

Rural Healthcare Matters

Helping More, Doing it Right

Dr. Liz Rogers



Dr. Liz Rogers

- ▶ Graduate of Indiana University-Bloomington for BA and AuD
- ▶ Owner of Southeast Kentucky Audiology in Corbin, KY since 2017
- ▶ Special interests include cochlear implants, ear wax removal, and rural healthcare!

Disclosures

- ▶ Director-at-large ADA board member beginning in 2022

Learner Outcomes

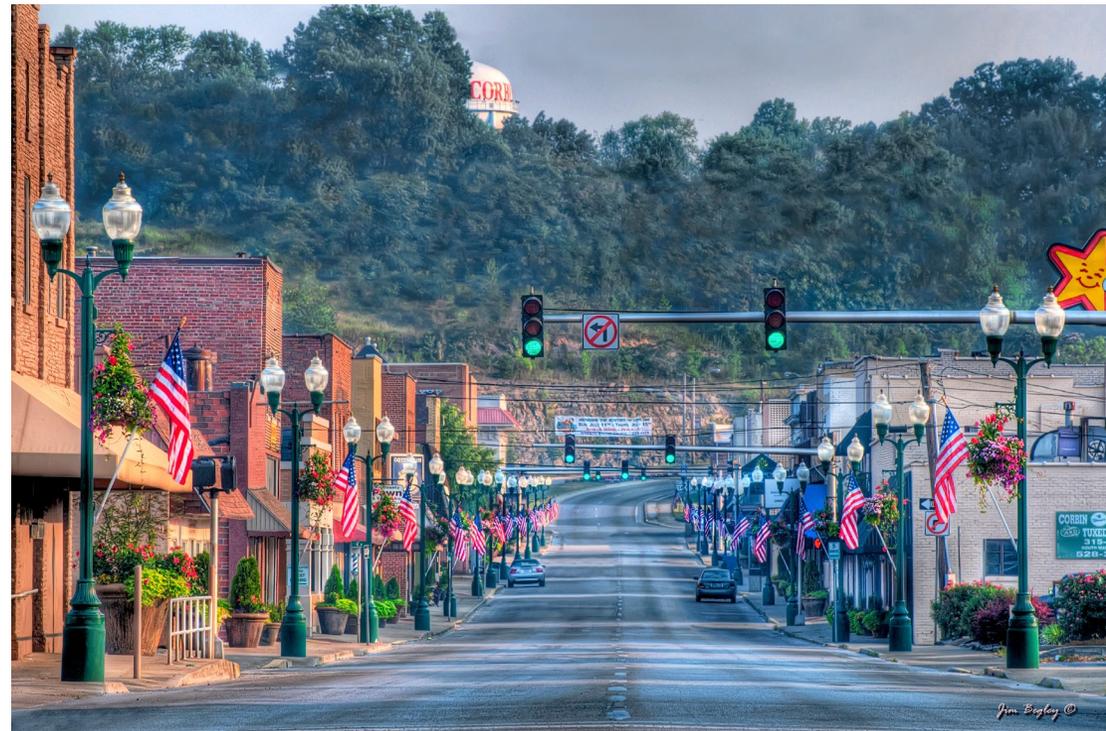
- ▶ **Learner Outcome #1:** Attendees will be able to list research-based data on healthcare disparities in rural areas and learn how reputably sharing this educational information with patients and local healthcare professionals can improve health literacy and help reduce the negative impacts of health disparities.
- ▶ **Learner Outcome #2:** Attendees will be able to list the many personal and professional reasons why and how audiologists should focus on patient-centered services plans to practice in rural healthcare settings.
- ▶ **Learner Outcome #3:** Attendees will learn the different business models that can be successful in rural healthcare. Examples include hearing evaluations and hearing aids, balance, cochlear implants, Veteran's evaluations and services, auditory processing evaluations, cochlear implants, and tinnitus evaluations.

