HEALTH

IN RURAL MISSOURI

Biennial Report

2024-2025

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH &
SENIOR SERVICES

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Health Care in Rural Missouri

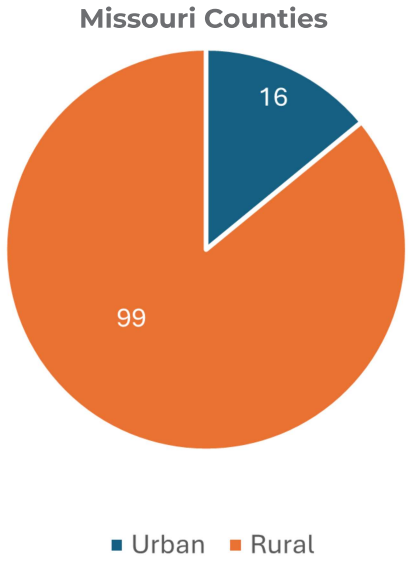
Basic access to primary care, mental and dental health providers, and specialty care services improves overall health and contributes significantly to an area's economic vitality. People in rural areas generally have less access to health care compared to people in urban areas, even for those who have health insurance, are financially stable and have access to transportation. Fewer primary care practitioners, mental health programs, and health care facilities often mean less preventive care and longer response times in emergencies.

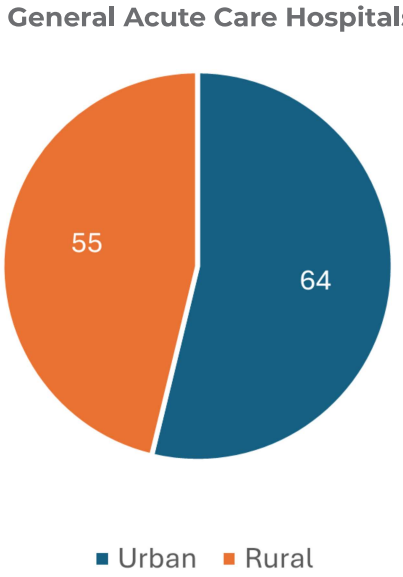
As of September 2025, Missouri had 163 licensed hospitals[xxxi], this includes general acute care (119), rehabilitation (23), psychiatric (20) and rural emergency (1). Only 62 of these hospitals (38%) are in rural counties; despite 99 of Missouri's 115 counties being rural (86%). The hospitals located in rural counties include:

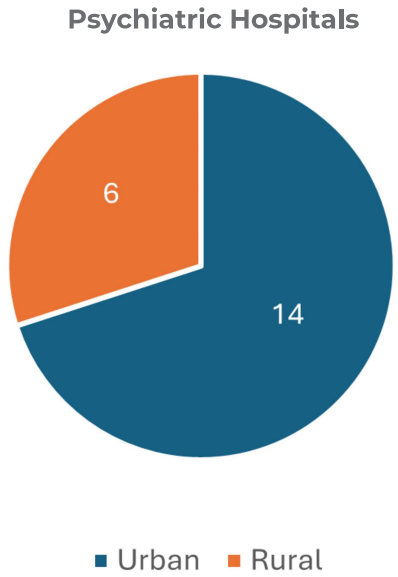
- 55 general acute care hospitals.
- 1 rural emergency hospital.
- 6 psychiatric hospitals.

General acute care hospitals are equipped to provide short-term inpatient medical services along with 24/7 emergency care and lab and radiology diagnostic testing. Rural general acute hospitals can also be designated as a critical access hospital (CAH) and/or a small rural hospital.

Rural emergency hospitals (REHs) also provide continuous access to emergency care and diagnostic testing but do not provide inpatient services. Psychiatric hospitals are staffed to provide treatment solely for mental health conditions.







[xxxii]MO Hospital Profiles By County

Rural Hospitals

Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs)

Missouri has 35 CAHs. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) designates eligible rural hospitals as critical access hospitals. CMS designed the designation to keep essential services in rural communities and improve access to health care while reducing the financial vulnerability of rural hospitals through cost-based Medicare reimbursement. Hospitals must meet the following criteria to receive CAH designation:

- Have 25 or fewer acute care inpatient beds.
- Be more than 35 miles from another hospital.
- Have an average length of stay of no more than 96 hours for acute care patients.
- Provide 24/7 emergency care services.

Small Rural Hospitals

Missouri has 42 small rural hospitals. A small rural hospital is defined as a non-federal, short-term, general acute care hospital. These hospitals must be in a rural area and have 49 or fewer available beds as reported on the hospital's most recently filed Medicare Cost Report. Small rural hospitals may be for-profit or not-for-profit.

Rural Emergency Hospitals

On January 1, 2023, CMS began designating rural emergency hospitals (REHs). CMS designed the REH designation to maintain access to critical outpatient hospital services in communities that may not be able to support or sustain a CAH or small rural hospital. REHs receive enhanced Medicare payments for certain outpatient services and additional monthly payments.

Facilities eligible for conversion to a REH include CAHs and small rural hospitals that were in operation as of December 27, 2020, or after. Facilities that closed after December 27, 2020, are eligible to reopen as a REH if they meet the REH conditions of participation.

