




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

Center for Rural Health



Annual Report FY 2023-24



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 50th Annual Rural Health Conference.



Arizona Center for Rural Health Annual Report FY 2023-24 | Copyright © 2024

Graphic design: Ann Garn | Photographs: Dan Derksen (p. 2)

Ann Garn (p. 6, 7, 12, 13, 15, 17, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 36) Michelle Moore (p. 16), Ken Miller (p. 33, 34-35)

Like us on Facebook | Join us on Twitter | Link with us on LinkedIn | crh.arizona.edu



Executive Summary FY 2023-24

Daniel Derksen, MD, Director, Arizona Center for Rural Health

What a year it has been! The Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH) hosted its 50th Annual Rural Health Conference June 3-5, 2024 in Flagstaff for a record 444 attendees. It was an extraordinary opportunity to honor the many contributions you made over that time. The following pages summarize the AzCRH programs, initiatives and progress for the time period from 7/1/2023 through 6/30/2024. We look forward to identifying and addressing rural health care challenges with you going forward.

AzCRH houses federal, state and foundation 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'24 grant funded AzCRH initiatives included: our state and federally funded and designated Arizona State Office of Rural Health (AzSORH); the HRSA Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (AzFlex) and Small Rural Hospital Improvement (AzSHIP) Programs; and ADHS, ARPA, CDC, CMS and SAMHSA funding that allow AzCRH staff, faculty and collaborators to provide technical assistance, education and information exchange between federal, state and foundation funding entities and rural health providers including Arizona's 17 critical access hospitals (CAHs), 52 rural health clinics (RHCs), 23 community health center systems in their more than 170 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 and the nation, we thank you for your engagement and collaboration. We look forward to continuing our work with you in 2025 and beyond!

Daniel Derksen, MD
Director, AzCRH

Jill Bullock
Associate Director

Arizona State Office of Rural Health (AzSORH)

Jennifer Peters, Program Manager, Daniel Derksen MD, Director and Principal Investigator

AzSORH links the AzCRH's diverse staff and faculty with rural communities, organizations, stakeholders, local, 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 the health workforce pipeline to practice in rural and underserved areas.
- Collect and analyze rural health data, produce actionable reports, and publish data visualizations.
- Identify and address factors that create disparities in rural and underserved communities.
- Promote accessible, affordable, and culturally competent healthcare for all Arizonans.

Since 1990 AzCRH has been the **state and federally funded and designated State Office of Rural Health (SORH)**. Every state has a SORH, Arizona is one of just ten states where the SORH is not embedded in a state government agency, and one of just two U.S. colleges of public health housing a State Office of Rural Health. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) federal funding requires a non-federal match – for every HRSA dollar, three dollars of non-federal support are required (1:3 federal to state match). The non-federal support is funded by the State of Arizona through a recurring appropriation to the University of Arizona (U of A) Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health (MEZCOPH).

AzSORH collects and disseminates rural health information, coordinates rural health activities in the state, provides technical assistance to rural communities and entities providing rural health services including Arizona's 17 federally designated Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs), 52 Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) of which 29 are CAH-affiliated, 18 Tribal-operated (P.L. 93-638 Self-determination) and 15 Indian Health Service clinics and hospitals, 23 community health center systems that operate more than 170 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), county health departments, state agencies – the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), the state's Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program called KidsCare, and private providers, practices, businesses and others. From June 3 to June 5, 2024 the AzCRH hosted the 50th Annual Rural Health Conference in Flagstaff Arizona for 444 in-person attendees.

There is no one-size-fits-all “solution” to improving the health and wellness of Arizona's rural and vulnerable populations. AzSORH

1990



The Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH) has been the federally designated Arizona State Office of Rural Health (AzSORH) since 1990.

embraces a multi-level, multi-sectoral approach to provide technical assistance and act as a conduit for local, state and federal resources directly to rural communities, providers, and care systems. Arizona’s rural areas comprise over 80% of the state’s land area and are home to 10.7% of its population (see [US Census Updates Brief](#)) and face unique health-care challenges, including higher rates of chronic diseases and limited access to healthcare services. Despite these challenges, rural communities can leverage strategic partnerships to be places of great vitality, innovation, and resilience. AzSORH works diligently to bridge gaps in healthcare access, ensuring that the diverse and often underserved populations in these areas receive the necessary support to improve their overall health and wellness.

Through the efforts of multiple faculty and staff, AzSORH facilitates access to funding, technical assistance, and workforce development programs. In the past year, AzSORH has collaborated with local, state, and federal partners to promote health initiatives tailored to the specific needs of Arizona’s rural, border, tribal and urban underserved populations, focusing on preventive care, clinical capacity and quality, workforce analysis, community capacity building and resilience, network building, and information sharing. By disseminating innovative health solutions and informing policy deliberations that address disparities, AzSORH works to improve overall health outcomes and reduce health inequities in underserved areas.

AZSORH FIVE-YEAR SUMMARY: JULY 1 TO JUNE 30 FISCAL YEAR (FY)

AZSORH ACTIVITY	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Total Technical Assistance	4,236	5,210	5,189	5,201	5,306	5,549
In-Person Contacts	2,620	2,631	279	385	553	753
Phone / Emails	545	484	474	425	498	506
Webinar Participation	749	1,343	1,196	1,347	1,149	1,090
Teleconference	106	134	148	261	273	283
Other Modes (Media, Surveys, Website, Etc.)*	216	553	3,092	2,783	2,833	2,917
Newsletter Distribution	9,792	10,164	10,070	10,893	11,758	19,347
Web Page Visits	40,696	46,143	44,601	85,666	68,275	70,492

*Previously labeled as “Assistance to researchers, others”

CONNECTING ARIZONA

Continuing its long tradition of Connecting Arizona, AzCRH expanded its reach beyond traditional activities like newsletters and webinars with new strategies aimed at relationship building, face-to-face site visits and partner support. In 2023–24, AzCRH staff and faculty visited and supported organizations in 86 unique communities in all 15 Arizona counties.