Southeast Kentucky Audiology History

- ▶ Located in Corbin, KY
- ▶ In practice since 2003
 - ▶ Pediatrics/adults diagnostics (ABR/VRA/CPA/HE/Tymps/OAEs) and HAs
- ▶ I started in 2014
 - ▶ Began doing CI
- ▶ I purchased in 2017
- ▶ Added another testing suite in 2018 - 3 booths total
- ▶ Began VNGs in 2019
- ▶ Added rotary chair in 2020
- ▶ Actively seeking to onboard an ENT

Corbin, KY

- ▶ Population of 7,202 (2019)
- ▶ Surrounding areas
 - ▶ London: 8,058 (2019)
 - ▶ Barbourville: 3,072 (2019)
 - ▶ Williamsburg: 5,274 (2019)



<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/corbincitykentucky>

<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/london-ky>

<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US2103574-barbourville-ky/>

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/williamsburgcitykentucky>

Southeast Kentucky Audiology Services

- ▶ ABR/ASSR
- ▶ Hearing Evaluations
 - ▶ VRA/CPA, Tymps, Reflexes, OAEs, Standard, High frequency
- ▶ Cerumen Management
 - ▶ Earigator, Manual Tools, Suction
- ▶ Balance Evaluations
 - ▶ SOP, DVAT, VNG, Calorics, Rotary Chair, cVEMP/oVEMP
- ▶ Hearing Aids
 - ▶ Selection, Fitting, REM, Programming, Cleaning, Repairs, All manufacturers
- ▶ Cochlear Implants
 - ▶ Candidacy Evaluations, Counseling, Activation, Programming, Speech Perception Testing, All 3 Manufacturers
- ▶ Unique Offerings
 - ▶ Lantos 3D Ear Scanner, Cognivue, Earigator, Pediatrics, Rotary Chair, Veteran's Community Care Provider, C&P Evaluations, Hearing Conservation Testing

Southeast Kentucky Audiology Participating Insurance/Programs

- ▶ Insurance
 - ▶ Medicare, Medicaid, Commercial
- ▶ Specialty Programs
 - ▶ Veterans Community Care, LHI/VES/QTC, Vocational Rehabilitation
- ▶ No TPAs

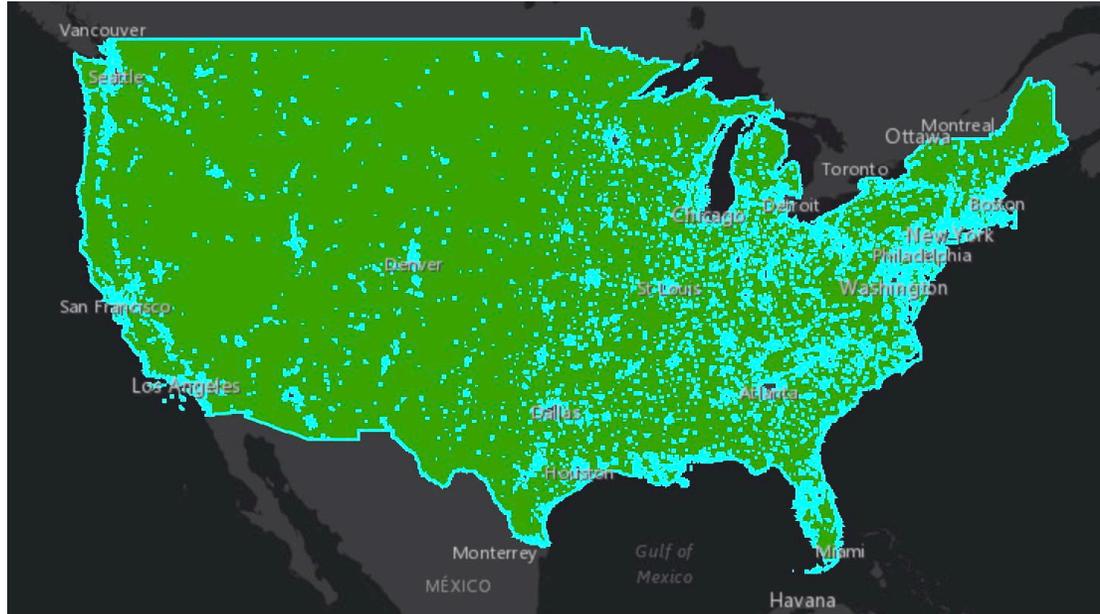
Southeast Kentucky Audiology

Our Dedicated Team

▶ Our Team

- ▶ Two Audiologists (2014, 2016)
- ▶ Hearing Instrument Specialist (2003)
- ▶ Fourth Year Extern
- ▶ Office Manager (2017)
- ▶ Audiology Assistant (2018)
- ▶ Physician Liaison (2018)
- ▶ Two Patient Care Coordinators (Second in 2019)
- ▶ And Growing!

