



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
MEL & ENID ZUCKERMAN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

# Center for Rural Health



**Annual Report FY 2022-23**



## The Arizona Center for Rural Health's core mission is to improve the health and wellness of Arizona's rural and underserved populations.

We respectfully acknowledge the University of Arizona is on the land and territories of Indigenous peoples. Today, Arizona is home to 22 federally recognized tribes, with Tucson being home to the O'odham and the Yaqui. Committed to diversity and inclusion, the University strives to build sustainable relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous communities through education offerings, partnerships, and community service.



Carlos Gonzales MD gives the opening blessing at the 49th Annual Rural Health Conference.

*Arizona Center for Rural Health Annual Report FY 2022-23 | Copyright © 2023*

Graphic design: Ann Garn | Photographs: Michelle Moore (cover) Dan Derksen (p. 2) Dr. Darren Vicente (p. 4) Ann Garn (p. 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 22, 24, 29 (top) 30, 31,33), Kris Hanning (p. 16) Jennifer Peters (p.29 bottom row)  
Like us on Facebook | Join us on Twitter | Link with us on LinkedIn | [crh.arizona.edu](http://crh.arizona.edu)

# Executive Summary FY 2023

Incredibly, the Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH) will host the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Rural Health Conference on June 4-5, 2024 at the High Country Conference Center in Flagstaff!

Try to imagine the rural health care challenges 50 years ago in Arizona. Imagine what our health system will look like 50 years from now!

The Feb 6, 2024 Annual Rural & Public Health Policy Forum at the Piper Auditorium in Phoenix will allow us to inform policymakers and leverage our work to ensure a healthier Arizona for the coming years.

The FY'23 AzCRH Annual Report highlights collaborations and progress in our new and long-standing programs and partnerships with you.

The June 2023 AzCRH Rural Health Conference broke all records for attendance at over 300 and underscored the energy, passion and engagement we will need to improve the health and wellness of Arizona's rural & vulnerable populations in the coming year and beyond.

AzCRH houses federal and state grants and provides webinars, conferences, technical assistance, data, analyses and reports to inform and support Arizonans, providers and policymakers on rural health services, best practices, legislation and regulation. AzCRH also serves as a pass through of federal and state information and support to rural health providers, partners and stakeholders.

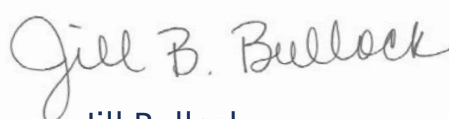
The State of Arizona, the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and other FY'23 grant funded AzCRH initiatives included:

- Arizona State Office of Rural Health (AzSORH): state and federally designated and funded.
- HRSA Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (AzFlex) Program.
- HRSA Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (AzSHIP).
- ADHS, ARPA, CDC, and SAMHSA funding allowed AzCRH to provide technical assistance, education & information exchange between federal funding and rural health providers including Arizona's 17 critical access hospitals (CAHs), 52 rural health clinics (RHCs), 21 community health center systems in their 172 federally qualified health center (FQHC) sites, 15 Indian Health Service and 18 Tribal-operated (P.L. 638) clinics and hospitals (see foldout map).

On behalf of the AzCRH faculty, staff, students and partners across Arizona, we thank you for your engagement and collaboration. We look forward to continuing our work with you in 2024 and beyond!



Daniel Derksen, MD  
Director, AzCRH



Jill Bullock  
Associate Director

# Arizona State Office of Rural Health (AzSORH)

Jennifer Peters, Daniel Derksen MD

AzSORH links the AzCRH's diverse staff and faculty with rural communities, organizations, stakeholders, state and federal resources to:

- **Collect and disseminate rural health information and convene events.**
- **Provide technical assistance to rural communities and organizations.**
- **Develop and support rural health networks and partnerships.**
- **Support and expand health workforce pathways to practice in rural and underserved areas.**
- **Collect and analyze rural health data, produce actionable reports and publish data visualizations, policy briefs and syntheses of contemporary rural health issues.**
- **Identify and address factors that create disparities in rural and underserved communities.**
- **Promote accessible, affordable, and culturally competent healthcare for all Arizonans.**

**The Arizona State Office of Rural Health (AzSORH) Program provides the infrastructure to identify, track and address ongoing and emerging issues affecting individuals, families and health systems in Arizona's rural and underserved communities.**

Continuously funded since 1990, July 2023 marks the 34<sup>th</sup> year of AzSORH service. AzSORH is housed at the University of Arizona Health Sciences Zuckerman College of Public Health in the Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH).

AzSORH is federal and state designated and funded by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), with 3:1 State of Arizona to Federal matching funds.

AzSORH participates in state, regional and national networks to elevate and amplify rural health issues. Two examples:

**May 2023**, AzSORH and other initiatives housed in AzCRH convened the 49th Annual Rural Health Conference for more than 300 in person attendees in Flagstaff, Arizona.

**June 2023**, AzSORH collaborated with the Arizona Rural Health Association to host the FORHP HRSA Region D annual meeting – bringing together nine States and multiple federal and national partners to discuss critical healthcare system transformation issues and to visit the Hopi Nation.



FORHP HRSA Region D visit to Hopi Cultural Center, Second Mesa, Arizona

AzSORH aims to improve health equity and services through efforts that increase access to quality health care services and promote community resilience. Critical strategies include understanding the structural, economic and social conditions that contribute to the health of individuals, families and communities; using data to inform and tailor interventions to reduce health disparities; and improving rural and underserved individual and community health outcomes.

As an example, AzSORH tracks the unwinding of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) 5/11/23, also known as “redetermination”—a return to the normal eligibility, enrollment and renewal processes for Arizona’s Medicaid program—the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) including its Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) known as KidsCare.

The decision to expand Medicaid eligibility in 2014 improved access to affordable rural health care

and stabilized the finances and operations of the state’s rural health safety net, clinics and hospitals operated by Arizona’s:

- 21 community health center systems and their 172 federally qualified health center (FQHC) sites
- 17 critical access hospitals (CAHs)
- 52 rural health clinics (RHCs)
- 15 Indian Health Service (IHS)
- 18 Tribal-operated (P.L. 638 Self-determination)

Of great concern is that 247,431 (9.8%) Arizonans lost Medicaid coverage between 3/1/23 and 8/1/23. The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that up to 75% of those that lost Medicaid coverage were due to procedural issues such as outdated contact information or not completing the eligibility and enrollment forms—and that many are still eligible for Medicaid due to income level.

**AHCCCS Total Enrollment by Month**

Month	3/1/23*	4/1/23**	5/11/23***	6/1/23	7/1/23	8/1/23
Total AHCCCS enrollment	2,527,141	2,492,034	2,472,270	2,357,454	2,306,212	2,279,710
Decrease from prior month		-35,107	-19,764	-114,816	-51,242	-26,502
% Decrease from prior month		-1.39%	-0.79%	-4.64%	-2.17%	-1.2%
% Decrease from 3/1 by month		-1.39%	-2.17%	-6.71%	-8.74%	-9.8%

\*Month prior to AHCCCS redetermination onset (highest enrollment)

\*\*AZ begins redetermination process

\*\*\*Federal end of public health emergency (PHE)

**AzSORH Five-Year Summary: July 1 to June 30 Fiscal Year (FY)**

AzSORH Activity	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
Total Technical Assistance	4,236	5,210	5,189	5,201	5,306
In-Person Contacts	2,620	2,631	279	385	553
Phone / Emails	545	484	474	425	498
Webinar Participation	749	1,343	1,196	1,347	1,149
Teleconference	106	134	148	261	273
Other Modes (Media, Surveys, Website, Etc.)*	216	553	3,092	2,783	2,833
Newsletter Distribution	9,792	10,164	10,070	10,893	11,758
Web Page Visits	40,696	46,143	44,601	85,666	68,275

\*Previously labeled as “Assistance to researchers, others”



# Arizona Health Improvement Plan (AzHIP) Rural & Urban Underserved Health Plan

Bryna Koch, DrPH, Jennifer Peters, Angel Oteng-Quarshie, Jack Ringhand, BSN

**AzCRH supports the Arizona Department of Health Service (ADHS) Arizona Health Improvement Plan (AzHIP) priority on the Rural & Urban Underserved Health Plan via an interagency services agreement (ISA).** AzHIP provides a structure for a networked system of partners to improve the health of communities and individuals across Arizona. Bryna Koch, DrPH serves a Principal Investigator (PI) of the Rural & Urban Underserved Plan; Dan Derksen, MD is a member of the AzHIP Steering Committee. The entire 2021-25 AzHIP can be found at [azdhs.gov](https://azdhs.gov)

The AzHIP Rural & Underserved Health Priority action area of “Address Health Professional Shortage by Building a Diverse Healthcare Workforce” aims to develop strategies to reduce financial and other barriers for underserved students in health professions education programs.

