



The Rural Mental Health Crisis

October 26, 2022

Compared with their urban counterparts, rural Americans have higher depression and suicide rates, but are less likely to access mental health care services.¹

In rural counties, the suicide rate is between 18.3 and 20.5 per 100,000 residents, compared to large urban communities where the rate is between 10.9 and 12.5 per 100,000 residents.²

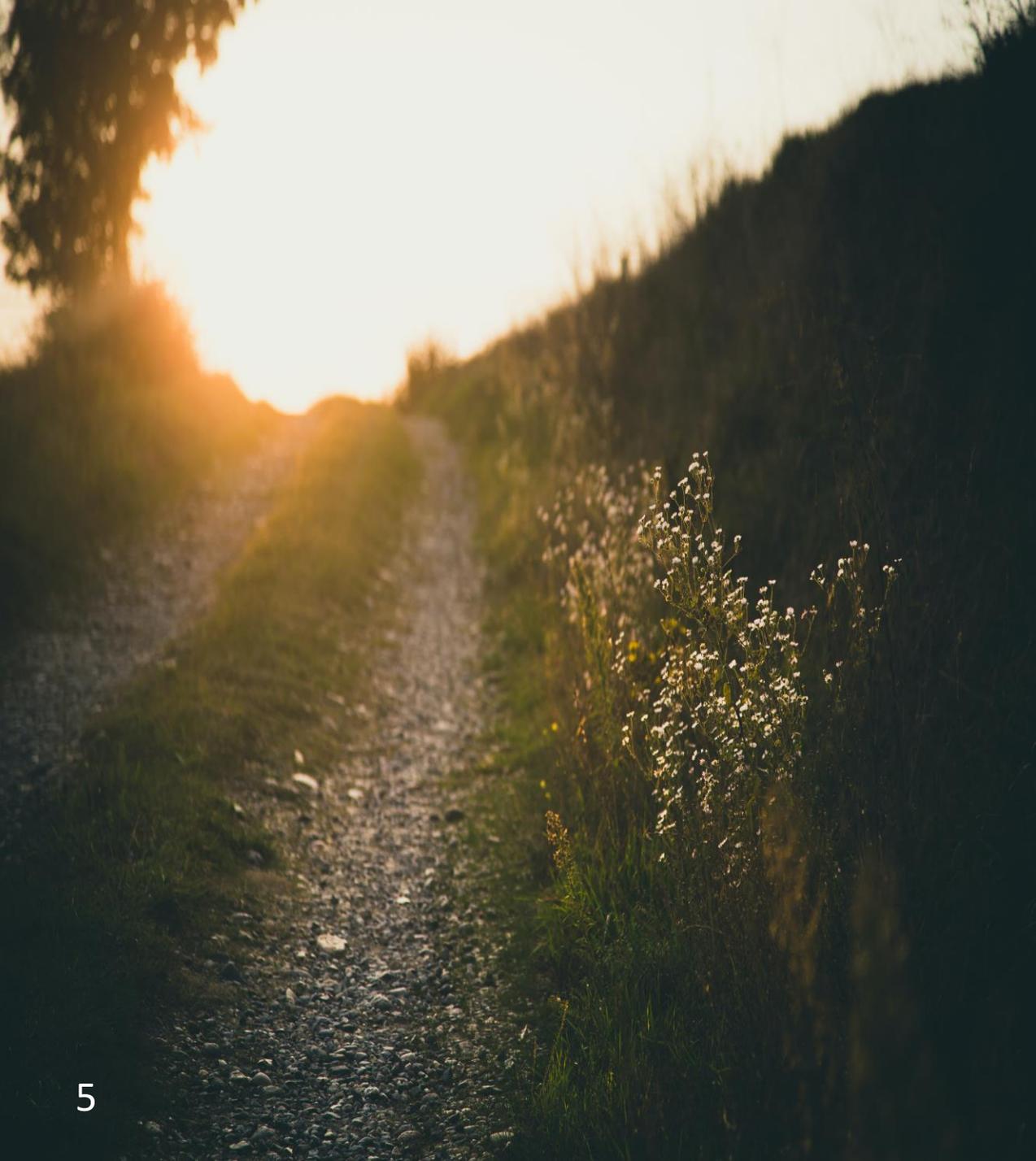
(64 to 68 Percent Higher)



Brooks Winton

Rural Minds Founder Jeff Winton was raised on his family's dairy farm in rural upstate New York. Growing up, he was aware of residents struggling with mental illness in silence.