What is “Rural”?



- ▶ The Census Bureau defines rural as any population, house, or territory **NOT** in an urban area
- ▶ Urban areas are 50,000+ population
- ▶ Urban clusters are 2,500-49,999
- ▶ The green represents all rural areas based on these definitions
- ▶ **97%** of the country’s land mass is rural

<https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=49cd4bc9c8eb444ab51218c1d5001ef6>

<https://www.hrsa.gov/rural-health/about-us/definition/index.html>

<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2017/08/rural-america.html>

Rural Population Statistics

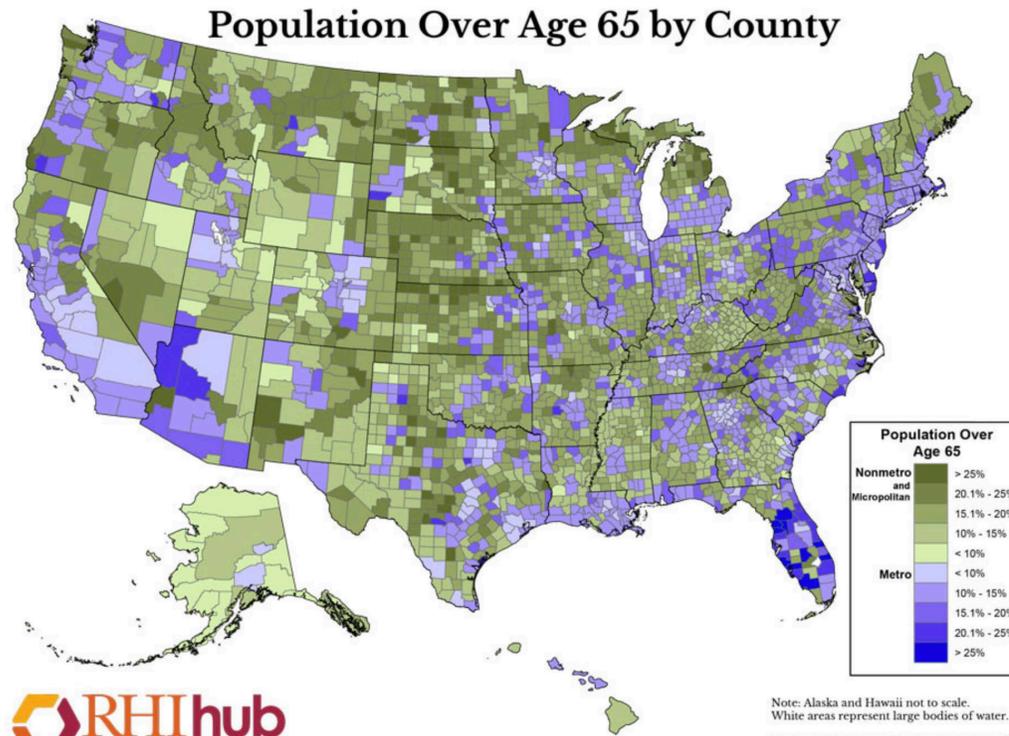
- ▶ As of 2017 **60 million** (1 in 5) Americans lived in rural areas
- ▶ 46.2 million older adults in the US
 - ▶ **10.6 million** older adults living in rural areas
 - ▶ 17.5% of the rural population was 65 years and older vs 13.8% in urban areas

<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2017/08/rural-america.html>

<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2016/cb16-ff08.html>

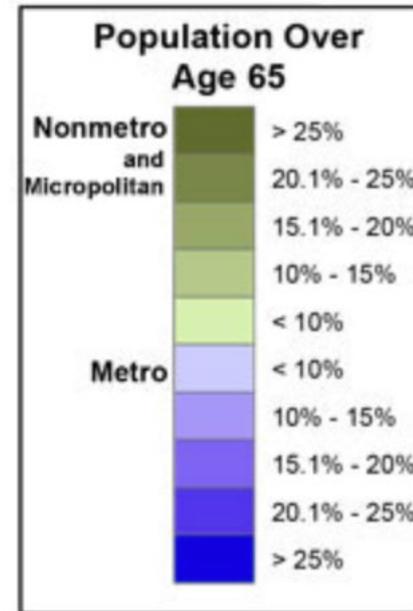
<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/10/older-population-in-rural-america.html>

Where Do They Live?