In FY 23, the AzCRH - AzHIP team hired two Master of Public Health (MPH) students, Angel Oteng-Quarshie and Jack Ringhand; created a project plan, developed methodologies, and began work on a literature review/gaps analysis to identify existing strategies and unmet need relating to financial and other barriers for underserved students in health professions education programs. The team will conduct stakeholder interviews to learn how supports for underserved students in health professions education programs can be strengthened. The intent of the literature review/gaps analysis and interviews is to create policy briefs, best practices, toolkits and communication materials.

The AzCRH-AzHIP team worked with other stakeholders including the Arizona Area Health Education Center (AzaHEC) Program and the AzaHEC Regional Centers. Bryna Koch, DrPH presented at the Arizona Healthcare Workforce Summit – Creating Connections and Pathways to Collaboration. Drs. Koch and Derksen participate in the Arizona Medical Association (ArMA) Healthy Arizona Workforce Coalition, an initiative funded by ADHS. Dr. Koch presented at an Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers (AACHC) strategic workforce planning session.

**Community partnerships in action;** Located in Benson, Arizona, Sunshine House offers community resources and a space for mental health providers to meet with Benson clients, parents and students in a homelike environment. The project is a result of a successful partnership between AzCRH Advancing Health Equity, Addressing Disparities (AHEAD) program, Benson Unified School District, Easterseals Blake Foundation, Benson Hospital, Benson Police Department and Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) convening to address Behavioral Health provider shortages in rural communities.



Left to right: Christy Crowley, Program Director, Easterseals Blake Foundation, presents on the collaborative achievements of Sunshine House to community partners; Chavon Woods, ADHS, Greg Volker, Chief, Benson Police Department, Kenneth Klein, ADHS.

A comparison of The Arizona Department of Health Services Health Improvement Plan 2019-2023 and the Arizona Critical Access Hospitals Community Health Needs Assessment 2021-2025 identifies overlapping priorities.

Look for these icons to see how the Arizona Center for Rural Health programs are addressing these shared priorities.



**Mental and Behavioral Health**



**Diabetes and Chronic Disease**



**Care for the Aging**



**Access to Care**



**Substance Use Disorder**



**Community Partnerships**

# Arizona Rural Hospital Flexibility Program (AzFlex)

Jill Bullock, Daniel Derksen MD

AzFlex celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> year (since 1999) of continuous funding from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA), Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. The HRSA Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program goal is to create and sustain rural health care networks and systems of care to maintain access to health care for rural residents. AzFlex joins together Arizona's 17 federally designated Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs), emergency medical service (EMS) providers, the state's 52 Rural Health Clinics (RHCs), and other health systems, entities and practitioners to increase rural health capacity, efficiencies and quality of care.

**Finance and Operations**—In March, 2023 AzFlex convened the popular CAH Coding and Billing Certification Boot Camp course as an in-person and virtual hybrid. Ten CAHs participated in the course with a record of 80 participants virtually and 13 in-person. Twelve participants passed the CAH Coding & Billing Specialist certification exam. (CAH-CBS).

AzFlex continued its partnership with the Southern Arizona Hospital Alliance (SAHA) to support a performance improvement network comprised of healthcare providers that serve Southern Arizona including four CAHs. The network supports hospitals, primary care practices, specialty clinics and healthcare professionals who represent the region's rural

AzFlex Trauma Managers meeting at Mt. Graham Regional Medical Center in Safford, Arizona.







Hopi Community Health Care Center, Polacca

healthcare delivery system by focusing on swing beds, cost reporting analysis and RHC development. AzFlex held a combined CAH/RHC Summit in June, 2023. Topics included Revenue Cycle Priorities, Swing Beds, Primary Care Medical Home model, peer review, SAHA network and care coordination.

AzFlex received additional funds to conduct outreach for the new Rural Emergency Hospital (REH) Designation. AzFlex worked with the Arizona Hospital & Healthcare Association (AzHHA) to conduct fiscal analyses about CAH conversion to REH designation. Based on that fiscal feasibility analysis, no Arizona CAH plans to convert to REH designation at this time.

**Quality Improvement**—Quality Improvement continues as a major Flex focus. AzFlex continues educating all AzCAHs on the changes in the Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement

Project (MBQIP) and orienting new staff to MBQIP. All AzCAHs participate in at least one MBQIP measure: patient safety, patient engagement, care transitions and outpatient measures. AzFlex continues its partnership with five other Flex programs (Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Utah and Washington) on quality improvement initiatives including Antibiotic Stewardship.

**EMS/Trauma**—AzFlex continues to co-manage the Arizona Trauma Managers workgroup and listserve with the Arizona Bureau of EMS.

**Population Health**—AzFlex continues to work in the area of Population Health which supports AzCAHs and rural areas with Social Determinants of Health by making sure rural residents have access to health insurance and primary care.

# The Arizona Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (AzSHIP)

Melissa Quezada, Joyce Hospodar, MBA, MPA, Leila Barraza JD, MPH, PI

## **The Arizona Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (AzSHIP) supports rural hospitals of 49 beds or less meet value-based payment and quality care goals.**

Since 2002, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA), Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) funds AzSHIP.

Rural hospitals face acute and long-standing economic and operational challenges that increase their risk of closure. Survival hinges on working collaboratively with partners, transforming service delivery, increasing access to quality care and identifying and addressing the social determinants of health that drive rural health disparities and poor health outcomes.

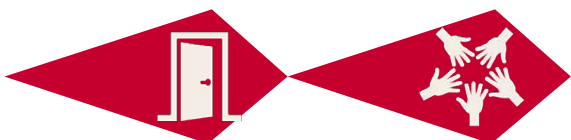
AzSHIP is comprised of two programs for eligible hospitals (see table). In the FY23 grant cycle, 13 rural Arizona hospitals participated in regular SHIP (R-SHIP); 15 of Arizona's 17 federally designated Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs), participated in the American Rescue Plan Act SHIP (ARPA-SHIP).

AzSHIP acts primarily as a pass-through for targeted federal support for eligible hospitals to

become or join an accountable care organization; participate in shared savings programs; purchase health information technology and training; and support quality improvement training and services. AzSHIP facilitates quality data collection training, Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey training, pharmacy disease registry training, telehealth equipment, revenue cycle management training and implementation.

ARPA allocated over \$4 million in funding for Arizona's small rural hospitals to expand COVID-19 testing and mitigation. ARPA-SHIP funding began in the fall of 2021, with a no cost extension allowing funds to be spent by December 31, 2023.

The combination of policy interventions that expanded Medicaid (2014), and sustained funding for AzSHIP, AzFlex and other rural support from federal, state, county and local levels have helped to stabilize and sustain Arizona's rural and critical access hospitals. The last Arizona CAH to close was in July, 2015.





Hopi Community Health Care Center, Polacca

**Pass through funds for R-SHIP and ARPA-SHIP**

	<b>R-SHIP</b>	<b>ARPA-SHIP</b>	<b>Total</b>
Funding Period	6/1/22 to 5/31/23	FY 23	
# Participating Hospitals	13	15	
Funds Per Hospital	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>\$246,600</b>	
<b>Total \$ distributed FY 23</b>	<b>\$156,352</b>	<b>\$1,178,345</b>	<b>\$1,334,697</b>
Projected for FY 24	<b>\$ 186,386</b>	<b>\$2,709,071</b>	<b>\$2,895,457</b>

# AzCRH Statewide Conferences 2022-23

Mariah Erhart

**The AzCRH Annual Rural and Public Health Policy Forum was held in person January 31, 2023.** More than 160 attended the Policy Forum held at The Virginia G. Piper Auditorium in downtown Phoenix. The Policy Forum addressed contemporary health policy issues and their impact on Arizona’s rural, border and tribal communities and provided a space to discuss priorities for the Arizona 2023 session. This year’s topics included: what to look for in the 2023 legislative session, how to make change at the local level, updates from the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), Medicaid redetermination, and much more.

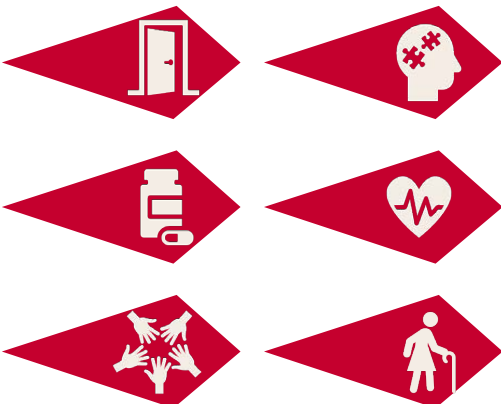
**The 49<sup>th</sup> Annual AzCRH Arizona Rural Health Conference “Enhancing The Rural Health Ecosystem” was held June 6-7, 2023 in Flagstaff, Arizona at the NAU High Country Conference Center.** With over 300 in person attendees, it was an energetic and engaged group, and the most well attended AzCRH conference ever! Conference presentations and recordings can be viewed on our website at: [crh.arizona.edu](http://crh.arizona.edu).

In addition to a record attendance, we were honored to have dynamic keynote, group and individual presenters and an incredible group of 26 students from the University of Arizona College of Nursing Summer Intensive Program. These students and other health professional students attending participated in large group conversations about rural health. They were able to gain confidence in these spaces and make connections that will aid them in their future careers and practice in Arizona. Students are the future of rural healthcare, and we hope to see even more student attendance at our 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Rural Health Conference to be held June 4-5, 2024!

