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Rural Ks Hospitals Fear Redesignation Proposal

(AP) - Kansas hospital officials say a federal proposal to change how rural hospitals are designated for purposes of Medicare reimbursements could be devastating to smaller health care facilities that already are struggling to survive.

The Wichita Eagle reports a Department of Health and Human Services report last fall suggested that critical access hospitals within 35 miles of another hospital should have their designations re-evaluated and receive reimbursements like other Medicare-certified facilities.

Critical care hospitals are reimbursed by Medicare at 101 percent of their costs, but the American Hospital Directory says half of those in hospitals in Kansas already are operating at a loss.

The Kansas Hospital Association predicts 72 of the 83 critical access hospitals in the state would be impacted if the 35-mile rule were put into effect.

Associated Press