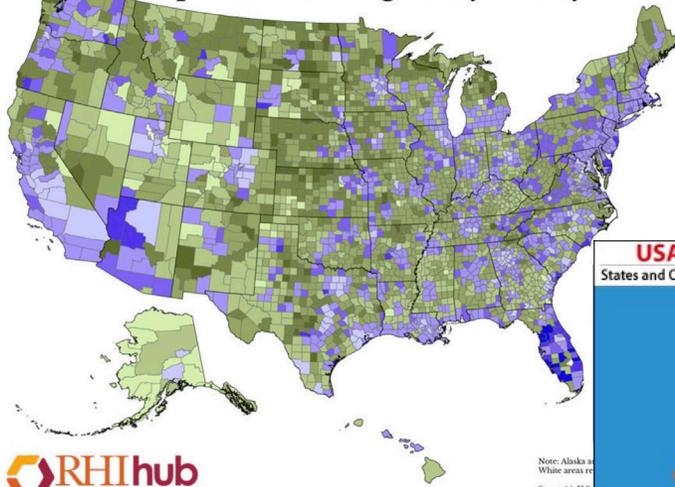
Note: Alaska and Hawaii not to scale.
White areas represent large bodies of water.

Source(s): U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census, Summary File 1



Where Are Audiological Services Needed?

Population Over Age 65 by County

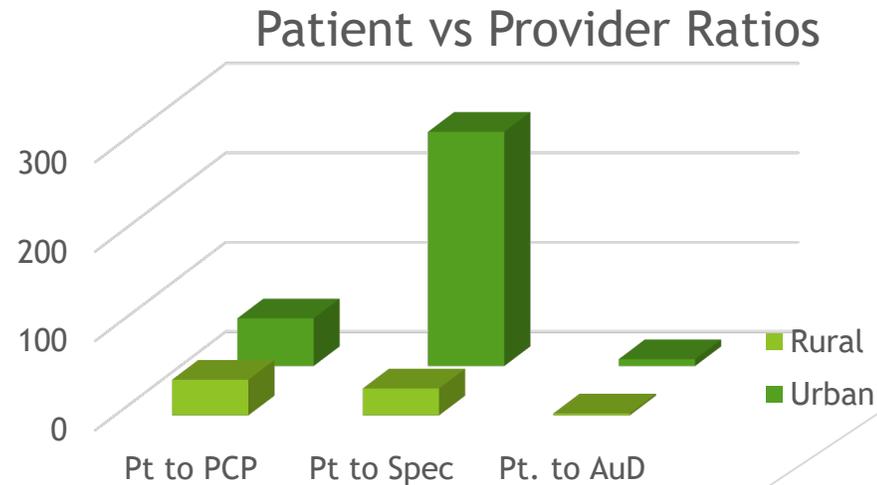


Note: Alaska and
White areas are
Source: U.S.
Census, Summary



Healthcare Options in Rural Areas

- ▶ Patient to Primary Care
 - ▶ 53.3 physicians per 100,000 residents in urban areas
 - ▶ 39.8 physicians per 100,000 residents in rural areas
- ▶ Patient to Specialty Care (dentists)
 - ▶ 263 specialists per 100,000 residents in urban areas
 - ▶ 30 specialists per 100,000 residents in rural areas
- ▶ Patient to Audiologist
 - ▶ 2.1-7.6 per 100,000 residents
 - ▶ Strong bias for urban vs rural area



<https://www.ruralhealthweb.org/about-nrha/about-rural-health-care>

https://journals.lww.com/thehearingjournal/Fulltext/2019/04000/Audiology_Service_Accessibility_and_the_Health.6.aspx

Why Are We Living in Urban Areas?

