

# SOUTH DAKOTA (SD)

## VETERAN POPULATION & VA ENROLLMENT

South Dakota is home to 64,266 veterans. [Of South Dakota's veterans](#), 11.5% are women, 44.5% are 65 or older, 26.5% have a personal income less than \$25,000 a year, and 30.9% have a personal income between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year. Less than 3% earned \$200,000 or more.

In 2021, over 39,000 South Dakota veterans were enrolled in VA health care.

The VA [has 3](#) inpatient care sites, 12 outpatient sites, 2 Vet Centers, and [2 CLCs](#) in South Dakota. South Dakota also [has 2 sites](#) with Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Programs in PTSD, Homelessness, General Mental Health, and Compensated Work Therapy Transition.

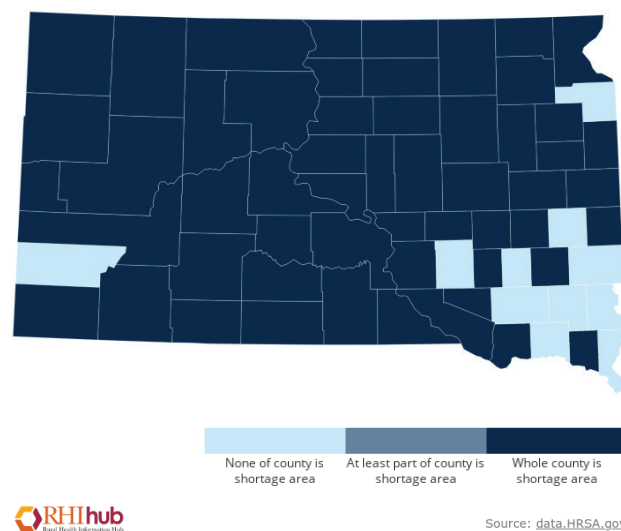
If the VA were to reduce its services or close any of its facilities in South Dakota, it is unlikely that already fragile and deeply troubled private sector healthcare facilities and practices could address the complex needs of thousands of veteran patients.

## Here's why:

### PROVIDER SHORTAGES

[U.S. News & World Report](#) ranks South Dakota as the 46th worst state in the nation for healthcare, with abysmal scores on healthcare quality, access, and public health outcomes. South Dakota is also experiencing a shortage of PCPs, with [55 of the state's 66 counties](#) facing a severe shortage of providers. While the state's physician-to-resident ratio is slightly better than the national average [at 1402:1](#), the Robert Graham Center estimates that South Dakota will [need to expand the number of PCPs by 27%](#) to meet projected demand in 2030.

### South Dakota Health Professional Shortage Areas: Primary Care by County, July 2025



## MENTAL HEALTH SHORTAGES

South Dakota has a severe shortage of mental health providers, with **all 66 of the state's counties** experiencing a severe shortage of professionals. According to KFF, South Dakota has only **26.4% of mental health professionals** they need to close this shortage. However, national statistics suggest that even when mental health professionals seem to be available, a **third of psychologists** and **45% of psychiatrists** may not accept insurance of any kind, and **six in ten psychologists** may not accept new patients.

**Mental Health Gaps:** According to KFF, **26.6% of residents** in the state reported symptoms of anxiety and depression in 2023. In South Dakota drug overdose deaths increased only slightly between 2011 and 2021 (from 4.5 per 100,000 to 5.7 per 100,000) but the age adjusted suicide rate in the state was higher than the national average in 2021. In spite of their significant problems, **22.6% of adults** with a mental illness reported an unmet need for counseling or therapy.

If the VA's clinical capacity is eroded and more VA enrollees are pushed into South Dakota's private sector, veterans could experience delays in accessing care and even risk not getting needed care at all. If VA teaching capacity is eroded, this could exacerbate provider shortages in the state, pitting veteran against non-veteran patients for scarce resources. In a state which ranks as poorly as South Dakota on healthcare quality, access, and public health outcomes, veterans who had been sheltered from these conditions could suddenly find themselves navigating a very different healthcare landscape.

**Hospital Closures:** The Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform (CHQPR) **reports** that 13 (27%) have lost services and that 9 (18%) of the state's rural hospitals are at risk of closing with 3 (6%) at immediate risk. From 2011 to 2023, **11-20%** of hospitals stopped offering obstetrics care.

Medicaid cuts and other reductions in healthcare funding could put many of the state's hospitals in even greater jeopardy. Veterans enrolled in the VA but pushed into the private sector could experience delays in accessing care. Moreover, they could be forced to compete with non-veteran patients (including their family members and neighbors) for scarce hospital resources.

### South Dakota Health Professional Shortage Areas: Mental Health by County, July 2025