Visited & Supported Arizona’s 17 Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs)

100%

Visited or Supported 50 of Arizona’s 52 Rural Health Clinics

96%

Grew Newsletter Distribution by

164%

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

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

AzCRH supports the Arizona Department of Health Service (ADHS) Arizona Health Improvement Plan (AzHIP) Rural & Urban Underserved Health priority area. AzHIP provides a structure for a networked system of partners to improve the health of communities and individuals across Arizona. The entire 2021-25 AzHIP can be found at azdhs.gov. Dan Derksen, MD is a member of the AzHIP Steering Committee and Bryna Koch, DrPH participates as part of the AzHIP network.

Bryna Koch also serves as the Principal Investigator (PI) of an interagency services agreement (ISA) funded project under the AzHIP Rural & Underserved Health Priority action area of “Address Health Professional Shortage by Building a Diverse Healthcare Workforce.” This project aims to develop strategies to reduce financial and other barriers for underserved students in health professions education programs.

In FY 24, the final year of the two-year project, the AzCRH -AzHIP team continued to work with two 2024 MPH graduates, Angel Oteng-Quarshie and Jack Ringhand. We focused on:

- 1) Identifying successful components of health professional education pathway and training programs that aim to serve underserved students and/or expose students to educational experiences in rural and underserved areas.
 - ▶ The AzCRH - AzHIP team completed a literature review. Jack Ringhand, MPH prepared an extensive research summary as part of his MPH internship experience at the AzCRH.
- 2) Conducting key informant interviews with the program directors of pathway and rural and underserved educational experience programs and health professions college student services

U of A Nursing Students chat with Holly Figueroa of the Arizona Rural Health Association During the 50th Annual Arizona Rural Health Conference.



professionals to better understand the financial and other barriers experienced by underserved students in these programs.

- ▶ The AzCRH - AzHIP team conducted interviews with 15 key informants to learn how support for underserved students in health professions education programs can be strengthened. The team analyzed these interviews using the qualitative software program, MaxQDA. This analysis identified themes and recommendations that will provide insight and actionable steps back to the AzHIP network on how to reduce financial and other barriers for underserved health professions students.
- 3) Providing direct support to students in the Rural Health Professions Program (RHPP) at any of the three public Universities:

University of Arizona (U of A), Arizona State University (ASU), and Northern Arizona University (NAU).

- ▶ The AzCRH - AzHIP project supported RHPP students from U of A (three MD students, one DNP student) and ASU (two DNP students) to attend the 50th Annual Rural Health Conference. This support directly addressed a financial barrier that students experience in their education careers: the ability to attend professional conferences.

The final report is posted on our AzCRH website at: <https://crh.arizona.edu/publications/azcrh-publications>. Findings will be presented to the AzHIP network. AzCRH looks forward to continued collaboration with ADHS to address the AzHIP Rural & Urban Underserved Health priority area.

Medical Students at the U of A Health Sciences Interprofessional Clinical and Professional Skills Center.



Arizona Rural Hospital Flexibility Program (AzFlex)

Jill Bullock, Joyce Hospodar, MBA, MPA, Brianna Rooney, DrPH and Daniel Derksen, MD

AzFlex is in its 26th year of continuous funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA), Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP). It is a core program in the Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH). The Flex goal is to create and sustain rural health care networks and systems of care to maintain access to health care for rural residents by working with Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs), physicians, EMS and other health providers, and clinics to increase efficiencies and quality of care. Arizona has 17 federally designated CAHs and 29 CAH-affiliated Rural Health Clinics (RHCs).

Finance and Operations: In March 2024, AzFlex convened its popular CAH Coding and Billing Certification Bootcamp. Eleven of Arizona's 17 CAHs participated with a record of 144 virtual and 23 in person participants. Twelve CAH participants passed the Coding & Billing Specialist certification test.

AzFlex continued its partnership with the Southern Arizona Hospital Alliance (SAHA) on a performance improvement network comprised of healthcare providers and four CAHs. The network supports rural hospitals, primary care and specialty clinics and providers focusing on swing beds, cost reporting analysis and RHC development. This year SAHA worked with a consultant on a comprehensive financial and operational performance analysis to identify areas for improvement and plan for a northern Arizona network expansion.

Quality Improvement (QI): continues as an AzFlex program priority by educating AzCAHs on Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Project (MBQIP) changes and orienting new staff. MBQIP measures include patient safety, patient engagement, care transitions and outpatient measures. Each AzCAH participates in at least one MBQIP measure. AzFlex partners with Flex programs in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah and Washington on antibiotic stewardship and a QI webinar series.

Population Health: AzFlex incorporates Population Health in all Flex activities, supports AzCAHs with Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) education and helps assure rural residents have access to health insurance and primary care.

AzFLEX FORWARD

University of Arizona Center for Rural Health was awarded its next five-year competing continuation grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy that will begin 9/1/24 and extend through 8/31/29.

1999

In 1999 The Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH) initiated the AzFlex program with funding from HRSA's Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program.

Arizona Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program Emergency Medical Services Supplement

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

The AzFlex Rural EMS Quality Program was one of just six supplemental grants awarded by the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA), Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) under the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Program nationally. Over the two years, the program improved rural EMS agency performance on national benchmarks by enhancing data collection, implementing automated quality improvement (QI) systems and providing benchmark directed education. It was 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. The QI tools were shared with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) and are now available for use by any EMS agency in Arizona.

During Year 2, our AzQuality team implemented QI programs at the five participating EMS agencies establishing “closed call rules” and performance measure benchmark reports for each agency for high risk 911 calls. These rules are an area of patient care documentation that must be completed by the EMT or Paramedic and submitted with the patient care report. The objectives for these new rules were to improve EMT and Paramedic documentation of the care provided and to stress the importance of new closed call rules for chest pain, stroke, and traumatic injury calls.

The project team developed and distributed EMTs and Paramedics education on why and how new closed call rules would be used. An astounding 100% of the five participating EMS agency EMTs

and Paramedics completed training, a testament to their hard work and dedication.