- ▶ Younger population
- ▶ Higher income opportunities
- ▶ City life
- ▶ More entertainment options
- ▶ More living options
- ▶ More retail options
- ▶ More food options
 - ▶ Restaurants, groceries, alternative diets

Rural Population Health Disparities

- ▶ Higher rates of
 - ▶ Obesity
 - ▶ Diabetes
 - ▶ High blood pressure
 - ▶ Cigarette smoking
- ▶ More likely to die from
 - ▶ Heart disease
 - ▶ Cancer
 - ▶ Unintentional injury (drug overdose, motor vehicle accident)
 - ▶ Chronic lower respiratory disease
 - ▶ Stroke

<https://www.cdc.gov/ruralhealth/about.html>

<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/diabetes/1/rural-concerns>

Rural Population Health Disparity Causes

- ▶ Reasons why
 - ▶ Physical inactivity
 - ▶ Poor diet/food deserts
 - ▶ Late diagnosis
 - ▶ Lower education and socioeconomic status
 - ▶ Transportation issues
 - ▶ Poverty level
 - ▶ Poor access to healthcare

<https://www.cdc.gov/ruralhealth/about.html>

<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/diabetes/1/rural-concerns>

Hearing Loss and Chronic Disease

- ▶ Diabetes and Hearing Loss
 - ▶ Twice as common
- ▶ Cardiovascular Disease and Hearing Loss
 - ▶ Higher incidence of hearing loss
- ▶ Cancer and Hearing Loss
 - ▶ Ototoxic cancer treatments
- ▶ Smoking and Hearing Loss
 - ▶ Hearing loss 60% more likely in smokers / twice as likely for secondhand smoke

<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/diabetes-hearing-loss.html>

<https://www.karger.com/Article/Abstract/212167>

<https://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/physical-emotional-and-social-effects-cancer/managing-physical-side-effects/hearing-problems>

<https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/50940-Smoking-and-hearing-loss>

Balance and Chronic Disease

- ▶ Diabetes and Vestibular Disorders
 - ▶ 70% higher in persons with diabetes
- ▶ Cardiovascular Disease and Vestibular Disorders
 - ▶ Slight increase in patients with hypertension
- ▶ Cancer and Vestibular Disorders
 - ▶ Vestibulotoxic cancer treatments
- ▶ Smoking and Vestibular Disorders
 - ▶ Smoking increases risk for peripheral vestibular disorder

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4774386/>

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/773517>

<https://emedicine.medscape.com/article/857679-overview>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5715055/>

Untreated Hearing Loss Impacts Balance and Cognition

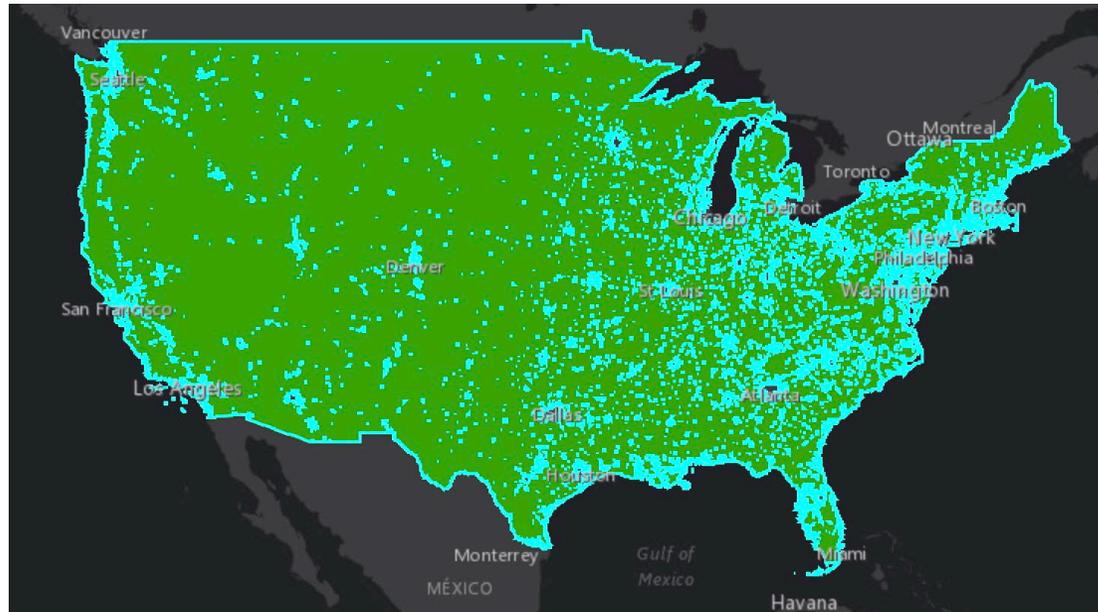
- ▶ “Older adults with hearing loss have a threefold risk of falls, which comprised the largest percentage of deaths from unintentional injuries between 2007 to 2016, costing about **\$50 billion** in Medicare and Medicaid expenditures on fall-related hospitalizations.”
- ▶ “Mild hearing loss doubles dementia risk. Moderate loss triples risk, and people with a severe hearing impairment are five times more likely to develop dementia.”

