



Community health centers provide high-quality, low-cost primary health care to low-income and vulnerable populations. Patients at health centers include a high number of people of color and immigrants. Health centers have a long track record of providing care in these communities and provide health care in a culturally competent and linguistically appropriate manner.

Rhode Island’s community health centers are committed to providing primary health care to all residents living in their service areas. The health centers also have staff members who help patients apply for RIte Care insurance. If a patient is uninsured and not eligible for RIte Care, health centers charge reasonable, sliding-scale fees based on the patient’s income.

Community Health Centers and Cultural Diversity

Primary care for all communities

Rhode Island is home to 10 community health centers located in 27 sites. Together, these health centers care for over 112,000 Rhode Islanders every year² - over 11% of the state’s population. The health centers provide care for everyone, but they care for people of color and immigrants in larger numbers than in the general population.

In Rhode Island, 11.3% of residents are Hispanic¹; at Rhode Island community health centers 28.7% of patients whose ethnicity is known are Hispanic.²

6.4% of Rhode Islanders are Black or African American¹; 16.1% of health center patients whose race is known are Black or African American.²

3.1% of Rhode Islanders are Asian¹; 5% of health center patients whose race is known are Asian.²

Rhode Island Immigrant Population

About 13% of Rhode Islanders were born in another country. About half, or 6% of Rhode Islanders, speak English less than “very well.”³

Nationally, one in three health center patients are best served in a language other than English.² In Rhode Island, one out of four health center patients are best served in a language other than English.² At some Rhode Island health centers, two out of three patients are best served in a language other than English.

Care in language patients understand

Staff and health care providers at community health centers are culturally and linguistically diverse. The health centers are committed to providing care to patients, whenever possible, in the language they understand best.

If someone at the health center does not speak the same language as the patient, the health center will arrange for an interpreter, either in person or by telephone.

Languages spoken at RI health centers

Arabic, Cape Verdean Creole, Chinese, English, French, German, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Italian, Khmer, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai

Twenty-five of the 27 health center locations have providers or staff who speak Spanish.

Citations

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table DP3Yr-5

² 2008 Uniform Data System data

³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S0501