Bryna Koch, DrPH, asks a question at a general session



Holy Figueroa, President of Arizona Rural Health Association (left) Jill Bullock, Associate Director of Center for Rural Health and Board member of AzRHA (center) with Guadalupe Campos of AzRHA (right)





UA College of Nursing Students hear about professional opportunities with Indian Health Services (IHS) from Lorraine Begaye, Health Recruitment Specialist during a break.



Dan Derksen, MD, opens the conference



Standing room only at a concurrent session



Tom Morris, FORHP, HRSA, HHS

# Arizona Health Workforce Data System Illuminating Arizona's Pathways to Practice

Bryna Koch DrPH, Susan Coates MBA & Charles Drake MS, MA

Visualizations and resources available on [crh.arizona.edu](http://crh.arizona.edu)

The Health Workforce Team created or updated the following visualizations in FY 23:

- Quantifying Arizona's Primary Care Shortages
- Arizona Health Workforce Profile: Physician Specialty Graduate Medical Education in Arizona
- Timeline: Developing Arizona's Healthcare Workforce Minimum Dataset
- Arizona Healthcare Employment, Projections, and Wage Report
- Arizona Marketplace and Medicaid Enrollment
- Arizona Rural Health Safety Net Map
- Graduate Medical Education 2023 Residents and Sites

Education, training, retention and support for Arizona's rural health workforce are essential to carrying out the AzCRH mission. Health workforce research and analysis help inform decisions on policies and programs aimed at supporting health workforce pathways from education to practice.

With support from the Arizona Area Health Education Center (AzaHEC) Program, we sustain the Arizona Health Workforce Data System (AzHWDS) project. The data warehouse serves as the foundation for our core report, the Arizona Health Workforce Profile Report. It includes updated workforce data, reports and policy briefs for behavior analysts, counselors, marriage and family therapists, nurses, physician assistants, physicians, psychologists, social workers, substance use disorder counselors and includes new data for the dentist and dental hygienist workforce.

In FY'23, the team assisted community health centers, not-for-profit organizations, UArizona Health Sciences and health workforce stakeholders to answer workforce data questions, guide program and grant development and respond to media, state and federal agency inquiries.

The team continued its long collaboration with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), Health System Designation, Primary Care Office and initiated a new workforce effort with the Bureau of Emergency Medical Services and Trauma Systems. Dr. Bryna Koch included the work of the team in presentations at state-wide conferences including the ADHS Maternal & Infant Mortality Summit, the Arizona Public Health Association (AzPHA) Spring Meeting, and the AzCRH 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Rural Health Conference.

**TIMELINE: DEVELOPING ARIZONA HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE MINIMUM DATA SET (MDS)**

Since 2017, Arizona healthcare stakeholders have collaborated to support the development of a system to provide timely, accurate, and standardized data about the healthcare workforce in our state, a minimum data set (MDS). Data on the healthcare workforce, including their primary work location, clinical hours, plans for retirement etc. is more important than ever as we observe the impacts and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on healthcare workers.

**2017**

- The Ad Hoc Committee of the Arizona Legislature on Health Care Workforce was created to make recommendations for the collection and publication of data concerning the healthcare workforce.
- The Committee met on **October 2, 2017**, and **December 18, 2017**. The discussion draft the University of Arizona Center for Rural Health developed for the committee is here
- The Committee recommended the following: 1) that the Legislature adopt legislation that directs, by January 1, 2020, that the licensing Boards designated in the legislation collect workforce data, as part of the licensing renewal process; and 2) that the stakeholders, licensing boards and interested parties, in conjunction with the Arizona Area Health Education Centers be encouraged to assist in the process of preparing for future legislation.

**2018**

- In the 2018 second regular session of the 53rd legislature, the legislature passed **HB 2197** "Directs, beginning on January 2, 2020, health professional regulatory boards to collect information for the Health Professional Workforce Database (Database) from individuals seeking initial or renewal licenses, certification or registration."
- Governor Ducey signed the bill on **May 16, 2018**.
- On **May 23, 2018**, the Vitalist Foundation convened stakeholders to review and discuss workforce MDS survey approaches.

**2019**

- In the 2019 first regular session of the 54th legislature, the legislature passed **SB 1096**, "Creates the Health Care Professionals Workforce Data Repository (Repository) to collect information from health professionals and establishes an advisory committee as outlined." Changes implementation date for licensing boards to January 2, 2021.
- Boards subject to the legislation are those in the **Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) Title 32 chapters 13** Medicine and Surgery (Arizona Medical Board), **15** Nursing (Board of Nursing), **17** Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons (Board of Osteopathic Examiners in Medicine and Surgery), **19** Board of Physical Therapy, **19.1** Psychologists (Board of Psychologist Examiners), and **33** Behavioral Health Professionals (Board of Behavioral Health Examiners).
- Governor Ducey signed the bill on **May 13, 2019**.

**2020-2021**

- The rule making process for the health professionals workforce data repository began in **March, 2020**.
- 2022**
- Final rulemaking was announced on **September 20, 2022**.
- The rule was finalized and effective as of **November 7, 2022**.
- The final rule can be found in **9 A.A.C. 11 Article 6**, Health Professionals Workforce Database.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
MEL & ENO SICKERMAN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
Center for Rural Health

Suggested Citation: DeKsen D, Koch B, Gam A. March, 2023. Timeline: Developing the Arizona Healthcare Workforce Minimum Data Set (MDS).



Gary Leslie, Public Health Educator, Hopi Community Healthcare Center, Polacca

# Advancing Health Equity, Addressing Disparities (AHEAD)

Mona Arora PhD, MSPH, PI, Jennifer Peters, Daniel Derksen MD

**The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC OT21-2103) National Initiative to Address COVID-19 Disparities among Populations at High Risk & Underserved, Including Racial & Ethnic Minority Populations & Rural Communities funds the Arizona Department of Health Services.** ADHS funds the AzCRH AHEAD initiative via a three-year, interagency services agreement (ISA). In its second year of funding, AHEAD mobilized partnerships and engaged communities in addressing social and health disparities through outreach and education; expanded services for vaccination, primary care and testing; conducted workshops and training to build workforce capacity; and developed new partnerships to address community concerns and unmet need related to the COVID-19 pandemic including substance and opioid use disorders (SUD/OD), healthy eating, active living, mindfulness and social wellness.

## AHEAD Services, Partnerships & Outreach

### Highlights:

- Subawarded funding to 16 rural and small libraries for the Arizona Librarians Enhancing Resilient Rural Communities project to address health disparities. Funded projects included:

distributing hygiene and wellness kits, conducting tai chi classes, and providing CPR and first aid training.

- Worked with the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association (AzHHA) to redesign Advance Care Planning education materials with community input; expanded access to the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, Disabilities and Access and Functional Needs (DAFN), and Senior communities. AzHHA also developed and disseminated the Best Practices for Accessible Communications guide.
- Engaged the public in Arizona community health events including the 2023 Tucson Festival of Books.
- Partnered the White Mountain Regional Medical Center Clinic Home Visit Program to expand primary care services to patients residing in the far reaches of its catchment area and promote awareness of this model for replication in other rural Arizona communities.
- Collaborated with AzHEALTHTXT to conduct a Community Needs Assessment to understand unmet needs and barriers to access healthcare information in Arizona's rural health workforce.
- Addressed the opioid epidemic exacerbated





# Mobile Outreach Vaccination & Education in Underserved Populations (MOVE UP)

Sheila Soto, DrPH, Cecilia Rosales MD, MS

Addressing Health Disparities One Community at a Time:

by the pandemic by developing education resources and working collaboratively with community organizations including the Benson Unified School District, Benson Hospital and Santa Cruz County Overcoming Substance Addiction (SOSA) consortium.

## AHEAD Training, Workshops & Education Highlights:

- Collaborated with the Tohono O’odham Nation’s Public Health Preparedness Program and Coconino Health and Human Services to train 35 staff on Public Health Fundamentals.
- Trained 93 middle and high school students in partnership with summer academic programs at the Southwest Environmental Health Sciences Center (SWEHSC), Mariposa Community Health Center and Southern Arizona Area Health Education Center (SAAHEC) summer youth programs.
- Partnered with the Regional Center for Border Health’s (RCBH) Western Arizona AHEC, Central Arizona AHEC, Southern Arizona AHEC, and Cochise Community College to train and graduate 44 Medical Assistants and 41 Direct Care Worker students.
- Sponsored a Long COVID Symposium.
- Collaborated to implement the Provider to Provider Warmline and sponsor 15 COVID-19 grand rounds sessions attended by over 1,100 healthcare professionals across the country.
- Partnered with MOVE UP and the Gila County Health Literacy Coalition to distribute over 2,000 copies of COVID-19 education materials in English and Spanish in Page, Safford, Globe, and Beaver Falls.

71,000

Administered COVID vaccines in underserved communities across the state through the MOVE-UP Mobile Health Unit (MHU) initiative.