Following training and implementation of the closed call rules, EMS agency performance on national quality measures was monitored to determine if improvements were made. The project team provided quarterly benchmark performance data to the participating EMS agencies. EMS agency dedication to QI, data driven patient care and accurate data collection dramatically improved performance. Prior to the AzQuality program, only two of the five participating EMS agencies documented a “last know well time” for patients transported with stroke symptoms. Following closed call rule implementation and benchmark reporting, all five EMS agencies reported last know well times for stroke patients, with some reporting times for 100% of cases. This improvement helps assure that these patients receive timely thrombolytic therapy to preserve neurologic function.

The AzQuality team shared its QI toolkits with other Arizona EMS agencies. The ADHS EMS Education Committee reviewed, approved and posted the toolkits on the ADHS website.

AzFLEX EMS FORWARD

HRSA awarded AzCRH a new, five-year competing continuation Flex EMS Supplement for the time period 9/1/24 to 8/31/29 titled: *Rural EMS Recruitment, Retention & Reimbursement Project (R4 Project)*.

The Arizona Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (AzSHIP)

Melissa Quezada, R-SHIP Program Manager
Joyce Hospodar, ARPA-SHIP Program Manager
Daniel Derksen, MD, AzSHIP PI (2013–2018)
Leila Barraza JD, MPH, AzSHIP PI (2018–2023)
Brianna Rooney DrPH, AzSHIP PI (2024 to current)

Since 2002, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) has funded the Arizona Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (AzSHIP) in the Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH). The initiative supports rural hospitals of 49 beds or less meet value-based payment and quality care goals.

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.

In the 2023-24 grant period, AzSHIP was comprised of two programs for eligible hospitals (see table on next page). Fourteen rural Arizona hospitals participated in the Regular SHIP program (R-SHIP), however one hospital did not seek reimbursement for their activities.

The other SHIP program, the American Rescue Plan Act SHIP program (ARPA-SHIP) allocated more than \$4 million in funding to Arizona

small rural hospitals between the fall of 2021 and December 2023. Ten hospitals participated this fiscal year in ARPA-SHIP from July 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023. ARPA-SHIP funding supported efforts to expand COVID testing and community-level COVID mitigation.

Arizona's two programs, R-SHIP and ARPA-SHIP, act primarily as pass-throughs 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; support quality improvement training and services; and respond to the COVID 19 public health emergency.

In 2023, hospitals were required to use R-SHIP funding to support Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Project (MBQIP) measurement and readiness activities for the International Classification of Diseases, 11th Revision (ICD-11). Twelve hospitals split their total award amount between two investment categories: Value-Based Purchasing (VBP) and Payment Bundling/Prospective Payment System (PB/PPS). One hospital used SHIP funding in the Accountable Care Organizations (ACO)/Shared Savings investment category.

2002

Since 2002, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) has funded the Arizona Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (AzSHIP) in the Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH).



AzCRH site visit with Sage Memorial Hospital in Ganado

“SHIP has afforded us the opportunity to initiate a strategic plan, envision the future, and generate numerous ideas regarding how best to navigate forthcoming system changes within a rural context. We are grateful to have commenced the planning process upon receiving the grant, and we are committed to maintaining our momentum in fostering awareness and making necessary preparations.” –San Carlos Apache Healthcare Inc., a Public Law 93-638 Self-determination site and one of Arizona’s 17 federally designated Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs).

Pass through funds for R-SHIP and ARPA-SHIP

	R-SHIP	ARPA-SHIP
Funding Period	6/1/23 to 5/31/24	7/1/23 to 12/31/23
# Participating Hospitals	14	10
Funds Per Hospital	\$10,255	\$246,600
Total \$ distributed FY 24	\$131,481	\$1,866,422
Projected for FY 24	\$ 154,574	N/A



AzCRH Statewide Conferences 2023-24

Mariah Erhart, Community Outreach Professional

The AzCRH Annual Rural and Public Health Policy Forum was held in-person February 6, 2024. More than 160 attended the Policy Forum held at The Virginia G. Piper Auditorium in downtown Phoenix. At this year's forum we included exhibitors and offered extended networking to foster more connections among Arizona's public health advocates. The Policy Forum kicked off with an update from the Governor's Health Policy Advisor, Zaida Dedolph. Other topics included advances in health workforce and persisting workforce needs, opportunities for improvement in Telehealth policy, oral health policies, and an update on bills introduced in the 2024 legislature and their potential public health implications



Left to Right: Dr. Ed Paul, former State Representative Jennifer Longdon, Jennifer Burns, Charlie Alfero, Jessica Yanow, in conversation at the Annual Rural and Public Health Policy Forum in February, 2024.





U of A Nursing Students attend the 50th Annual Arizona Rural Health Conference



Left to Right: Andrea Lerner, NAU listens during a breakout session at the 50th Annual Arizona Rural Health Conference in June.



Left to Right: Dan Derksen, MD and Heather Carter in discussion after a general session at the 50th Annual Arizona Rural Health Conference in June.

On June 3-5, 2024 in Flagstaff, AzCRH celebrated our 50th Annual Arizona Rural Health Conference, which is the longest running rural health conference in the nation. Between the June 3 pre-conferences and the June 4,5 Rural Health Conference, there were 444 attendees, the most well attended event yet! Four pre-conferences were held on June 3: the HRSA Enhancing Maternal Health Initiative: Arizona Convening; the 2024 Arizona Critical Access Hospital (CAH) and Rural Health Clinic (RHC) Summit; Graduate Medical Education (GME) Financing 101; and the Arizona Area Health Education Center (AzaHEC) Preceptor Development Training.

Conference details, presentations, and attendee photos for the Annual Rural and Public Health Policy Forum and the Annual Arizona Rural Health Conference can be viewed on our website at: crh.arizona.edu.

1974

The First Annual Rural Health Conference was held in 1974.



