

AUCD Rural Area Code Caucus (RACC)

Area codes are often associated with places, regional cultures and accents, and geographies. They are also associated with political perspectives and parties, and are sometimes used to categorize political leanings. Some area codes clearly describe urban “city dwellers” while others clearly label the “country folk” or rural and territorial regions of our country. In 2016, the U.S. Census Bureau¹ reported that rural areas cover 97% of the nation’s land area, but contain only 19% of the population—that’s 65 million people, with up to 15 million estimated as having some type of disability². That may be an underestimate since rural dwelling citizens tend to be older.

While there are many ways to categorize interests, issues and concerns across the vast diversity of the AUCD network, we have developed a “**Rural Area Code Caucus**” (RACC) as a way to engage UCEDDs, LENDs and IDDRCs on issues that manifest themselves in unique ways in rural, remote and frontier regions of states and territories. These issues include transportation—where public transit may be non-existent or limited to one or two roundtrip bus routes each week. Employment—where the nearest employer may be a gas station 40 miles away. Housing—where public or affordable accessible housing stock is extremely limited, or nonexistent. Healthcare—where the nearest medical specialist is 200 miles from a small community and where telemedicine is unreliable because Internet infrastructure is lacking or infeasible due to the nature of the healthcare need.

The RACC:

1. Fosters a diversity of views, serving as an information and feedback resource to the AUCD Public Policy Committee.
2. Serves as a consultant to the AUCD Board of Directors on issues of unique interest or concern to rural, remote and frontier areas that AUCD members serve.
3. Provides a strategy for stronger and more diverse relationships with complementary rural-issue partners (e.g., technology infrastructure, rural homelessness, public health, transportation)

RACC Outcomes include:

1. Increased number of informed advocates from rural/territory communities.
2. Expanded partnerships on disability and human service issues.
3. Increased visibility of rural/territorial issues in national disability priorities.

¹ See <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2016/cb16-210.html>

² See https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6732a3.htm?s_cid=mm6732a3_w