However, the wake-up call was the suicide of Jeff's beloved 28-year-old nephew, Brooks. It led to Jeff establishing Rural Minds to focus on confronting mental illness in rural America through education and resources.



Our mission is to serve as the informed voice for mental health in rural America, and to provide mental health information and resources.



Our vision is a rural America
where there's no more
silence, suffering, or stigma
around mental illness.

Recognize Rural Barriers to Mental Health

Nearly 3/4 of rural counties lack a psychiatrist⁴

20% fewer primary care physicians than in urban counties³

Nearly 3 in 10 rural Americans (28%) do not have broadband internet at home⁵

81% do not have a psychiatric nurse practitioner⁴

Rural Lifestyle Challenges to Mental Health

- Self-imposed barrier of asking for help when taught to pursue self-reliance as a virtue
- Lack of trust in anyone to maintain confidentiality in a small, close-knit community
- Fear of negative judgement from others as being incompetent or less capable
- Difficulty getting an appointment with limited availability of mental health professionals
- Time and transportation required for long-distance travel to meet with a mental health professional
- Unreliable, expensive, or nonexistent internet service for online video or telehealth appointments
- Lack of adequate health insurance coverage
- Feeling of isolation without having access to talk with someone outside of the community who understands mental health challenges in rural America
- Weakening agricultural economy, financial instability and a solitary way of life

The Pandemic's Effect on Mental Health

NATIONALLY:

1 in 5 people who recovered from COVID-19 were diagnosed with a mental illness within 3 months of recuperating. ([The Lancet Psychiatry journal](#))

RURAL:

Impacted about 3 out of 5 rural adults, and 2/3 of famers and farmworkers. ([AFB Survey](#)).

According to the [National Institutes of Health](#) (NIH), COVID-19 likely caused an increase in suicides in rural areas.

YOUTH:

Nearly 2 out of 3 young people have expressed feeling down or depressed during the pandemic. ([The Hill](#))

Nearly half of parents noticed a new or worsening mental health condition in their teen since the pandemic started. ([Mott Poll](#))

[The American Academy of Pediatrics](#), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children's Hospital Association have declared a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health.

U.S. Surgeon General has [released an advisory focused on supporting youth mental health](#), in which he writes: "It would be a tragedy if we beat back one public health crisis only to allow another to grow in its place."



Address rural mental health needs by:

Listening to rural Americans and providing forums for sharing personal experiences with rural mental health challenges

Connecting to existing mental health information and services

Identifying gaps in rural mental health information and resources to achieve health equity

Collaborating with mental health nonprofits and organizations, and socially responsible corporations