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

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

Education, training, retention, and support for the health workforce in rural and underserved Arizona 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 (AzaAHEC) Program, the Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH) workforce team sustains 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. The data warehouse is the backbone of the team's ability to develop workforce reports and briefs, create interactive reports and maps, and respond to requests for technical assistance and special reports.

The AzCRH workforce team maintains the Geographic Information System Hub where we provide interactive maps including the Arizona Rural and Safety Net Health Facilities maps and more. The team maintains an interactive reports page on the AzCRH website.

Throughout the year our team provides mapping and data support to other projects housed within the AzCRH. We respond to requests for technical assistance from the U of A Health Sciences (UAHS) Office of the Senior Vice President, the AzaAHEC Graduate Medical Education (GME) program, the U of A Center on Aging, the U of A Comprehensive Center for Pain and Addiction (CCPA), the Arizona Governor's Office and other health workforce and policy stakeholders to provide workforce data analysis and answer workforce data questions to inform program and policy development.

Visualizations and resources available on crh.arizona.edu

Workforce briefs created by the team in FY 24 include:

- Arizona Rural Maternity Care
- Quantifying Arizona's Mental Health Professional Shortages
- Quantifying Arizona's Dental Health Shortages

Number of Designated Correctional, Federal Qualified Health Center, FQHC Look A Like, or Rural Health Clinic Facility Dental Health Care HPSA*

County	FQHC & Look A Like	Rural Health Clinic	Correctional Facility	Designated HPSA
Apache	0	0	0	0
Cochise	0	0	0	0
Cocopa	0	0	0	0
Graham	0	0	0	0
Greenlee	0	0	0	0
Maricopa	0	0	0	0
Navajo	0	0	0	0
Pima	0	0	0	0
Pinal	0	0	0	0
Santa Cruz	0	0	0	0
Yavapai	0	0	0	0
Yuma	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0

Number of Designated Correctional, Federal Qualified Health Center, FQHC Look A Like, or Rural Health Clinic Facility Primary Care HPSA

County	FQHC & Look A Like	Rural Health Clinic	Correctional Facility	Designated HPSA
Apache	0	0	0	0
Cochise	0	0	0	0
Cocopa	0	0	0	0
Graham	0	0	0	0
Greenlee	0	0	0	0
Maricopa	0	0	0	0
Navajo	0	0	0	0
Pima	0	0	0	0
Pinal	0	0	0	0
Santa Cruz	0	0	0	0
Yavapai	0	0	0	0
Yuma	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0

Dental HPSA Score Formula

Population to Provider Ratio (10 points) + % Populations Below 100% Federal Poverty Level (10 points max) + Water Population Status (7 points max) + Travel time to nearest source of care (NSC) (5 points max) = HPSA Score (0-25)

ARIZONA RURAL MATERNITY CARE

Updated April 26, 2024
Prepared by: Bryna Koch, DrPH | bryna@arizona.edu
Daniel Derksen, MD | dderksen@arizona.edu

	2018-2019	18	19	20
Maternal Mortality per 100,000 Live Births	10.9	21.1	14.4	14.4

BACKGROUND

The United States has the highest maternal mortality rate of developed countries defined as maternal death during pregnancy, childbirth or within 42 days after delivery.

The data below is from the two most recent Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRRC) reports, the most recent report published in January 2024, includes data from 2018-2019. The earlier report, published in December 2020, includes data from 2016-2017. Note that these reports analyze pregnancy-related and pregnancy-associated deaths. These measures differ from the CDC and CDC definition of maternal mortality above.

Arizona's maternal mortality rate worsened from 2016-17 to 2018-19, in terms of both Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Ratio and Pregnancy-Related Mortality Ratio.

The Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Ratio (PAMR) is the number of pregnancy-related deaths per 100,000 live births. The MMRRC report defines maternal mortality as deaths occurring while pregnant or within one year of the end of a pregnancy. In 2018-19, the PAMR in Arizona was 26.3 deaths per 100,000 live births. This is an increase compared to 2016-2017 when the PAMR was 18.3 deaths per 100,000 live births.

The Pregnancy-Related Mortality Ratio (PRMR) is a death that occurs during or within one year of pregnancy, regardless of the cause. Pregnancy-related deaths and Pregnancy-Associated, but Not Pregnancy-Related deaths. In 2018-2019, Arizona's PRMR was 91.2 deaths per 100,000 live births. This is an increase compared to 2016-2017 when the PRMR was 79.1 deaths per 100,000 live births.

Rural Arizona's Experiencing Maternal Health Challenges:

In 2016-17, women residing in Arizona rural counties had higher PAMRs than women who lived in an urban county (rural PAMR 94.0 versus 76.6 urban).¹ In 2018-2019, the MMRRC report found that despite stable birth rates in urban and rural Arizona, "rural counties experienced a slight decline in Pregnancy-Associated deaths from 82.1% in 2016-2017 to 77.9% in 2018-2019" however "rural areas experienced an increase from 15.7% in 2016-2017 to 17.4% in 2018-2019".² Caution in interpreting rural data is warranted given the small number of cases.³

* Designation for Limited Cooperation & Enforcement (LCE) received 03/07/2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/od/oddiva/press/2024/s030724.html>
1 CDC. Maternal Mortality 2018-21, accessed 01/05/2024 at <https://www.cdc.gov/maternal-mortality/press-releases/2024/s010524.html>
2 Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) Jan 2024. Maternal Mortality in Arizona, 2018-19. Accessed 01/05/2024 at <https://www.adhs.gov/documents/prevention/maternal-mortality/maternal-mortality-in-arizona-2018-2019.pdf>
3 ADHS Dec 2020. Maternal Mortality and Severe Maternal Mortality in Arizona. Accessed 01/05/2024 at <http://www.adhs.gov/documents/prevention/maternal-mortality/maternal-mortality-in-arizona-2018-2019.pdf>
Suggested Citation: Koch & Coates & Gill & Mallick & Ladd & Smith & Adams Rural Maternity Care April 2024.

