertise:** Pharmacists are doctorate-trained healthcare providers who receive at least six years of advanced education. Current pharmacy school standards include diagnosis and prescribing, among many other clinical topics. To date, pharmacists' clinical expertise has been underutilized across the U.S. healthcare system.

### ASK 3: INCLUDE PHARMACIES IN TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION EFFORTS

**Most Aligned RHTP Strategic Goals:** Tech Innovation

- The pharmacy industry is committed to modernizing healthcare data infrastructure, particularly interoperability. Data sharing and interoperability between pharmacies and the broader healthcare ecosystem are essential to improving care and promoting efficiencies.
- NACDS, in collaboration with our member companies, actively participates in national initiatives and multi-stakeholder groups dedicated to achieving these objectives.