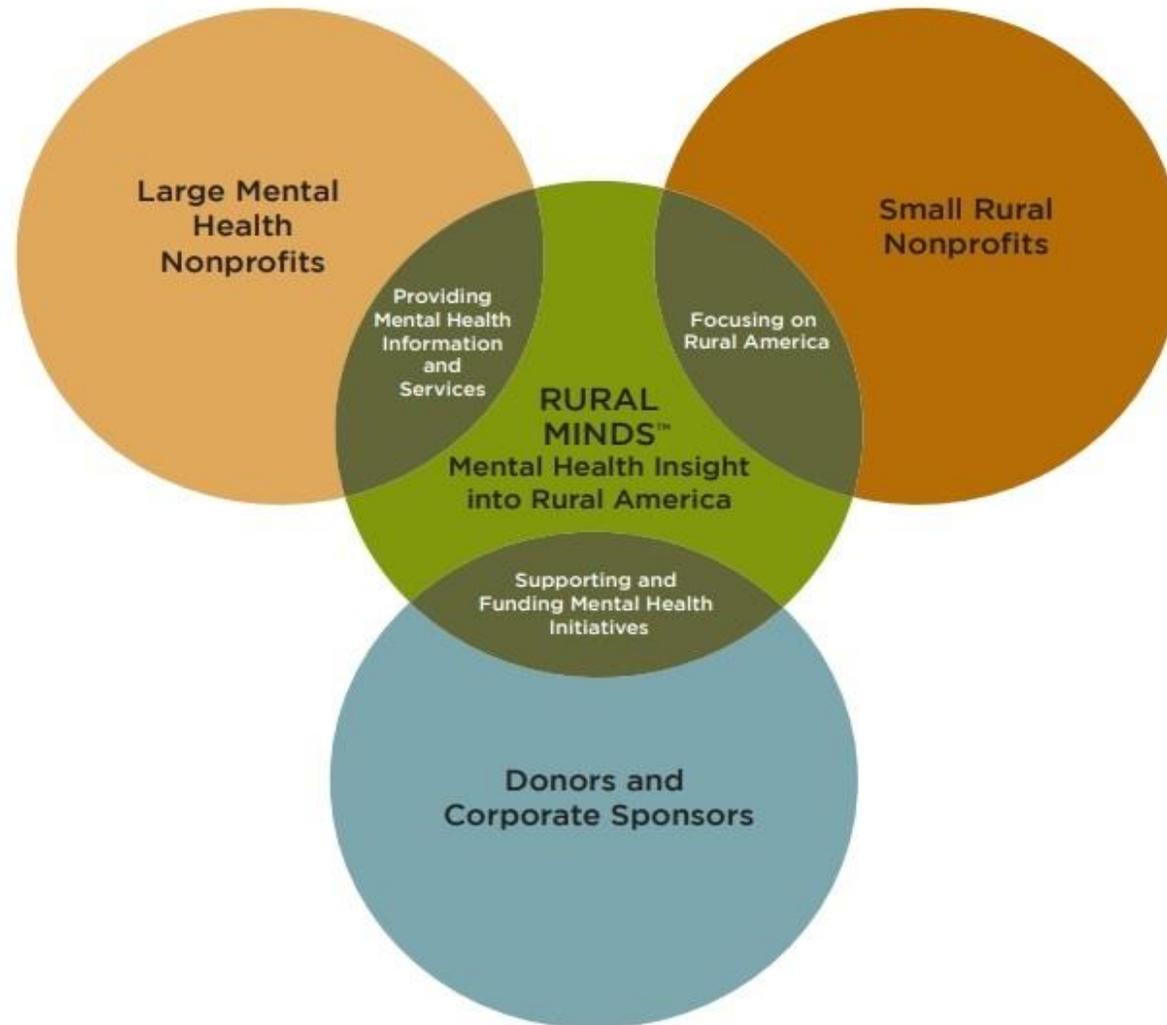
Developing and providing mental health initiatives that are needed to better serve rural America

Rural Minds is working to help eliminate the stigma of mental illness in rural America.

- Recognize suicide and mental illness in rural America as an emergency
- Normalize conversations about mental illness and reduce stigma through rural Americans sharing personal lived experiences
- Recognize mental illness as an illness rather than a character flaw
- Empower people in rural America with the resources to become part of the solution to improving mental health



RURAL MINDS VALUE DELIVERY
Collaboration Partners & Core Service Offerings



Taking Root In Our First Year

In addition to building a partnership with Mental Health America, Rural Minds has:

1. Hosted a series of Rural Mental Health Connections webinars
2. Formed the Rural Minds Partnership Council with membership from industry leaders in the bio/pharma and agricultural industries
3. Developed the Rural Suicide Awareness and Prevention program in partnership with the National Grange
4. Launched the Rural Minds Moving Forward newsletter
5. Established partnerships with multiple nonprofit organizations
6. Secured digital, print, and broadcast media coverage across the country

THE RURAL MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS
People living in rural areas – places not near cities and with small populations and large, open land areas – are confronted with unique challenges when it comes to caring for their mental health.

RURAL LIFESTYLE CHALLENGES

Fear of negative judgment by family, friends, and community members for appearing weak or unable to deal with life's ups and downs is just one of the many challenges that keep people from seeking help in rural areas. As members of small, close-knit communities, many rural individuals are also often concerned about a lack of privacy about their mental health conditions.

Additional factors that impact mental health in rural America include:

- Shortages of mental health providers, meaning rural residents typically must travel long distances to receive mental health services.
- Limited access to affordable, reliable broadband Internet, which reduces the ability to search for help and information and telehealth availability are affected.
- Lack of adequate insurance to cover the costs of mental health services.
- Stress factors that are unique to rural life including a weakening agricultural economy, financial instability, and solitary lifestyle.