Percent Living in Primary Care Shortage Areas (HPSAs) and Number of Mental Health Providers Needed to Eliminate Shortage (2023)

Number of Designated Correctional, Federal Qualified Health Center, FQHC Look A Like, or Rural Health Clinic Facility Primary Care HPSA

County	FQHC & Look A Like	Rural Health Clinic	Correctional Facility	Designated HPSA
Apache	0	0	0	0
Cochise	1	4	1	0.33
Cocopa	2	0	0	0.28
Graham	0	0	0	0.00
Greenlee	0	0	0	0.00
Maricopa	0	0	0	0.00
Navajo	0	0	0	0.00
Pima	0	0	0	0.00
Pinal	2	2	0	0.28
Santa Cruz	1	0	0	0.00
Yavapai	2	0	0	0.28
Yuma	1	2	1	1.43
Total	14	12	1	2.73

Definitions

HPSAs are a geographic area, population, or facility with a shortage of primary care, dental, or mental health providers and services. HPSAs are based on factors illustrated below. In the mental health HPSA calculation for Arizona only psychiatrist physicians are included.^{1,2}

Mental Health HPSA Score Formula

Population-to-Provider Ratio (7 points) + % Populations Below 100% Federal Poverty Level (5 points max) + Elderly Ratio (3 points max) + Youth Ratio (5 points max) + Alcohol Abuse Prevalence (1 point max) + Substance Abuse Prevalence (1 point max) + Travel Time to Nearest Source of Care (5 points max) = HPSA Score (0-25)



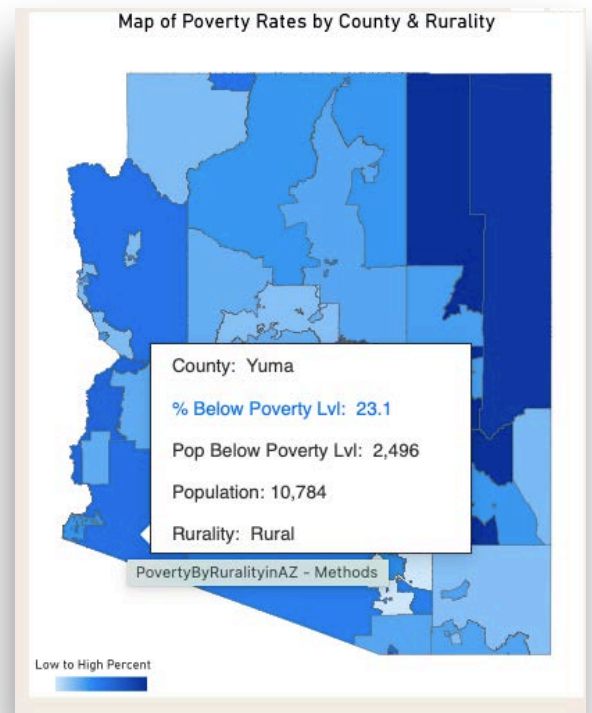
Bryna Koch, DrPH, presents at the Arizona Rural and Public Health Policy Forum

Bryna Koch, DrPH represented the AzCRH workforce team's efforts through presentations at the following conferences and meetings:

- Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers (AACHC) Workforce Recruitment and Retention Conference, September 2023
- Rural and Public Health Policy Forum, February 2024
- ASU Maternal and Child Health Conference, April 2024
- Rural Women's Health Network Quarterly Meeting, April 2024
- Arizona Public Health Association Coffee and Conversations Webinar, April 2024

In FY 24 we updated the following interactive reports:

- Poverty in Rural Arizona
- Arizona Healthcare Employment, Projections, and Wage Report
- Arizona Marketplace and Medicaid Enrollment
- Arizona Graduate Medical Education Funding



Advancing Health Equity, Addressing Disparities (AHEAD)

Mona Arora, PhD, MSPH, PI, Brianna Rooney, DrPH, Jennifer Peters, Daniel Derksen, MD

Background AzCRH AHEAD Initiative - The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC OT21-2103) National Initiative to Address COVID-19 Disparities among Populations at High risk and Underserved, Including Racial and Ethnic Minority Populations and Rural Communities funded the Arizona Department of Health Services, who in turn funded the Arizona Center for Rural Health’s AHEAD initiative via an interagency services agreement from 8/1/2021 through 5/31/2024. Dr. Derksen served as Principal Investigator (PI) through 6/30/2023, with Dr. Arora serving as PI through 2024.

AHEAD mobilized partnerships and engaged communities in addressing social and health disparities through community outreach and education; expanded services including vaccination, primary care, and testing; and developed and implemented workshops and trainings to build workforce capacity.

AHEAD AZ implemented an innovative, community-based approach to public health intervention, leveraged local partnerships to amplify its reach and impact, and developed a diverse network of community partners as shown in the table at the bottom right of the following page.

AHEAD’s strategy fostered trust-based relationships with local organizations, which were instrumental in executing program activities. This approach was essential in rural areas where local entities often serve as trusted messengers and primary sources of support. The program’s evaluation methods adapted the CDC’s partner categories and created tiered classification criteria to assess the effectiveness and reach of these partnerships. This framework helped to systematically evaluate partner activities across six broad categories, providing a clear picture of the program’s broader impact (bottom left figure).



AHEAD helped support the MOVE-UP Mobile Health Unit. It was on site for the Campesinos Sin Fronteras’ 29th Annual Farmworkers Health Fair in San Luis, AZ and the AzCRH 50th Annual Rural Health Conference in Flagstaff where staff distributed resources.

