

# PROGRAM SUMMARY

CDC COVID-19 Health Disparities Grant

## Key Impacts:



The Safe Zone workshops deepened participants' understanding of the impacts of racism and other systemic biases that impact the health of high-risk and marginalized populations such as the LGBTQ community, people with substance use and mental health issues, enabling them to address policy barriers and improve local systems and health equity.

The MA Fast Track program helped to address the shortage of health professionals in critical areas and provided career advancement opportunities. Participation from the health centers meant the ability to combine additional training with students' regular duties. The ongoing support from CAAHEC and the RCBH through the program represents a significant commitment to the health centers and their communities.



## Fast-track Online Medical Office Specialist Pilot Program and Safe Zone Workshops

### Program Description:

- ▶ Safe Zone Workshops bring together health equity, social justice, and access-to-care concepts to describe patterns and underlying causes of inequities, and the systems and policy barriers that contribute to health disparities.
- ▶ CAAHEC partnered with the Regional Center for Border Health (RCBH) to provide opportunities for health center staff to train prospective and current Medical Assistants (MAs) through a Medical Office Specialist Pilot Program known as MA Fast Track, training students how to check in patients, collect payment and insurance information, and more.

### Program Goals:

- ▶ Address barriers to care faced by minority and marginalized populations and improve health disparities through Safe Zone workshops.
- ▶ Respond to healthcare workforce shortages through early and accelerated MA training.



## CDC COVID-19 Health Disparities Grant Strategies:

**Strategy 1:** Expand existing and/or develop new mitigation and prevention resources and services to reduce COVID-19-related disparities among populations at higher risk and that are underserved.

**Strategy 4:** Mobilize partners and collaborators to advance health equity and address social determinants of health as they relate to COVID-19 health disparities among populations at higher risk and that are underserved.



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### Milestones:

- ▶ Conducted two Safe Zone workshops in the Summer of 2022 and the Spring of 2023, educating University of Arizona Health Sciences students, Area Health Education Centers Scholars, health care professionals, and high school students
- ▶ Launched two cohorts of students
- ▶ Cohort 1: 88% of 32 students graduated from the MA pilot program in February 2023; 100% of these passed their national certifications in Medical Assisting and Medical Office Specialists.
- ▶ Cohort 2: 30 students are currently enrolled the program

*“The MA Fast Track program has great potential, it is a morale booster for our team and if there are additional opportunities to expand, that would be incredible for our health center!”*



### Stepping into the future:

The MA Fast Track program is ongoing.

### Partnerships developed or strengthened:



University of Arizona College of Nursing  
 Regional Center for Border Health-College of Health Careers  
 Neighborhood Outreach Access to Health (NOAH)  
 Wesley Community and Health Centers  
 Desert Senita Community Health Center

Canyonlands Healthcare  
 Creek Valley Health Clinic  
 Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation  
 Chiricahua Community Health Centers, Inc.  
 Circle the City  
 Native Health

Primary



### Health Equity SDOH Primary Area of Impact:

Education

Employment

Health Systems and Services

Housing

Income and Wealth

Physical Environment

Public Safety

Social Environment

Transportation

Secondary



Tertiary



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Advancing Health Equity • Addressing Disparities in Arizona