25,166

MOVE UP provided wrap-around services including life-saving health screenings and referrals to care.

3,000

Distributed PPE and

2,500

COVID-19 testing kits in rural and underserved communities.

1,450

Facilitated the procurement and community distribution of Narcan (Naloxone) kits through the MHU initiative.




# Arizona First Responders Initiative

Joyce Hospodar, MBA, MPA

## Naloxone Leave Behind Program

In October 2022, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) awarded ADHS, Bureau of EMS & Trauma System, a four-year cooperative agreement under the First Responders – Comprehensive Addiction & Recovery Act (FR-CARA).

The FR-CARA objective is to promote a ‘Naloxone Leave Behind’ program targeting rural and underserved communities whereby First Responder agencies distribute Naloxone. Both the Arizona Emergency Medicine Research Center (AERMC) and the Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH) supported the project and helped with its design, implementation and evaluation.



**END THE EPIDEMIC**

Arizona First Responders Initiative

## Naloxone Leave Behind

**Participating EMS Agencies Receive:**

- **Training and Technical Assistance**  
ADHS and the University of Arizona have developed an online interactive Naloxone Leave Behind training.
- **Free Naloxone Leave Behind Kits**  
Each Naloxone Leave Behind kit includes a custom pouch with two doses of intranasal naloxone, instructions for use, and a list of resources specific to each EMS agency's jurisdiction.

**EMS Agencies can save lives by participating in the Arizona First Responders Initiative Naloxone Leave Behind Program.**

In Arizona, more than 5 people die every day from opioid overdoses. Naloxone Leave Behind Programs are evidence-based interventions that are proven to save lives. Naloxone Leave Behind Programs are legal and encouraged by the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) Bureau of EMS and Trauma System.

To participate, contact Sebastian Thomas:  
✉ [Sebastian.Thomas@azdhs.gov](mailto:Sebastian.Thomas@azdhs.gov)

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES | ARIZONA EMERGENCY MEDICINE RESEARCH CENTER | THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA MEL & ENID ZUCKERMAN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER FOR RURAL HEALTH



# Arizona Rural Recruitment & Retention Network (Az3RNET)

Joyce Hospodar, MBA, MPA

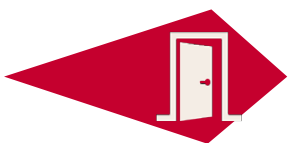
AzCRH, the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), and the Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers (AACHC) are members of the National 3RNET—a national leader for community-based health professional recruitment and retention.

The Arizona 3RNET website posts opportunities for both health professionals and employers located in rural and underserved areas of the state. It also provides information about the Arizona State Loan Repayment Program, National Health Service Corps opportunities and recruitment of J-1 visa physicians.

Rural health clinics (RHCs), rural, urban and critical access hospitals (CAHs), Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), behavioral health providers, and other healthcare organizations post job opportunities on the Arizona 3RNET website. During the reporting period, 21 new employers were added, 383 jobs were posted, and 13,921 referrals were made to registered employers.



UArizona College of Nursing Students at the Arizona Rural Health Conference



**3 R N E T**

# Arizona Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) AzMAT Mentors Program

Benjamin Brady DrPH, Bridget Murphy DBH, M.Ed.



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funds the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) and thereby the AzCRH via an interagency services agreement (ISA) for the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Mentors program.

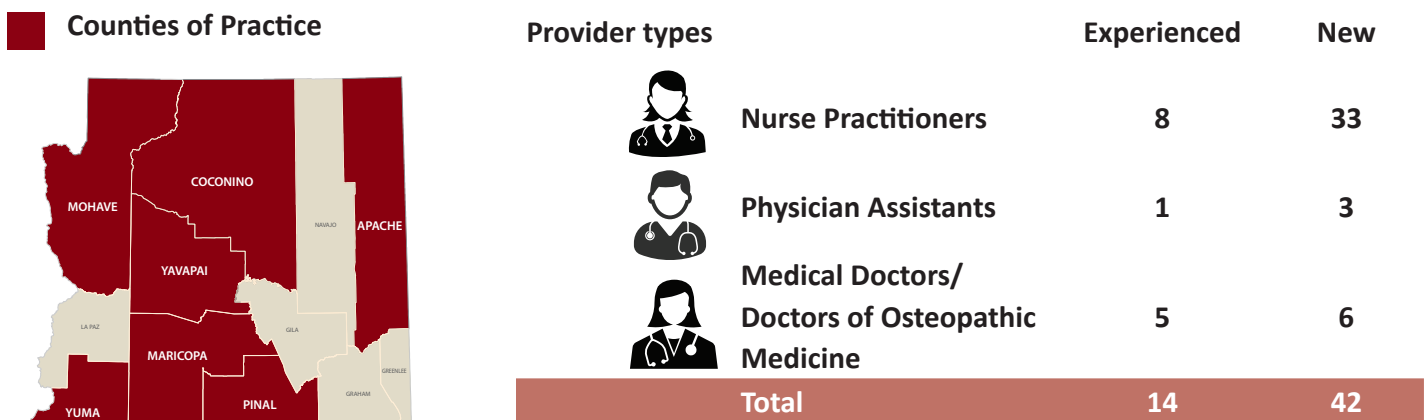
The MAT Mentors Program aims to increase Arizona healthcare providers capacity to prescribe buprenorphine, an evidence-based and recommended treatment for individuals with opioid use disorder (OUD). Participants include experienced MAT providers who are matched with less experienced, new MAT providers to offer mentorship through collaborative consultation. Consultation sessions are based on individualized goals and personalized discussions and guidance.

AzMAT Mentors offers training opportunities through professional, practice-based mentoring to address

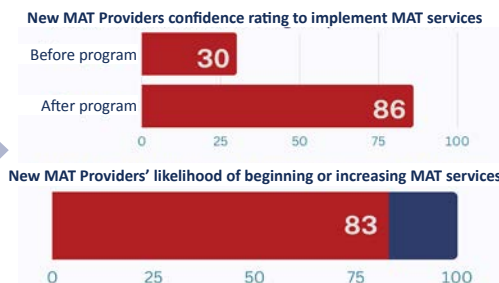
gaps in substance and opioid use disorder treatment services availability. The program engaged providers from nine of Arizona's 15 counties, including both rural and urban counties. Most participants are nurse practitioners, highlighting the importance of engaging a wide range of professional disciplines in offering OUD treatment. As shown in Figure below, participants from program year 3 (2022) reported substantial increases in confidence to implement MAT services. At the end of program, 83% of new MAT providers indicated they would begin or increase offering MAT services.

To further meet Arizona's prescribing provider OUD training needs, we recommend 1) offering continuing education credit to encourage additional less experienced providers to participate in OUD training programs like AzMAT Mentors; 2) expanding collaborative consultations to address pain and addiction; and 3) implementing organization-level approaches to promote opioid stewardship strategies.

## RESULTS: Participant Descriptions Years 1-4.



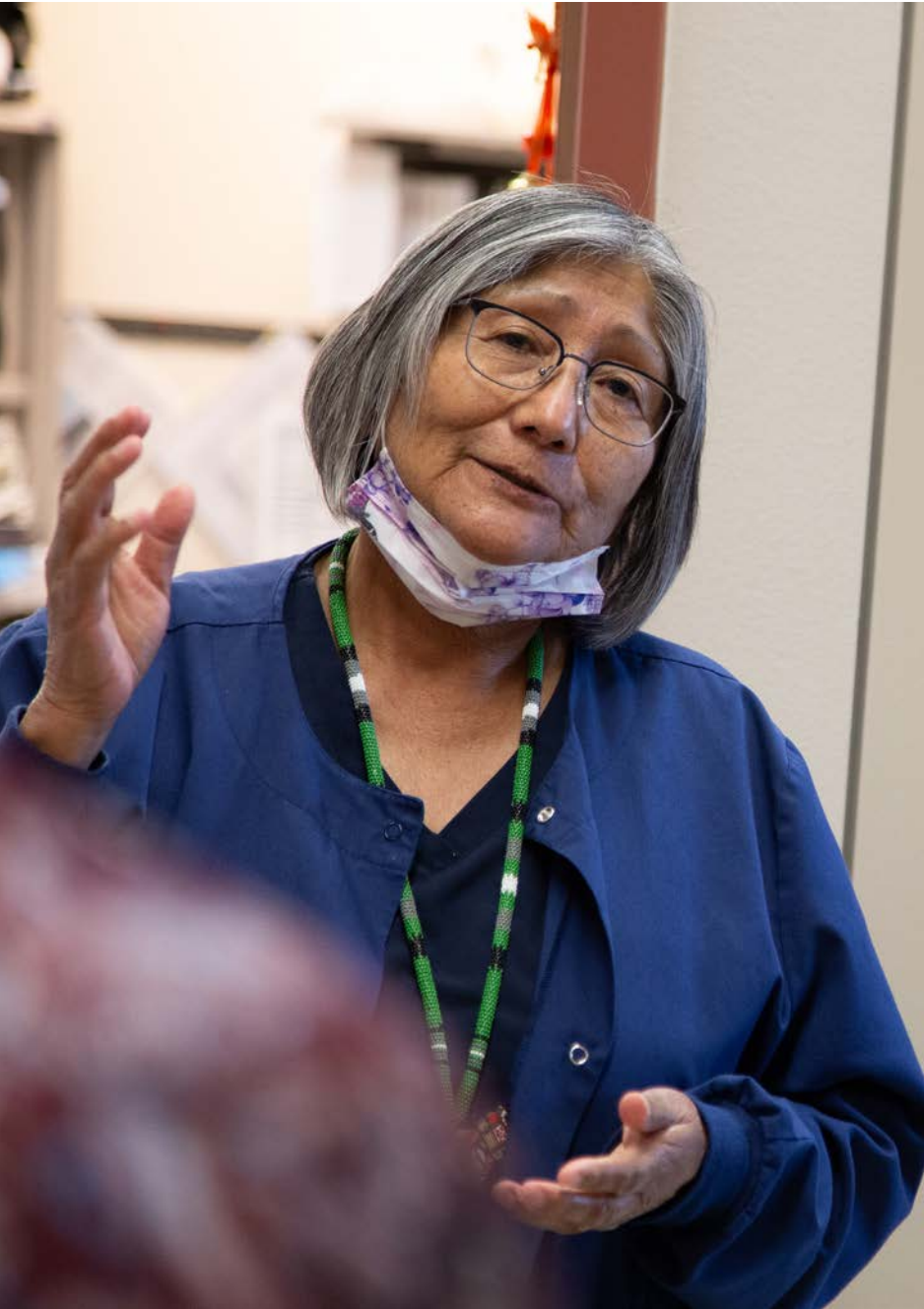
**POST PROGRAM RESULTS:**  
Our year 3 evaluation from the 16 new providers who completed the survey.