AHEAD 2021 – 2024

Highlights:

- ▶ **Facilitated distribution of 71,000 COVID-19 vaccines and 4,300 antigen rapid testing kits.**
- ▶ **Provided wrap-around social services toolkits to approximately 90,000 individuals and health education to over 200,000 individuals, ensuring outreach was conducted in both English and Spanish.**
- ▶ **Hosted 400 vaccine events in collaboration with over 200 non-traditional partners across 12 of Arizona’s 15 counties, reflecting AHEAD’s extensive reach.**
- ▶ **Distributed 29,795 PPE items, 2,610 Narcan kits, and referred over 5,000 individuals to Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and other healthcare providers.**
- ▶ **Facilitated health insurance enrollment for about 1,200 individuals and conducted workshops for over 400 children and adolescents.**

AHEAD addressed health inequities and their impact on social determinants of health by promoting, recruiting, and training certified medical assistants to fill positions in rural hospitals and clinics; increasing the number of clinical home visits for patients with transportation, mobility, disability, and/or chronic disease challenges; and partnering with non-traditional health partners to introduce, inspire, and provide pathways for health careers for youth.

Over the course of the CDC-ADHS-AzCRH AHEAD AZ initiative, the activities significantly contributed to improving health outcomes in Arizona’s rural and underserved communities by leveraging a diverse and expansive network of partnerships. The program’s accomplishments in vaccine distribution, health education, and support services underscore the importance of collaborative, community-based approaches in addressing health disparities and preparing for future public health crises.



AHEAD lead Public Health Fundamentals training with Pima County Health Department.

AHEAD AZ Collaborating Organizations

AHEAD Organization Types	Number
Healthcare	71
Education	34
Government	60
Social Service Non-profits	47
Advocacy Non-profits	19
Health-Related	22
Tribal	22
Private Industry	19
Total	294





Arizona Rural Recruitment & Retention Network (Az3RNET)

Joyce Hospodar, MBA, MPA, Senior Advisor, Rural Programs

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 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, 18 new employers were added, 234 jobs were posted, and 17,019 referrals were made to registered employers.



Arizona Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) AzMAT Mentors Program

Bobbie Alcanzo, Estefanía Mendivil, Bridget Murphy DBH, M.Ed., Dan Derksen, MD

AzMAT Mentors History: Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) through an Interagency Service Agreement (ISA) with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), the Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH) developed, implemented, and evaluated the AzMAT Mentors Program from 2019-2023.

The program aimed to increase capacity for opioid use disorder (OUD) treatment in Arizona. The AzMAT Mentors Program concluded in September 2023. The Program’s key achievements, recommendations, and resources are summarized.

The AzMAT Mentors Program began when qualified healthcare professionals needed a waiver (x-waiver) to prescribe medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD). During the program’s four years, this requirement was eliminated. Now, all practitioners with a current Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) registration and Schedule III authority can prescribe buprenorphine for OUD, state law permitting. Training requirements for

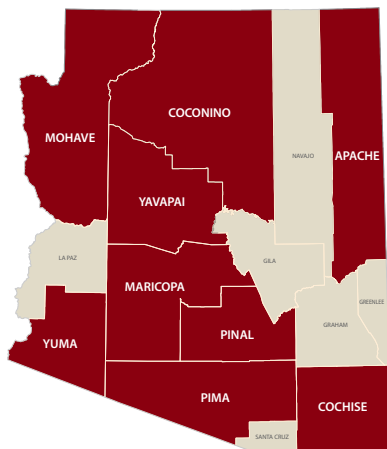
practitioner licensing are regulated at both the national and state levels.

The MAT Mentor program connected experienced OUD treatment providers with less experienced ones across nine of Arizona’s 15 counties, primarily nurse practitioners. We offered a structured approach for setting achievable learning goals through collaborative consultations, starting with a collaboration plan discussed during orientation.

Our Accomplishments: In our final year, we conducted a follow-up survey with participants from years 1-3. Almost all providers communicated increases in confidence for providing OUD services. Confidence is an important predictor for making changes and mastering knowledge and skills. The providers reported practice increases for screening and identifying need for OUD and providing brief supportive counseling for patients with OUD (64%), increase in medication management (71%), and medication induction (50%).

RESULTS: Participant Descriptions Years 1-4.

Counties of Practice



Provider types



Nurse Practitioners

8

39



Physician Assistants

1

4



Medical Doctors/Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine

6

7

Total

15

50

POST PROGRAM RESULTS:

Our year 3 evaluation from the 16 new providers who completed the survey.

Sustainability: Sustainability efforts included hosting a webinar with the Primary Clinical Support System (PCSS) to (re)introduce providers to this free training and mentoring service, maintaining resources on our website, and applying key learnings to other work. A University of Arizona alumni intern assessed our sustainability efforts and concluded that we planned effectively through collaborations, resource integration, and evaluation. Sustainability is achieved daily through AzMAT Mentors Program providers who continue to offer OUD treatment.

Acknowledgements: We want to send a huge thank you to the AzMAT Mentors Program participants, faculty, staff, students, collaborating organizations, and funders.

Reports: To read the full evaluation and sustainability reports visit our website.

Resources: The current version of the AzMAT Mentors Program is no longer available, however, relevant resources organizational and clinical tools are at: <https://crh.arizona.edu/mentor>. We continue

training and technical assistance around opioids and stimulants through the Overdose Data to Action-State (OD2A-S grant). For more information contact us: azcrh-od2a@arizona.edu

PCSS <https://pcssnow.org/>

SAMSHA <https://www.samhsa.gov/medications-substance-use-disorders/waiver-elimination-mat-act>

FindLaw.com - Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) Title 32. Professions and Occupations § 32-3248.02. Health professionals; substance use or addiction continuing education - last updated March 08, 2022 | <https://codes.findlaw.com/az/title-32-professions-and-occupations/az-rev-st-sect-32-3248-02/>

Clinical Practices	Confidence Rating for Practice (N = 14) %
Chooseing which OUD medication to prescribe	93
Identifying need for OUD treatment	93
Medication Management	93
Providing brief supportive counseling for patients with OUD on MAT	93
Referring to higher level of specialty care	86
Screening for OUD	86
Medication induction	86
Identifying need for referral to higher level of (specialty) care	86

Tribal Health Equity and Engagement

Agnes Attakai, MPA, AzCRH Health Disparities Outreach & Prevention

AzCRH collaborates and engages 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. Tribal Initiatives in 2023-24 in these areas are summarized below.

