

ASPR TRACIE Medical Surge and the Role of Health Clinics

About Health Clinics

- » Nearly 1,400 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), 4,100 Rural Health Clinics (RHC), and over 1,200 Free and Charitable Clinics provide community directed primary healthcare across the country.
- » These clinics have extensive geographic coverage, strong community ties, and the potential to reach medically underserved areas.
- » They also play a pivotal role in providing outpatient primary care and preventive health services to the most vulnerable populations in the U.S.
- » FQHCs and RHCs are among 17 provider and supplier types subject to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Emergency Preparedness Requirements Final Rule.

Key Findings

- » Health clinics have capabilities in preventive and disease management services that can make communities more prepared and resilient; can treat lower acuity patients to help decompress hospital emergency departments during surge responses; and can provide follow-up care and monitoring during the disaster recovery phase, but the overall emergency management role of health clinics has not been clearly defined in most communities.
- » Wide variation exists in the capacity and resources of health clinics.
- » Many health clinics are involved in planning with their local healthcare coalitions and other community partners, but their levels of engagement vary.
- » Awareness of CMS Final Rule requirements is high, but health clinics would benefit from training and technical assistance to support their implementation efforts.

Methodology

- » Convenience sample of individuals serving in leadership positions at health clinics was identified through recruitment via primary care associations and non-profit and governmental partners.
- » ASPR TRACIE analyzed data from 175 online survey responses and 25 follow-up telephone interviews with health clinic leaders; participants represented 38 states in all 10 regions.
- » Topics included: the role of health clinics in different emergency response scenarios, level of capability and infrastructure for response, characteristics of preparedness activities, and factors that facilitate engagement in emergency management activities.

Opportunities to Improve Preparedness

- » Better define the role of health clinics in overall community emergency management efforts.
- » Increase engagement of health clinics with health care coalitions and other community partners.
- » Provide training, technical assistance, and other resources to support health center emergency management knowledge and activities.
- » Promote opportunities for knowledge exchange and learning, particularly highlighting the lessons learned of health clinics with emergency response experience.
- » Support FQHCs and RHCs in implementing CMS Final Rule requirements.
- » Encourage the use of hazard vulnerability analyses to establish emergency response expectations based on health clinic capabilities and community threats.
- » Promote continuity of operations planning to aid in resilience efforts.

Related Resources and Next Steps

Related Resources:

- » [Medical Surge and the Role of Health Clinics](#) (full report)
- » ASPR TRACIE Topic Collection: [Ambulatory Care and Federally Qualified Health Centers \(FQHC\)](#)
- » [Emergency Preparedness Requirements for Medicare and Medicaid Participating Providers and Suppliers](#) Resource Page

ASPR TRACIE Will:

- » Develop tip sheet to help health clinics engage with healthcare coalitions and others in emergency management.
- » Continue outreach to healthcare providers in additional primary care settings.