# Tribal Health Equity and Engagement

Agnes Attakai, MPA

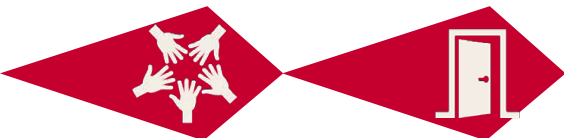


Carletta Johevama, RN, BSN, Supervisory Clinical Nurse - Outpatient, Hopi Health Care Center

**AzCRH collaborates with diverse partners to achieve health equity for American Indian communities by increasing access to Indigenous research, providing public health training, disseminating evidence-based information and strengthening health career pathways for American Indian students, health care providers and leaders.**

**Access to Indigenous Research – Served on the planning committees and facilitated sessions for the:**

- “Discover Tribal Approaches to Address Substance Use in Your Community” Nov 2022 Tribal Opioid & Substance Use Conference on indigenous approaches to building capacity and resilience to address substance use disorder in tribal communities.
- “Doing Research in Indian Country” Dec 2022 ASU conference “Being a Good Relative in Research” where participants learn to work collaboratively to address Arizona tribal community research needs.



---

**Provide Public Health Training – Presented:**

- “Indigenous perspectives of health, the impact of COVID and resilience” at the “COVID, Climate Change, & Preparedness: Lessons Learned Workshop” (Nov 2022),
- At the “Indigenous Peoples Health Forum” Pima County Health Department (Dec 2022).
- “Changing The Paradigm: Who Tells Our Story Shapes Our Destiny” (May 2023).
- “Strengthening Cultural and Intergenerational Communication Between CBOs and Tribal Health Depts/Organizations” (May 2023)
- “Arizona Complete Health Tribal Community Wellness and Awareness Conference” (June 2023).

**Disseminate Evidence-Based Information**

- Represented the UArizona and AzCRH on the Rural Quality Advisory Council for the Rural Quality Improvement Technical Assistance Program (RQITA) to improve rural quality and health outcome via technical assistance to beneficiaries of Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) quality initiatives.
- Served (2021-2023) on the National Rural Health Association Health Equity Council to promote and enhance physical and mental well-being for rural and frontier underserved

populations through national leadership, representation and advocacy for accessible, affordable, high quality health services that result in an improved quality of life.

- Served on the American Indian-AHEC Strategic Planning Committee; provided input on health career pathways for native students.

**Strengthen Health Career Pathways**

AzCRH in collaboration with UArizona and external partners coordinated and facilitated the meeting to strengthen health career programs for native students:

Taught in the Health Promotion Science Maternal & Child Health Programs in Rural Southwest service-learning course (Summer 2023).

Participated in the Association of American Indian Physicians Virtual Pre-Admission Workshop (Mar 2023); the 3rd American Indian/Alaska Native Virtual Workforce Development Summit (Apr 2023); and the Traditional Honoring Ceremony for graduating Native American Students from the UAHS, Colleges of Medicine, Pharmacy, Nursing and Public Health (May 2023).

Sponsored two interns for the Tribal Health Experiential Student Internship Seminar (THESIS) a partnership of the Southern Plains Tribal Health Board (SPTHB) and the CDC John R. Lewis Undergraduate Public Health Scholars Program (Summer 2023).

# Overdose Data to Action (OD2A), Recognition and Naloxone Training

Bridget Murphy DBH, Elena Cameron, Bianca SantaMaria MPH, Maria Losoya, Dominic Clichee MPH, Jason Horn MPH, Ehmer Taj, Daniel Derksen MD

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) via the Arizona Department of Health Services interagency services agreement (ISA) with AzCRH funds the OD2A initiative. AzCRH faculty, staff and students have been implementing the OD2A project for four years. OD2A aims to support communities to expand and enhance linkages to substance use care. This year we continued providing our overdose recognition and naloxone distribution training (ORND) with community health workers/representatives (CHW/R) and expanded our efforts to include training with other healthcare providers.

**“I will be better prepared to respond if and when I encounter someone who has experienced an opioid overdose.”**

**- Survey respondent**

**“In case of an emergency, I will know how to respond properly and efficiently.”**

**- Survey respondent**

## OD2A Outreach 2022–2023

Participated in 38 outreach events and distributed more than 1800 pieces of educational material, in English and Spanish, about overdose recognition and related resources. Examples include:

- DATOS del Fentanilo para familias. Que es fentanilo y como actua en su cuerpo.
- Donde encontrar naloxone disponible para revercion de sobredosis. Linea de VIDA prevencion de suicidio 24/7- 1800-273-8255
- Shatter the Stigma with Person First Language
- Fentanyl Facts for Families
- Know your rights Good Samaritan Law
- Arizona Opioid Assistance and Referral Line
- AZ 2-1-1
- Opioid Epidemic Within Pandemic
- Stay Safe and Healthy This Season Booklets. (AHEAD, AZ)





## Training & Technical Assistance

Trained CHW/R on how to recognize and respond to an overdose. From July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023, there were 14 trainings representing five counties (Cochise, Maricopa, Pinal, Pima, Yuma).

Developed training series addressing pain, substance use, and treatment for opioid use disorder (OUD). Included in-person, live virtual, and online asynchronous.

Finalized the Opioid Stewardship Program (OSP) implementation strategy guide.

## Coordination and Dissemination

- Coordinated substance use efforts in Arizona that included rural health hospitals and community-based prevention, harm reduction, and treatment organizations. This connected organizations with naloxone distributors, eased distribution challenges, provided medication-assisted treatment resources, and fostered collaboration between hospitals and behavioral health services.
- Connected organizations to support collaboration. For example, we connected the Team Awareness Combating Overdose (TACO) group with Pima County Health Department to support education about overdose.
- Distributed OUD treatment resources for American Indian populations in northeastern Arizona.
- Led three professional presentations to disseminate program information (Tribal Opioid Conference, Telemundo, and Addressing Pain and Addiction in Rural Communities).
- Participated in the ADHS-hosted Hepatitis C Elimination Advisory Group. Contributed to the Arizona Hepatitis C Elimination Plan.
- Submitted manuscript on findings from the OSP needs assessment.
- Finalized report summarizing results of the OSP implementation pilot.
- Distributed an assessment on needs and barriers associated with integrating the opioid prescribing guidelines into electronic health records.

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA**  
MEL & ENID ZUCKERMAN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
**Center for Rural Health**

**PROGRAMS**

Interested in collaborating with an experienced MAT provider to help you offer MAT?

Register to receive mentorship in prescribing medication for opioid use disorder  
[crh.arizona.edu/mentor](http://crh.arizona.edu/mentor)

**Recognition and Management of Opioid Overdose for Community Health Workers and Representatives**

Register to receive CHW/R opioid overdose prevention training  
[vlh.com/chwr](http://vlh.com/chwr)

Community Health Workers play crucial roles saving lives, reducing opioid overdoses, and helping individuals get into treatment.

**Opioid use disorder and behavioral health services for people who are AI/AN in Northeastern Arizona**

**BACKGROUND**

In Northeastern Arizona, for the American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) population, there are a multitude of healthcare service delivery organizations available to help individuals with opioid use disorder (OUD), including the (a) Indian Health Service, (b) Tribal Healthcare Organizations, and (c) Tribally Operated Health Programs, each with its unique structure and service delivery type. Their services range from clinical treatment and management to prevention-focused health promotion (see Table 1). This quick guide is designed for two purposes: (1) to provide an overview of these healthcare delivery organizations and (2) to help the AI/AN population and individuals serving them living in rural Northeast Arizona (Apache and Navajo County) navigate the different types of resources available for individuals with OUD.

