



# Study Resolution

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## Access to Pharmacy Services in Virginia

Authorized by the Joint Commission on Health Care on December 17, 2024

WHEREAS, pharmacy services include dispensing of medication, patient education, vaccinations, and testing services; and

WHEREAS, pharmacies can be an important community asset, providing access to essential health services for members of the surrounding community, particularly in areas with limited access to primary care providers; and

WHEREAS, pharmacy deserts, geographical areas characterized by limited access to pharmacy services, are associated with lower medication adherence and poor health outcomes for members of the surrounding community, and research suggests medically underserved populations are more likely to live in pharmacy deserts; and

WHEREAS, nationally, one in eight pharmacies, a majority of which were independent pharmacies, ceased operation between 2009 and 2015 and, more recently, large retail pharmacy chains announced over 2,000 additional pharmacy closures nationally, including many locations in Virginia over the next three years; and

WHEREAS, many factors contribute to pharmacy closures and loss of access to pharmacy services in Virginia, including reduced sales, low reimbursement rates, and low dispensing fees under Medicaid; and

WHEREAS, implementing strategies to ensure access to pharmacy services could improve the health and well-being of Virginians; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, by the Joint Commission on Health Care, that staff be directed to study access to pharmacy services in Virginia.

The study shall (i) describe how access to pharmacy services has changed in Virginia over time, and the impact of changes in access to pharmacy services on Virginians, (ii) identify areas in Virginia that constitute pharmacy deserts, and describe populations in Virginia that are impacted by pharmacy deserts, (iii) identify factors that impact access to pharmacy services in Virginia, including state and federal law, (iv) describe strategies to ensure access to pharmacy services, including strategies implemented in other states, and (v) recommend policy options through which the state may ensure access to pharmacy services.

The Joint Commission on Health Care shall make recommendations as necessary and review other related issues as warranted.

In accordance with § 30-169.1 of the *Code of Virginia*, all agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Department of Medical Assistance Services, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, the Department of Health

Professions, and the Department of Health shall provide assistance, information, and data to the Joint Commission on Health Care for this study upon request.