# Activity: Know before you go

Getting to know your service area really well takes commitment and resources. You will need to devote time to understand the rural areas, the commonplaces individuals gather, and learn what programs currently exist.

Before you head out to meet folks in your rural service area, you can use existing data to better understand who lives and works there. Here are some simple tools to use to gain an understanding of the demographics and disability in your rural service areas.

* <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>
* <http://rtc.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/geography/>
* <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/> (no disability data)

## Practice: Using the Disability Counts website

1. Click this link <http://rtc.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/geography/>
2. Choose your state
3. Choose the counties you would like to focus on (these may be a combination of rural and urban counties to make comparisons)
4. Choose variables you are interested in such as the Disability Poverty Rate or the Veteran Disability Rate
5. Submit your choices to view the statistics

For example, after selecting two neighboring counties in Montana (Ravalli, a rural county and Missoula, an urban county), we can see that the disability rate for veterans in Ravalli county is 42% while the disability rate for veterans in Missoula County is 29%.