**A. INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE (IHS)**

The IHS, an agency within the United States Department of Health and Human Services, is responsible for providing federal health services to people who are AI/AN. Its goal is to raise their health status to the highest possible level.<sup>1</sup> The IHS provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.6 million AI/AN people who belong to 574 federally recognized tribes in 37 states, including OUD services.<sup>1</sup> IHS facilities usually have the highest level of in-patient care compared to the other two health service delivery types covered in the next sections.

The IHS is divided into twelve regions, known as areas, throughout the U.S. Each area is comprised of regional tribes with a centrally located area office acting as a headquarters. Three IHS areas operate in Arizona, with two serving the AI/AN population in Northeastern Arizona, the Navajo Area and Phoenix Area. The Navajo Area Office is located in St. Michaels, AZ and the Phoenix Area Office located in Phoenix, AZ. The Navajo Area includes all of the Navajo Reservation, while the Phoenix Area includes Hopi and White River tribes.

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA**  
MEL & ENID ZUCKERMAN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
**Center for Rural Health**

Suggested citation: Clithee D. Opioid use disorder and behavioral health services for people who are AI/AN in Northeastern Arizona. University of Arizona, Center for Rural Health, 2022.

# The AzCRH Rural Health Professions Program (RHPP)

Marc Verhougstraete, PhD, Jennifer Peters

**The AzCRH Rural Health Professions Program (RHPP) at the Mel & Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health (MEZCOPH) is a partnership with the Arizona Area Health Education Center (AzAHEC) Program, its six Regional Centers (AIH-AHEC, CAAHEC, CERE, CPCHP, SAAHEC and WAHEC), and the nine RHPPs supported by the AzAHEC Program—the five UArizona health sciences colleges (MEZCOPH, Nursing, Pharmacy, Medicine–Tucson and Medicine–Phoenix; the ASU College of Nursing, and NAU School of Nursing and PA Program).**

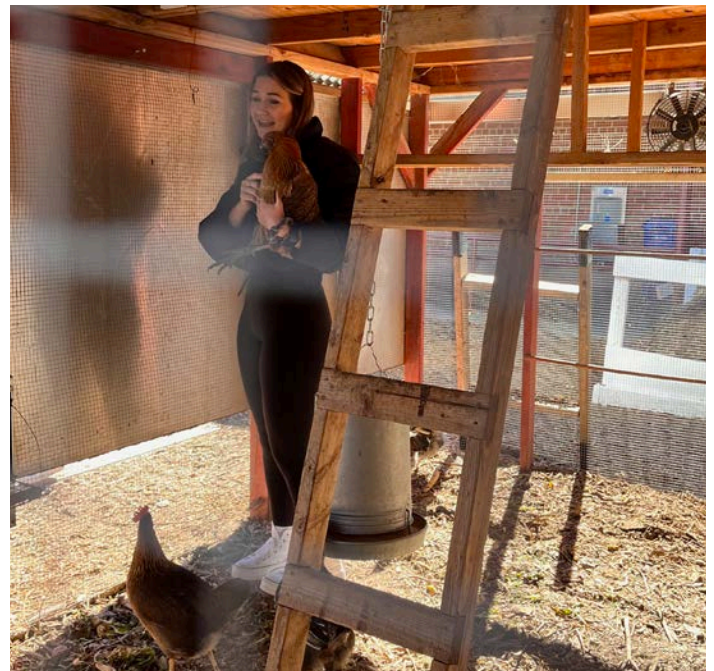
In FY23, the MEZCOPH RHPP program offered five graduate-level service-learning academic courses which allow active and experiential learning and reflection on health equity, social and environmental determinants of health and health disparities.

Our RHPP mission is to increase the number of public health students who graduate and serve rural and underserved Arizona communities and populations upon graduation. Records show that of the students who have participated, 76% are working in underserved areas or with organizations serving underserved populations in Arizona.

Since 2018, the RHPP has provided >190 students the opportunity to participate in service-learning courses and activities, totaling about 9,000 contact hours. Participants are 80% female, 40% Hispanic, >15% mixed race, 4% black or African American and 4% Asian. More than 40% of our students grew up in a rural area and 56% grew up in Arizona. In 2022-23, 39 MEZCOPH students

participated in five service-learning courses, internships and mission related activities. The courses and activities were held in a hybrid format with students meeting virtually prior to the in-person community immersions.

The MEZCOPH RHPP program also administers the Interprofessional AHEC Scholars Program with the eight other RHPPs. This two-year interprofessional program provides students with community-based experiential training in rural or underserved Arizona communities. In 2021-22, the program saw one cohort graduate at the annual RHPP meeting, another cohort continued to engage with Arizona's communities through their first year and recruited the new (Fall 2023-25) two-year cohort. MEZCOPH RHPP sponsored seven students in the graduating AHEC Scholars Program cohort and has four students in the continuing Scholars cohort.



Service-learning course student in Tucson tends the chickens at Manzo Elementary School Garden Program.





Artist and muralist Mel “Melo” Dominguez leads a City of South Tucson community tour for students in the **Family & Child Health in Urban, Underserved Settings Service-Learning public health graduate course**, to prompt discussion on how public and community-driven art spaces are critical to positive neighborhood development. (top left). Students harvest crops in the Tierra Anita

community garden in Tucson, (top right) which is managed by Primavera Foundation. Harvested fruits and vegetables are cleaned and provided with meals to people living in nearby shelters.

**PHPM 597D – 2023 Rural health service-learning course** students (bottom) pose in front of Mt. Graham after working with Discovery Park.

# The AzCRH Internship Program

Melissa Quezada

**The AzCRH Internship Program provides opportunities for undergraduate and graduate student internship and dissertation community-based projects in Arizona's rural and urban underserved areas.** In FY23, students worked on program design, implementation, evaluation and other projects.

## FY'23 Internship Highlights:

**Marianna Grigorov** is a current Master of Development Practice (MDP) student who supported the Library Champions Program from August 2022 to May 2023.

**Natasha Rapp** is a May 2023 graduate of the UArizona Master of Development Practice (MDP) program. She supported a service-learning course survey and report and developed training resources.

**Jason Horn** is a May 2023 graduate of the UArizona Zuckerman College of Public Health Master of Public Health (MPH) program. For his internship he created an evaluation protocol and REDcap survey for the Opioid Stewardship Program. He provided administrative support for the AzCRH Overdose Data To Action (OD2A) initiative. He now works for the Tucson Medical Center.

**Jan Muyot** is a May 2023 graduate of the UArizona Master of Public Health (MPH) program. During her internship she developed a youth centered Substance and Opioid Use Disorder (SUD/ODU) education module and training materials.

**Bobbie Alcanzo** is a UArizona medical student. During her internship she developed a long-term follow up protocol to assess the AzMAT Mentors

Program impact. She developed an instrument, connected with former participants, analyzed data, and is writing up the results.

**Kennedy Orr** is an undergraduate student who identified sustainability strategies to extend the program's influence beyond the end of grant funding. She completed a literature review of best practices, conducted a project staff focus group and is preparing a report.

**Ehmer Taj** collaborated during his graduate internship to develop a tool and collect data on Arizona healthcare organization readiness to integrate opioid prescribing guidelines into their electronic health records.

**Yesenia Siemens** is a Frontera undergraduate student. During her summer internship she is researching Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) services in Yuma and Pima counties for American Indian populations.

**Gabriela Elizondo-Craig** and **Halie Tewa** are both Master students who studied the Microbial Analysis and QMRA of *Helicobacter pylori* infection in Southwestern Arizona during the summer.

Special thank you to the AzCRH Rural Health Professions Program Student Practicum who supported the course development, community outreach and final project creation for service-learning course delivery.

HPS 597A – Family & Child Health in Urban Underserved Settings – **Sandra Rodriguez Quintana** (MPH – graduated 2023)

PHP 597C – Border Health Service-Learning Institute – **Karina Duenas**

PHPM 597D – Rural Health – **Taylor Simmons**

MILAGRO Independent Study – **Miguel Meza Balbin, Estefania Ochoa Mora**

Congratulations to our 2022-2023 AzCRH interns and graduates! Bear down!



# Students Helping Arizona Register Everyone (SHARE)

Estefania Mendivil

**Arizona Center for Rural Health trains UArizona Health Sciences students to learn to navigate the healthcare system and become health leaders.** SHARE students learn about the U.S. health system, including the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), the Children's Health Insurance program (CHIP, or KidsCare in Arizona), and private health insurance (including qualified health plans offered on Arizona's Federally Facilitated Marketplace).