Rural emergency hospitals are required to provide the following services:

- 24-hour emergency services.
- Laboratory services identified in the CAH conditions of participation and consistent with the needs of the patient population.
- Diagnostic radiologic services.
- Pharmacy or drug storage area.
- Discharge planning by, or under the supervision of, a registered nurse, social worker or other qualified professional.

In January 2024, Parkland Health Center in St. Francois County became the first REH in Missouri and remains Missouri's only REH at the time of report publication.

Hospital Closures

Rural hospitals are a crucial component for a community's well-being. In addition to providing primary, acute and long-term care, they are often a significant employer and leader in community-based health programs and initiatives. Most rural hospitals are the only source of medical care in their community. Many hospitals struggle financially due to numerous factors; however, reimbursement issues are significant. These issues include claim denials, increasing administrative burdens from insurers, and systemic inefficiencies like slow payment cycles and complex billing. These issues are worsened by staffing shortages, frequent policy changes and difficulties with prior authorization.

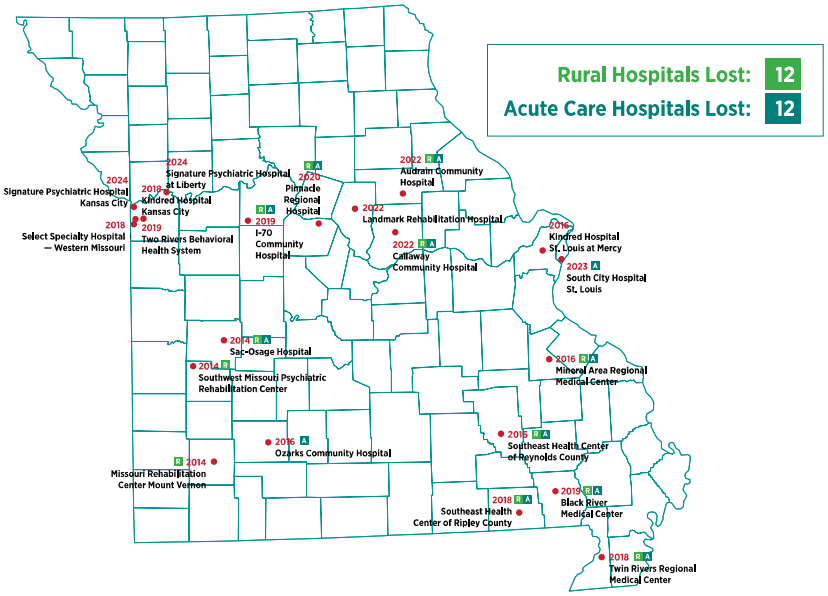
From 2014 through the time of this publication, 24* Missouri hospitals have closed; 12 were in rural counties. Closure of rural hospitals reduces access to needed medical care and worsens health outcomes for residents in those communities. Hospital closures also create an economic impact as hospitals are often one of the largest employers and economic drivers of their community. Forty-seven rural counties are now without a general acute care hospital.

*Please note that above map does not include hospital closures of St. Luke's Des Peres (St. Louis), Homer G. Phillips (St. Louis) and Landmark Hospital (Cape Girardeau) that occurred in 2025.

MHA
MISSOURI HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

21 Hospital Closures in Missouri

Since 2014



- → **Southwest Missouri Psychiatric Rehab Center,** El Dorado Springs, in 2014 R
- → **Sac-Osage Hospital,** Osceola, in 2014 R A
- → **Missouri Rehabilitation Center,** Mount Vernon, in 2014 R
- → **Mineral Area Regional Medical Center,** Farmington, in 2016 R A
- → **Southeast Health Center of Reynolds County,** Ellington, in 2016 R A
- → **Ozarks Community Hospital,** Springfield, in 2016 A
- → **Kindred Hospital St. Louis at Mercy,** St. Louis, in 2016
- → **Kindred Hospital Kansas City**, in 2018
- → **Select Specialty Hospital – Western Missouri,** Kansas City (non-member), in 2018
- → **Twin Rivers Regional Medical Center,** Kennett, in 2018 R A
- → **Southeast Health Center of Ripley County,** Doniphan, in 2018 R A
- → **Two Rivers Behavioral Health System,** Kansas City, in 2019
- → **Black River Medical Center,** Poplar Bluff, in 2019 R A
- → **I-70 Community Hospital,** Sweet Springs, in 2019 R A
- → **Pinnacle Regional Hospital,** Boonville, in 2020 R A
- → **Callaway Community Hospital,** Fulton, in 2022 R A
- → **Audrain Community Hospital,** Mexico, in 2022 R A
- → **Landmark Rehabilitation Hospital,** Columbia, in 2022
- → **South City Hospital,** St. Louis, in 2023 A
- → **Signature Psychiatric Hospital,** Liberty, in 2024
- → **Signature Psychiatric Hospital,** Kansas City, in 2024

Source: mhanet.com/mhaimages/advocacy/missouri_hospital_closures.pdf