ENDING THE STIGMA IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

The stigma associated with mental health conditions is a major barrier to seeking help for many individuals in rural communities. Although mental health is important to overall health, some people don't recognize mental health conditions as valid health issues. This type of thinking is often more common in rural communities, where a mental health condition can be seen as a personal weakness or character flaw, which adds shame to the struggles of someone already dealing with a mental health condition.

Understanding that mental health conditions are valid health issues – just like cancer or diabetes – is one step toward eliminating the stigma in rural communities. In addition, talking openly with others about lived experiences with mental health conditions, as well as providing support to those who are struggling, are essential to breaking down the mental health stigma.

MORE INFORMATION

- Access information about rural mental health and available resources at ruralminds.org.
- Explore options for care at ruralscreening.org/help.
- Take a mental health screen at ruralscreening.org to determine if you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition.
- If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. You can also reach Crisis Text Line by texting NHA to 741.741.

QUICK FACTS

- RURAL AREAS HAVE 20% FEWER PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS THAN URBAN AREAS.¹
- 85% OF RURAL COUNTIES DO NOT HAVE A PSYCHIATRIST AND 87% DO NOT HAVE A PSYCHIATRIC NURSE PRACTITIONER.²
- RURAL RESIDENCES ARE LESS LIKELY THAN THOSE LIVING IN SUBURBAN AREAS TO HAVE HOME BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS, AND ABOUT 1/3 IN 10 RURAL AMERICANS (28%) SAY THEY DO NOT HAVE A BROADBAND INTERNET CONNECTION AT HOME.³
- IN RURAL COMMUNITIES, THE SUICIDE RATE IS BETWEEN 18.2 AND 20.5 PER 100,000 RESIDENTS, COMPARED TO LARGE URBAN COMMUNITIES WHERE THE RATE IS BETWEEN 10.9 AND 12.5 PER 100,000.⁴

MHA Mental Health America | **RURAL MINDS** | © 2017 Rural Minds. All rights reserved. For more information, visit ruralminds.org.

Rural Minds Media Coverage

Article in [Scientific American](#)

Article in [Hoard's Dairyman](#)

Radio interview on [Our Ohio Weekly](#)

Sirius XM Satellite Radio interview on ["Ranch it Up"](#)

Article in [Feedlot magazine](#)

Article in [Good Day! magazine](#) – The National Grange

Television interview with Jeff on [RFD-TV'S Today's Market Watch](#)

Radio interview with Jeff on [1010 KSIR, Colorado's Ag Station](#)

Radio interview with Julie on [1010 KSIR, Colorado's Ag Station](#)

National Grange newsletter article – Jeff speaks at [The DC Experience](#)

National Grange newsletter article – [Partnership with Rural Minds](#)





“Sometimes the loudest cries
for help are silent.”

– Harlan Coben



Help Us Help Others

Thank You!

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Sources

- ¹ Capriotti T, Pearson T, Dufour L. (2020, February 18). Health Disparities in Rural America: Current Challenges and Future Solutions. Clinical Advisor. Retrieved from <https://www.clinicaladvisor.com/home/topics/practice-management-information-center/health-disparities-in-rural-america-current-challenges-and-future-solutions/>
- ² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). Disparities in Suicide. Retrieved from, <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/disparities-in-suicide.html>
- ³ JAMA, Assessment of Changes in Rural and Urban Primary Care Workforce in the United States From 2009 to 2017, Original Investigation Health Policy, October 28, 2020; [Donglan Zhang, PhD¹](#); [Heejung Son, MS^{1,2}](#); [Ye Shen, PhD²](#); et al
- ⁴ Andrilla CHA, Patterson DG, Garberson LA, Coulthard C, Larson EH. Geographic Variation in the Supply of Selected Behavioral Health Providers. Am J Prev Med. 2018 Jun;54(6 Suppl 3):S199-S207. doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2018.01.004. PMID: 29779543
- ⁵ Vogels, E. (August 19, 2021). Some digital divides persist between rural, urban and suburban America. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/08/19/some-digital-divides-persist-between-rural-urban-and-suburban-america/1>