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Arizona hard, and over 400,000 Arizonans lost their jobs – and thus employer sponsored insurance. With Public Health Emergency (PHE) funding from Health and Human Services, Medicaid enrollment in Arizona increased by 27% since the beginning of the pandemic, to reach 2.5 million enrollees. However, since March 1, 2023 through 8/1/23, more than 247,000 people (9.8% of 2.3 million enrollees) lost AHCCCS coverage coinciding with the end of the Public Health Emergency in May 2023, and resumption of the normal processes of Medicaid eligibility and enrollment that started 4/1/2023 in Arizona. Thank you to our SHARE Leaders and student volunteers for offering services in Arizona.



# AzCRH Navigator Initiative

## Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers

Cody Welty MSPH, Kennedy Orr, Gabriela Sanches, Dina Suarez, M.Ed, Maria Losoya, Marc Verhougstraete PhD, PI

### Navigator Accomplishments



Assisted **3,080** consumers through completed appointments



Enrolled **374** consumers in Marketplace, AHCCCS and/or CHIP/ KidsCare applications



Hosted **10,909** total office hours at libraries in Green Valley, Sahuarita, and Flowing Wells to provide enrollment assistance to community members

The Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers funds the AzCRH Navigator Initiative that helps rural Arizonans determine whether they are eligible for public health insurance or other public benefits and assists them with enrollment. Our AzCRH navigators educate individuals about health insurance options tailored to each individual and family need, assist with eligibility forms and enroll consumers in health coverage. Our navigators work throughout Southern Arizona to provide education and assistance about coverage options and public benefits via the Affordable Care Act's Marketplace, the state's Medicaid program (AHCCCS), Arizona's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP, known as KidsCare), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and others.

In project year 2022-23, our navigators reached an estimated 240,303 individuals through marketing efforts. Efforts included: providing over 10,000 flyers to 154 locations; being published in two Arizona Daily Star-La Estrella Newspaper columns; presenting in five radio programs for KNOG Radio 91.1 Manantial; being interviewed by Univision Tucson; and participating in six radio programs to reach and educate over 95,000 individuals. Outreach included partnering with new organizations: Thrive Resilience Program; Nosotros Comprometidos a Su Salud; United Healthcare Medicare Store; Southwest Family Community Center; Tucson C.A.R.E.S.; and Pima County Health Department Clinics.



The AzCRH Navigator Initiative offered in-person Marketplace and Medicaid eligibility and enrollment assistance and education to community members at over 172 event locations such as:

- TUSD Back to School vaccines event
- Sahuarita Community Food Bank
- Palo Verde High School Family Resource Event
- United Healthcare Medistore Event
- Pima County Cares Resource and Job Fair
- Pima One Stop Resource Event
- Nosotros Liver Health Awareness Event
- Pima County Resource and Job Fair
- Pima Binational Health Fair
- Tucson C.A.R.E.S. (Community Access, Referral, Education, and Service)
- Open Enrollment Events at Our Lady of Fatima and El Rio Clinic

## Contact our Navigators:

<https://crh.arizona.edu/programs/health-insurance-assistance>

**Dina Suarez:** [dsuarez6@arizona.edu](mailto:dsuarez6@arizona.edu),  
(520) 833-4935

**Maria Losoya:** [mlosoya@arizona.edu](mailto:mlosoya@arizona.edu),  
(520) 268-0126

**Gaby Sanchez:** [gabrielasanchez@arizona.edu](mailto:gabrielasanchez@arizona.edu),  
(520) 833-2312

**Schedule an appointment at:**  
[coveraz.org/connector](https://coveraz.org/connector)

**Facebook:** [@AzCRHNavs](https://www.facebook.com/AzCRHNavs)  
<https://www.facebook.com/AzCRHNavs>



# Arizona Rural Emergency Medical Services Quality Assurance Program (Quality AZ)

Joshua Gaither, MD, Justin Lara, BS, Jennifer Smith, MD, PI

**The AZ Rural EMS Quality Program was one of just six supplemental grants awarded under the Rural Hospital Flexibility Program nationally.** The program seeks to improve rural EMS agency performance on national benchmarks by improving data collection, implementing automated quality improvement (QI) systems and providing benchmark directed education. The Program is being implemented at five rural EMS agencies—Nogales Fire District, Sonoita–Elgin Fire District, Central Arizona Fire & Medical Authority, Timber Mesa Fire & Medical District and Heber–Overgaard Fire District. It targets areas where significant differences exist between rural and urban EMS patient–centered outcomes. If effective, we will work with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) to make the Program’s QI tools available across the State.

During Year 1, our team laid the foundation for implementing these QI systems—establishing the required information technology infrastructure, developing EMS provider education content and executing data use agreements.

To kick off Project Year 1, our team met with each of the five EMS agencies. Objectives for the meetings were to discuss the project; identify key technology requirements—ePCR systems and access points; connect with the key personnel at each site who will lead the project, serve as primary contacts and agency program advocates; and navigate around potential roadblocks. For example, the Sonoita–Elgin Fire Department identified an obstacle as implementing a new ePCR system, making it difficult to collect retrospective data.

We obtained University of Arizona IRB approval to analyze EMS agency data for the primary purpose of quality improvement and executed data use agreements with the five rural EMS agencies.

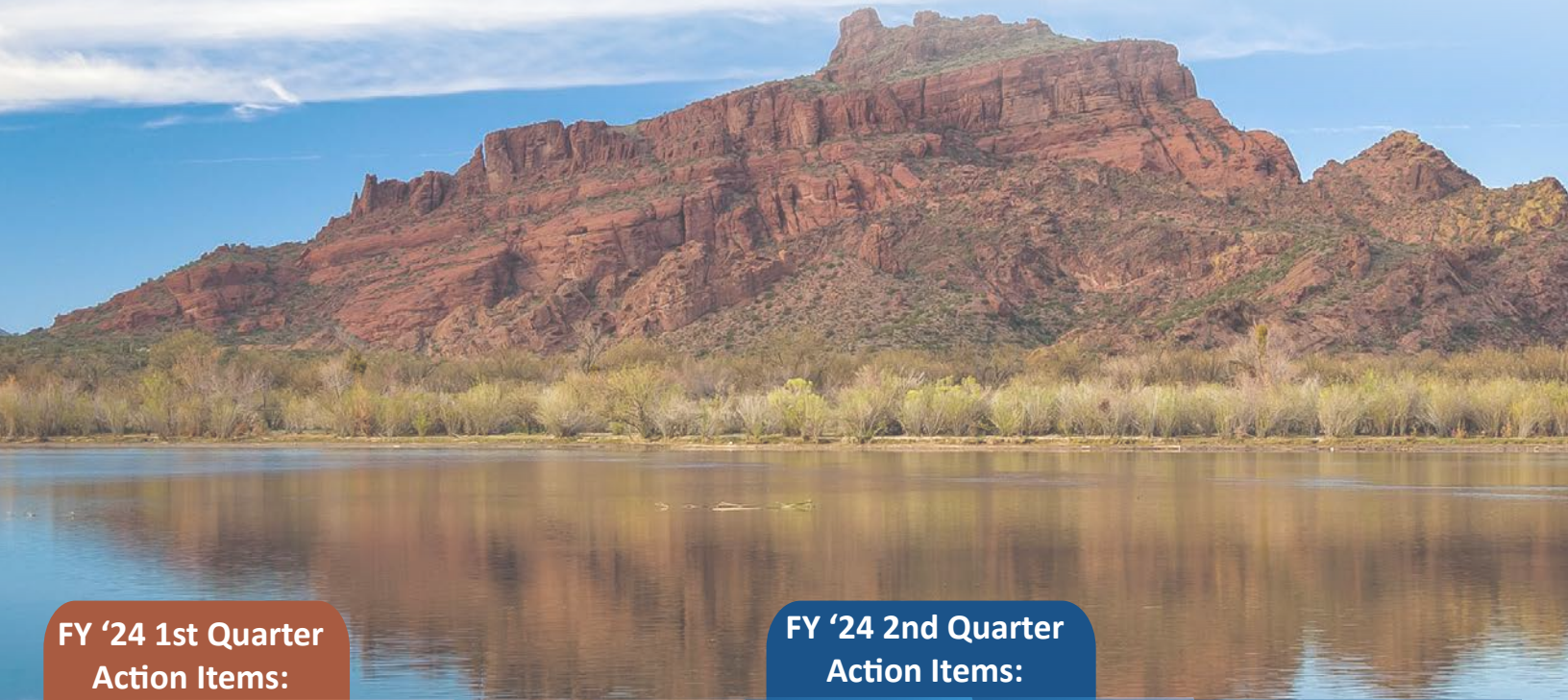
The project team developed two-hours of EMS provider training for each agency using Articulate software. Topics included the importance of data completeness, data quality for reporting, evidence-based guidelines and EMS research. To ensure that each EMS agency could complete the training, we distributed iPads with FirstNet data service. We supplemented online training with three live 30-minute Zoom sessions reinforce the concepts using case-based scenarios to stimulate engagement and discussion and answered questions.

The team designed data queries for each agency’s ePCR system to track the clinical benchmarks, capture relevant data and report on performance.



