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Mental Health Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) in the Mountain West

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**MENTAL HEALTH CARE HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE
AREAS (HPSAs) IN THE MOUNTAIN WEST**

Health Fact Sheet No. 24 | July 2023

Prepared by: Nicole Diaz Del Valle, Caitlin J. Saladino, and William E. Brown, Jr.

PURPOSE:

Using data from the Kaiser Family Foundation’s “Mental Health Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs)”¹ 2022 report, this fact sheet looks at the mental health care health professional shortage area (HPSA) designations for Mountain West states: Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

ABOUT THE DATA:

The original report includes data on HPSA designations for all 50 states. This fact sheet synthesizes the data into four categories: (1) the number of HPSA designations; (2) the population of the designated HPSA; (3) the percent of need met; and (4) the number of health professionals needed to remove the designation for the Mountain West states.

The “total mental health HPSA designations” metric is based on a population-to-provider ratio of 30,000 to 1, and removal of designation means the population-to-provider ratio is below this threshold. The “population for designated HPSAs” metric includes the population in the geographic area, as well as those that are not located in the geographic area but are still served by the facilities.² The “percentage of need met” metric is the number of psychiatrists available to serve divided by the number of psychiatrists needed to eliminate the HPSA designation. The “practitioners needed to remove designation” metric reflects the number of mental health professionals needed to reach the population-to-psychiatrists ratio below the threshold.

KEY TERMS:

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|--|--|
| Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) | A designation given to a geographical area, population group, or healthcare facility that has a shortage of health professionals. ³ |
|--|--|

KEY FINDINGS:

1. In 2022, Arizona ranked 7th in mental health care health professional shortage areas in the United States.
2. Among Mountain West states, Arizona had the most mental health care health professional shortage areas (233), followed by New Mexico (94); Utah (50) had the lowest number of health professional shortage areas among Mountain West states.
3. Among Mountain West states, Nevada (235) would need the greatest number of mental health care practitioners to eliminate its HPSA designation.
4. Utah’s percentage of need met (55.1%) is the highest in the Mountain West, meaning more than half of their mental health care need is met; Arizona has the lowest percentage of need met (8.5%) in the Mountain West.

¹ Mental Health Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). 2022. *Kaiser Family Foundation*. Retrieved from www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/mental-health-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/

² Designated Health Professional Shortage Areas Statistics. 2023. *Bureau of Health Workforce, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services*. Retrieved from <https://data.hrsa.gov/Default/GenerateHPSAQuarterlyReport>

³ Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) and Your Site. 2023. *The National Health Service Corps*. Retrieved from <https://bhwa.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/workforce-shortage-areas/nhsc-hpsas-practice-sites.pdf>

Table 1 displays the total mental health care HPSA designations for the five Mountain West states by rank, along with the population of the designated HPSA, percent of need met, and the number of practitioners required to eliminate the designation. Arizona has the most mental health care HPSA designations (233), and Utah has the least designations (50). Nevada’s designated HPSAs population number (4,012,818) is larger than the state population because the metric includes both those within the geographic area and those outside that are still served by the facilities. Of the percentage of need met, Utah has the highest percent (55.1%) and Arizona has the lowest percent (8.5%). The two Mountain West states that require the most practitioners to remove the HPSA designation are Nevada (235 practitioners) and Arizona (227), and Utah requires the least (78).

Table 1: Mental Health Care Professional Shortage Area Designations in the Mountain West, 2022

| Mountain West State | Rank | Total Number of Mental Health Care HPSA Designations | Population of Designated HPSAs | Percent of Need Met | Practitioners Needed to Remove HPSA Designation |
|---------------------|------------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Arizona | 7 th | 233 | 3,478,236 | 8.5% | 227 |
| New Mexico | 26 th | 94 | 1,619,974 | 18.2% | 86 |
| Colorado | 34 th | 71 | 2,832,983 | 34.6% | 113 |
| Nevada | 38 th | 61 | 4,012,818 | 28.6% | 235 |
| Utah | 42 nd | 50 | 2,921,306 | 55.1% | 78 |

* Adapted from “Mental Health Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs)”. 2022. *Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF)*. www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/mental-health-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/