

# Aging-at-Home on the Range

## Home Health Access in Rural Ferry County Washington



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### Hypothesis

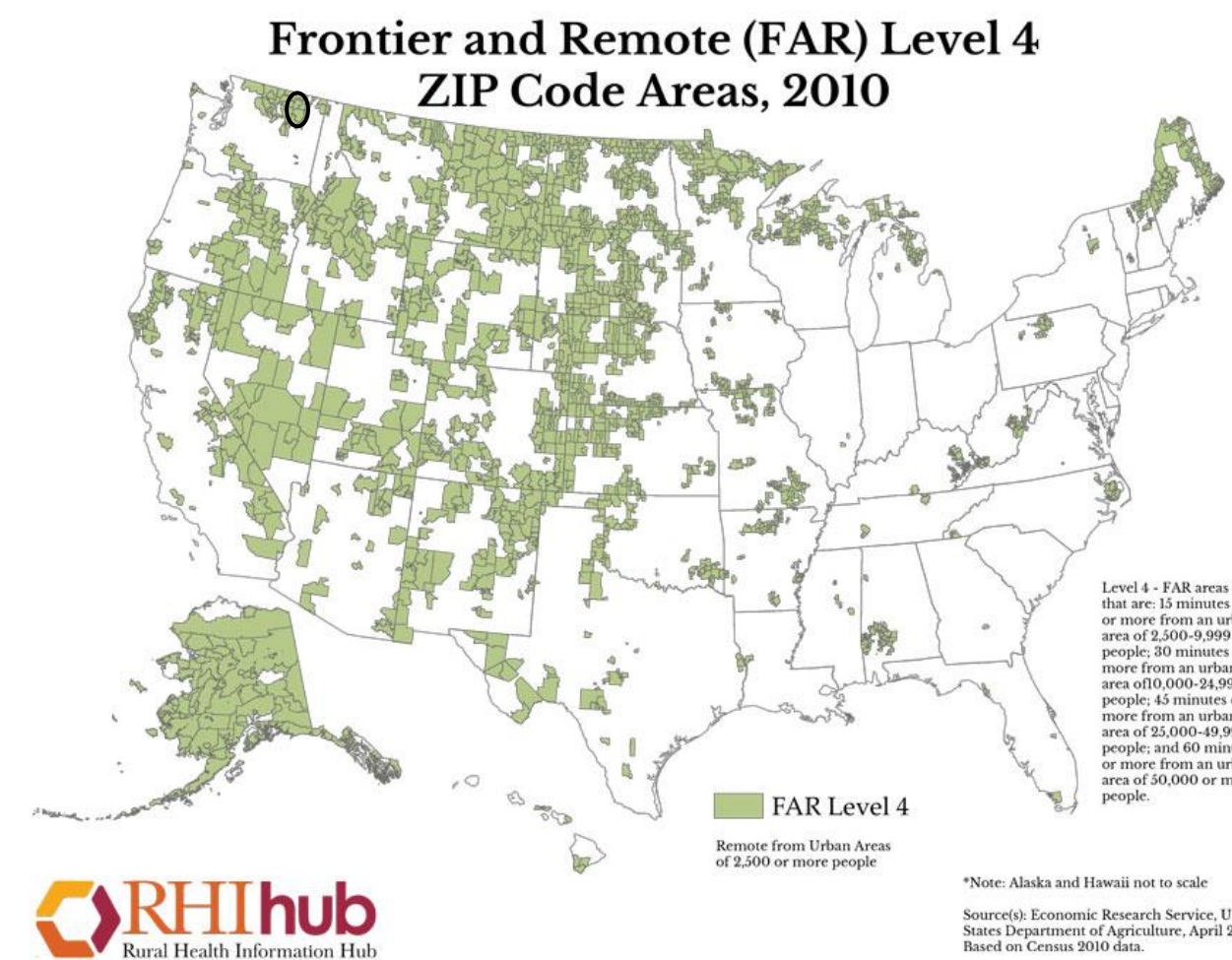
- Bring in-home healthcare services to the aging population of Ferry County by declaring Ferry County a Home Health Agency (HHA) Shortage Area.

### Background

- Level 4 frontier area – extremely rural
- Located in Okanogan highlands
- 28 percent of population over age 65
- Health needs are more complex for age over 65
- Reported need in county for home health services
- Only 2% of Medicare beneficiaries lack home health services
- Barriers include low patient volume, distance from service providers, small workforce pool



Welcome sign entering Republic, WA  
Largest town in Ferry County at ~1000 residents



Map of FAR Level 4 Areas in USA – Ferry County circled in black

Source: <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/rural-maps/mapfiles/frontier-level-four.jpg>

### Community Profile Assets

- Ferry County Health
  - Financially stable and working to expand ability to serve patients
  - Can complete in-home nursing visits through their Rural Health Clinic (RHC) if Ferry County is declared an HHA shortage area
- Excellent working relationship with WA State Office of Rural Health
  - Office can aid in HHA Shortage Area application and approval process

### Literature Review

- Research shows benefits of home health for aging-in-place and a greater need for services in rural areas
- Research is lacking on rural home health provision strategies
- HHA development requires significant administrative planning and oversight
- HHA Shortage Area declaration allows for utilization of existing staff and structures without development of full HHA
- Currently no shortage areas declared in WA State
- Little research on effects of HHA Shortage Area declarations on patient outcomes



Entrance to Ferry County Health Complex in Republic, WA

### Conclusions

- Strengths
  - Ferry County Health is in a good position to explore development of in-home health services.
  - Application for HHA Shortage Area could be undertaken with Office of Rural Health support
- Weaknesses
  - HHA Shortage Area does not allow RHC to offer in-home physical therapy or occupational therapy
  - HHA Shortage Area declaration process not currently defined for WA state
- Research Potential
  - If HHA Shortage Area declaration were approved, Ferry County Health could serve as a case study for provision of services through this program in WA state

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