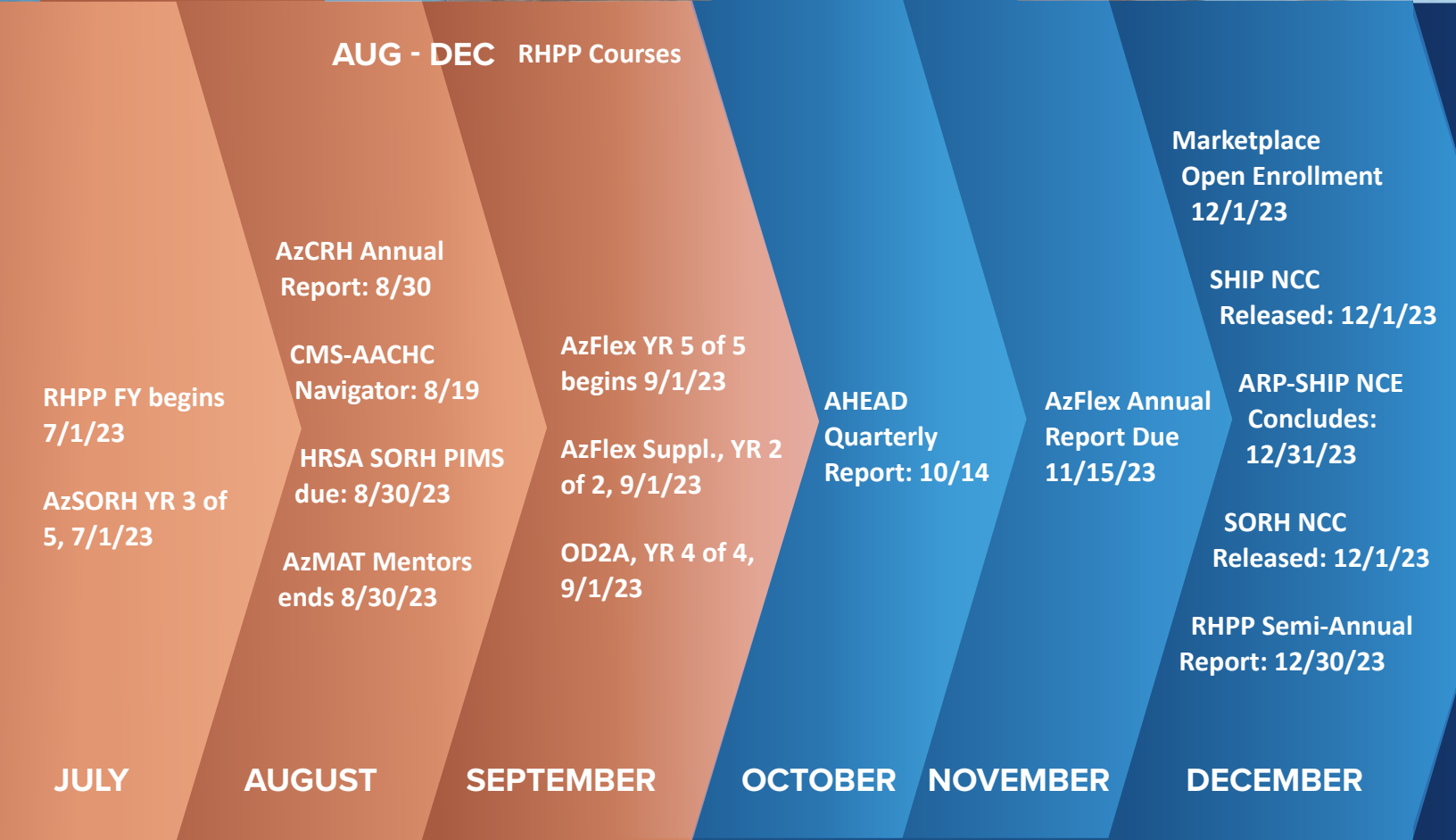


# AzCRH Deliverables – FY24: July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024



## FY '24 1st Quarter Action Items:

## FY '24 2nd Quarter Action Items:





Salt River, Arizona

**FY '24 3rd Quarter  
Action Items:**

**FY '24 4th Quarter  
Action Items:**

**JAN - MAR** RHPP Course (TUC)

RHPP Course  
(PHX)

Rural & PH Policy  
Conf 2/6/23

SHIP NCC Due:  
Mid-Feb

ADHS OD2A Qrtrly  
Report: 2/28/24

SORH CC Due:  
Mid-Mar

Flex NCC  
released: Mid-  
March

AHEAD  
Quarterly  
Report: 4/14

RHPP Annual  
Conference

Navigator  
Quarterly  
Report: 4/14

RHPP Community  
Engagement

RHPP Tribal & Rural  
Course

ADHS OD2A  
Quarterly Report:  
5/31/24

50<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Rural Health  
Conference June  
3-5, 2024

SHIP Grant Yr  
starts: 6/1/24

ADHS-CDC  
Award Yr 2 of 2  
starts: 6/1/24

MAT Mentors  
Quarterly Report  
due: 6/30/24

**JANUARY**

**FEBRUARY**

**MARCH**

**APRIL**

**MAY**

**JUNE**

# Arizona Center for Rural Health Faculty and Staff



**Daniel Derksen, MD, Director**  
Arizona Center for Rural Health  
Professor, Associate VP  
University of Arizona  
dderksen@arizona.edu

**Jill Bullock, Associate Director**  
Arizona Center for Rural Health  
Flex Coordinator  
bullock1@arizona.edu

**Paul Akmajian, MFA**  
Manager Marketing and Outreach  
pakmajian@arizona.edu

**Mona Arora, PhD, MSPH**  
Assistant Research Professor  
manand@email.arizona.edu

**Agnes Attakai, MPA**  
Health Disparities Outreach &  
Prevention  
agnes@arizona.edu

**Pam Barnes, BS, MBA**  
Business Manager  
pbarns@arizona.edu

**Leila Barraza, JD, MPH**  
Associate Professor  
Director, Arizona AHEC Program  
lbarraza@arizona.edu

**Benjamin Brady, DrPH**  
Assistant Research Professor  
brb99@arizona.edu

**Elena Cameron**  
Health Educator Assistant  
ercameron@arizona.edu

**Dominic Clichee, DrPH(c), MPH**  
Program Management Assistant II  
dominicclichee@email.arizona.edu

**Susan Coates, MBA**  
Principal Database Specialist  
scoates@arizona.edu

**Charles Drake, MS, MA**  
Data Architect III  
cdrake@arizona.edu

**Mariah Erhart**  
Community Outreach Professional  
merhart@arizona.edu

**Ann Garn**  
Manager Marketing and Outreach  
agarn@arizona.edu

**Rod Gorrell**  
Finance Manager  
gorrellr@arizona.edu

**Loren Halili, MPH**  
Program Coordinator  
lorenhalili@arizona.edu

**Jason Horn**  
Administrative Support  
hornjason86@catworks.arizona.edu

**Joyce Hospodar, MBA, MPA**  
Senior Advisor, Rural Programs  
hospodar@arizona.edu

**Bryna Koch, DrPH**  
Assistant Research Professor  
brynak@arizona.edu

**Maria Losoya**  
Health Educator and Community  
Outreach Specialist  
mlosoya@arizona.edu

**Estefania Mendivil**  
Community Outreach Professional I  
emendivil@arizona.edu

**Michelle Moore, MS, MPH**  
Program Management Assistant  
mmoore4@arizona.edu

**Bridget S. Murphy, DBH**  
Assistant Research Professor  
bridget@arizona.edu

**Sheryl Nelson, MA**  
Project Management Assistant II  
snelson4@arizona.edu

**Kennedy Orr**  
Administrative and Program Support  
kennedyorr@arizona.edu

**Angelina Oteng-Quarshi**  
Student Project Contributor  
aotengquarshie@arizona.edu

**Jennifer Peters**  
Manager, State Office of Rural Health,  
Program Advisor, AHEAD AZ  
petersjs@arizona.edu

**Melissa Quezada**  
Executive Associate  
melissaquezada@arizona.edu

**Jack Ringhand, BSN**  
Student Project Contributor  
jackringhand@arizona.edu

**Gabriela Sanchez**  
Health Educator and Promotion  
Professional, Certified Health  
Insurance Navigator  
gabrielasanchez@arizona.edu

**Bianca SantaMaria, MPH**  
Health Education and Promotion  
Professional II  
biancas@arizona.edu

**Laura Schweers, MSW**  
Program Manager Assistant  
schweers@arizona.edu

**Dina Suarez, M.Ed**  
Certified Health Insurance Navigator  
dsuarez6@arizona.edu

**Ehmer Anwar Taj**  
Assessment Specialist  
ehmert@arizona.edu

**Maria Rocio Torres, MPH**  
Program Management Assistant  
torresm1@arizona.edu

**Marc Verhougstraete, PhD**  
Associate Professor  
Director, Rural Health Professions  
Program  
mverhougstraete@arizona.edu

**Cody Welty, MSPH**  
Program Coordinator  
codywelty@email.arizona.edu

**Patrick Wightman, PhD**  
Assistant Research Professor  
wightman@arizona.edu