Access to Indigenous Research: Agnes Attakai, MPA, AzCRH Director of Health Disparities Outreach & Prevention, served on the planning committee for the November 2023 Tribal Opioid & Substance Use Conference “Strengthening Tribal Approaches to Address Substance Abuse in Your Community.” The conference had diverse partners from across Arizona with over 100 participants who discussed indigenous approaches to building capability and resilience to address substance use disorder in tribal communities.

Attakai facilitated breakout sessions and was on the planning committee for the October 2023 Arizona State University (ASU): Doing Research

in Indian Country. The theme of “Being a Good Relative in Research” offered opportunities to work collaboratively with state, tribal and non-profit organizations to address the research needs of Arizona’s tribal communities.

Provide Public Health Training: As part of Advancing Health Equity, Addressing Disparities (AHEAD AZ) team, Attakai facilitated three trainings on Building a Healthy Community as part of the Public Health Fundamentals training with the Tohono O’odham Nation, Coconino County Health Department, and Pima County Health Department between June through December, 2023.

Disseminate Evidence-Based Information: AzCRH Director of Health Disparities Outreach and Prevention assisted with the planning and moderation of the 8th Annual Rural Women’s Health Symposium in August 2023 and served a two-year term (2021-23) on the National Rural Health Association (NRHA) Health Equity Council to promote and enhance physical and mental well-being for rural and frontier underserved populations and was appointed to the American Indian



AHEAD AZ facilitated Public Health Fundamentals Training with Tohono O’odham Nation.

Health -AHEC Regional Center Strategic Planning Committee providing input on health career pathways for native students.

Strengthen Health Career Pathways: AzCRH in collaboration with U of A and external partners coordinated and facilitated health career meetings and programs for native students:

- Assisted with the AI/AN Workforce Development Southwest Region on the Third American Indian and Alaska Native Virtual Workforce Development Summit in April 2024, and shared best practices from the University of Arizona.
- Assisted in the planning of the 2023 Association of American Indian Physicians

Virtual Pre-Admission Workshop in March for native students interested in applying to medical school.

- Sponsored two summer 2023 interns for the Tribal Health Experiential Student Internship Seminar (THESES) - a partnership of the Southern Plains Tribal Health Board (SPTHB) and the CDC John R. Lewis Undergraduate Public Health Scholars Program.
- Created the Indigenous Health Curriculum for the Global MD (GMD) program. The purpose of this project is to develop an Indigenous health GMD curriculum for medical students to address Indigenous health disparities.



Agnes Attakai, MPA, facilitates Public Health Fundamentals training with Pima County Health Department.

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

Bianca SantaMaria MPH, Maria Losoya, Bobbie Alcanzo, Estefanía Mendivil, Rocío Torres, Bridget Murphy DBH, PI, Todd Vanderah, PhD, Daniel Derksen MD

AzCRH has been working with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) to provide training and technical assistance on opioids for more than five years via interagency service agreements (ISAs).

In 2023, AzCRH was awarded a new ADHS ISA project, a federal subaward from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to enhance and expand our work. We work in collaboration with ADHS, the Arizona Community Health Workers Association (AzCHOW), the Comprehensive Center for Pain and Addiction (CCPA), and Guild Health Group to provide training and technical assistance in pain and substance use for opioids and stimulants.

Our work engages culturally and linguistically diverse groups to:

- Develop and deliver professional development content for clinicians, community health workers/representatives (CHW/R), and other health professionals on topics such as the 2022 CDC Clinical Practice Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Pain, integrated services, x-waiver elimination, medications to treat opioid use disorder (MOUD) and others.
- Assess, develop, and maintain a centralized list of addiction resources building on existing resources beyond what the state's Medicaid program (AHCCCS) offers.
- Develop training and technical assistance plans to support healthcare organizations to integrate the 2022 Clinical Practice Guideline into the electronic health records (EHRs).

2023 to 2024 Notable Achievements:

Professional development content:

- Updated, expanded training materials to include information about stimulants, health equity, and wellness for providers.
- Provided a day-long online training on poly-substance use in rural Arizona for practitioners, public health personnel, and students.
- Engaged 60 CHW/Rs at the annual AzCHOW Roots Conference to learn more about harm reduction.
- Offered a CDC's 2022 Clinical Practice Guideline webinar.
- Attended and tabled at the 7th Annual Southern Arizona Opioid Misuse Prevention Symposium and completed a live interview with "We love Nogales," about OD2A-S and its scope of work.
- Disseminated information about substance

Understanding Polysubstance Use in Rural Arizona - Developing and Delivering Effective Solutions

Virtual Event

April 24, 2024

As of 2023, more than five people a day die of an opioid overdose in Arizona. These were Arizonans with family, friends, and communities that care about them. To help reverse this trend, there are effective prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services we can deploy throughout rural Arizona. Join us in Flagstaff for this one-day training to understand how best to serve your community.

Guild Health Group
improving a safe and healthy world

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA HEALTH SCIENCES
Comprehensive Pain & Addiction Center

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
MILLER & LINDA DICKEYMAN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH
Center for Rural Health

This training is supported by Grant number CDC-RFA-CE19-1904 funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.

use as part of a panel at the Mood, Food, and Substance Use Symposium in San Diego, CA.

Developing and Maintaining Resource List:

- Met with AZ 2-1-1 to discuss non-Medicaid resources available in its database. After review and discussion AZ 2-1-1 added additional resources to its database.
- Compiled a list of more than 600 non-Medicaid resources.

Supporting rural health care organizations to integrate the CDC 2022 Clinical Practice Guideline into their EHRs.