https://journals.lww.com/thehearingjournal/Fulltext/2019/04000/Audiology_Service_Accessibility_and_the_Health.6.aspx

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/the-hidden-risks-of-hearing-loss>

The Data Supports It - Our Expert Help is Needed!

- ▶ Significant opportunity for audiologists in rural healthcare!
- ▶ Large population of 65+ in rural areas
- ▶ Higher incidence of chronic disease
- ▶ Higher risk for hearing and balance disorders



Why Rural Healthcare

- ▶ Business Reasons
- ▶ Personal Reasons
- ▶ Audiology Awareness

Business: Lower Overhead

- ▶ Lower Overhead
 - ▶ Lower lease payment
 - ▶ Lower property taxes
 - ▶ Lower insurance
 - ▶ Lower labor costs

Business: Reimbursement

- ▶ Insurance reimbursement in rural vs urban... is the same!



Business: Insurance Contracts

- ▶ Greater negotiating power
- ▶ Potential for higher reimbursement rates
- ▶ Specialty services are desired

Business: Competition

- ▶ Less competition in rural vs. urban areas

Business: Wider Coverage Area

- ▶ You may open in an urban cluster or rural area, but you will pull and attract patients from surrounding areas

Personal: Lower Cost of Living

- ▶ Housing Cost
 - ▶ 30% lower in rural areas
- ▶ Food Cost
 - ▶ 6% lower in rural areas
- ▶ Overall, 8% less expensive to live in rural area
 - ▶ Lower service costs
 - ▶ Lower goods costs

Personal: The Simple Things

- ▶ Closer to nature
- ▶ Peace and quiet
- ▶ Slower pace of living
- ▶ Wonderful place to raise a family
- ▶ Tight-knit community
- ▶ More privacy
- ▶ Less violent crime

Personal: Giving Back

- ▶ Providing services where they are desperately needed and appreciated
- ▶ Opportunities for non-profit

Audiology Awareness

- ▶ Grassroots effort
- ▶ OTC devices
- ▶ Interprofessional collaboration

Rural Healthcare Challenges

- ▶ Lower income population (Non-profit? Sliding scales?)
- ▶ Lower education level
- ▶ Medicaid
- ▶ Transportation issues
- ▶ Personal
- ▶ Other medical specialties
- ▶ “Only Provider” dilemma

Rural Living Challenges

- ▶ Less entertainment options
- ▶ Few “high-end” options: restaurants, shopping
- ▶ Few specialty healthcare options
- ▶ Education/sport options
- ▶ Drug problems
- ▶ Travel (interstates, airports)

What Rural Doesn't Mean

- ▶ No personal life or nightlife
- ▶ No shopping or restaurant options
- ▶ Not hours away from a city
- ▶ Not a lower quality of life

Business Models

- ▶ Bread and butter
- ▶ Specialty
- ▶ Full-scope

Business Basics - How To Find Growth Areas

- ▶ What other providers are in the area, how many providers, what specialists?
- ▶ Is there growth in the area - economic development?
- ▶ What zip codes does your current practice pull from?
- ▶ Is the population all lower income, retirement area, mix?
- ▶ What other industries are there?
- ▶ Walmart?

Business Basics - Your Core Questions

- ▶ Knowing your break-even or estimated breakeven
- ▶ What is the insurance mix?
- ▶ Are TPAs very prevalent, which ones?
- ▶ Do you know what services you can charge for?
- ▶ What can the market sustain for private pay?
- ▶ Will you be in network or out of network?
- ▶ Billing and coding

Extending Your Reach - How?

- ▶ New practice
 - ▶ Find your underserved area, business plan, billing/coding training, hiring, marketing
- ▶ Satellite clinic
 - ▶ Spare the manpower? Telehealth? New hires?
- ▶ Mobile clinic
 - ▶ In home, van/truck
- ▶ Utilizing assistants
 - ▶ Hearing aid assistants, charting assistants, “free” appointments
- ▶ Outsource
 - ▶ Bookkeeping, billing, marketing
- ▶ Mission trips
 - ▶ Military medical clinics, Hear Now/Hear the World, free healthcare clinics

Bread and Butter

- ▶ Hearing evaluations
- ▶ Hearing aids
- ▶ Unbundled model
- ▶ Other diagnostics?

Specialty Services - Easy Add Ons

- ▶ Hearing conservation
- ▶ Aural rehabilitation
- ▶ Cerumen management
- ▶ Veteran's compensation and pension evaluations
- ▶ Veterans Community Care Program

Specialty Services - More Involved

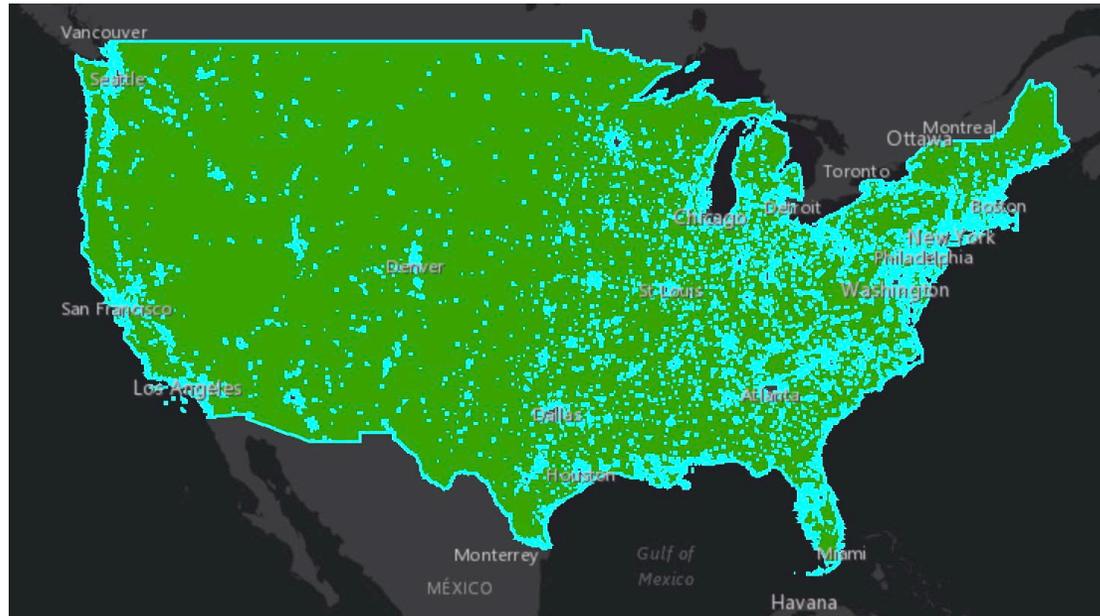
- ▶ Balance and vestibular
- ▶ Cochlear implants
- ▶ Electrophysiology
- ▶ Tinnitus
- ▶ Pediatrics
- ▶ Auditory processing evaluations

Full-Scope

- ▶ Do it all!
- ▶ Start adding slowly
- ▶ Can you do it yourself?
- ▶ Can you hire another provider? More support staff?

You Can Do This!

- ▶ “If people are doubting how far you can go, go so far that you can’t hear them anymore” -Michele Ruiz



Thank You!!

- ▶ Questions?
- ▶ Comments?
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- ▶ www.sekyaudiology.com