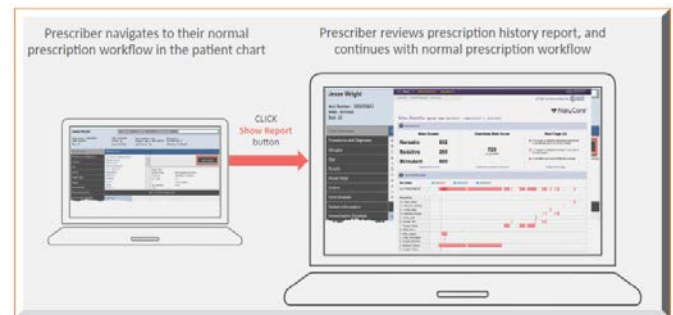
- Reviewed our 2022 survey results to inform our plan to support rural health organizations.
- Examined the literature for relevant guidance.
- Engaged with Arizona Controlled Substance Monitoring Program for support and resources integrating the prescription monitoring program into their EHR.

Plans for Next Year - We plan to continue enhancing and expanding our training and technical assistance activities to move us closer to eliminating overdose in Arizona. If you're interested in learning more, please email us at azcrh-od2a@arizona.edu




INTEGRATE WITH THE ARIZONA CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES PRESCRIPTION MONITORING PROGRAM

Eliminate unnecessary steps and gain one-click access to a patient's controlled substance prescription records by integrating Arizona CSPMP data into your clinical workflow.



Through integration, healthcare providers will no longer need to navigate to the Arizona PMP website, log in, and enter their patient's information. Instead, the EHR or pharmacy management system will automatically initiate a patient query, which will return the patient's controlled drug prescription records directly within the clinical workflow, without the need to reset your PMP password every 90 days.

Arizona State Board of Pharmacy is funding licensing fees associated with integration using Bamboo Health's PMP Gateway service. The connection is free!

Visit pharmacypmp.az.gov and click on the  icon to get started today by completing an Integration Interest Form!

February 2024

Naloxone Leave Behind Program

Entering its second year of a 4-year cooperative agreement with SAMSHA, ADHS, Bureau of EMS and Trauma System, Arizona Emergency Medicine Research Center (AEMRC), and the AzCRH, continue to support and encourage all first responder agencies within the state to implement a Naloxone Leave Behind Program.

Free online training is available along with free Naloxone kits that include 2 doses of intranasal naloxone, detailed instructions, and a county level resource card.

As of June 2024, 35 EMS Agencies implemented the Naloxone Leave Behind Program with 2,691 first responders trained and 251 Naloxone kits distributed.



Students and faculty are led on a neighborhood walk through the City of South Tucson by artist and local Chicana business owner, Mel Dominguez.

Students work at The Garden Kitchen, a collaborative program of the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, Pima County, and the City of South Tucson, to create signage and materials for the Plaza Mobile Market that distributes fresh and locally grown fruits and vegetables at the Valencia Library.



The AzCRH Rural Health Professions Program (RHPP)

Marc Verhougstraete, PhD, PI, 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 and its six Regional Centers (AIH-AHEC, CAAHEC, CERE, CPCHP, SAAHEC, and WAHEC). The University of Arizona Health Sciences colleges have five RHPP programs, four other RHPPs are located at Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University health professional education programs.

Each year the AzCRH RHPP program offers graduate-level academic courses emphasizing 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 and other health professional students who graduate to serve rural and underserved Arizona communities and populations

Of the more than 220 students who participated in our RHPP since 2018, 76% went to work in underserved areas or with organizations serving underserved populations in Arizona. Our RHPP students participated in our service-learning courses and activities, totaling 10,400 contact hours and reflected the rich diversity of our state and region with > 80% female, 40% Hispanic, >15% mixed race, 4% black or African American, and 4% Asian. More than 40% grew up in a rural area and 56% grew up in Arizona.

In the 2023-24 fiscal year, 31 MEZCOPH students participated in our five service-learning courses, internships, and mission related activities totaling nearly 1,400 rotation hours. Students meet virtually prior to in-person community immersions.

Our RHPP program administers the MEZCOPH AHEC Scholars Program, in collaboration with the

eight other RHPPs. It is a two-year program that provides student Scholars with experiential training in rural or underserved Arizona communities. In 2023-24, our Scholars program had four students graduate at the annual RHPP meeting, another four who completed their first year, and four students being recruited to begin their two-year Scholars program in August 2024.



While visiting Mission Garden, students learn about the history of Tucson's foodways, and how food systems are intrinsically linked to community resiliency and can be a component of healing from historical trauma.

The AzCRH Internship and Rural Experiential Immersion Programs (IREIP)

Melissa Quezada, Executive Associate, AzCRH

The AzCRH Internship and Rural Experiential Immersion Programs (IREIP) provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate health profession student internship, dissertation, graduate research assistant and other community-based, experiential learning immersions in Arizona's rural and urban underserved areas. Students worked on program design, implementation, evaluation, and other projects.

2023-IREIP Highlights:

Kennedy Orr graduated from the U of A Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health (MEZCOPH) with a BS in December 2023. Kennedy identified sustainability strategies to extend the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) interagency service agreement (ISA) with the AzCRH beyond the 2023 funding cycle and into the new OD2A-S cycle. She also participated in the AzCRH Navigator program.

Ehmer Taj, MPH, graduated in December 2023 from MEZCOPH with an MPH. He collaborated to develop and collect assessments with healthcare organizations in Arizona. The purpose of the assessment was to gauge the readiness of healthcare organizations to integrate the opioid prescribing guidelines into their electronic health records.

Bobbie Alcanzo is a U of A College of Medicine – Tucson medical student (class of 2025) who led the development of a long-term follow up protocol to assess the impact of the AzMAT Mentors Program during her AzCRH Internship. This included developing an instrument, connecting with former participants, analyzing, and writing up the results. Bobbie also developed and delivered trainings as part of the AzCRH OD2A-S on the relevance of professional mentoring programs to increase access to substance use disorder treatments.

Jack Ringhand, MPH, RN, graduated from MEZCOPH with his MPH in Public Health Policy and Management in May 2024. He supported and contributed to the ADHS Arizona



Jordan Upshaw, Doctoral Student, assisting with HPS 597A.



Zoe Demitrack in Morenci.



Jack Ringhand attending the 2023 Annual Arizona Rural Health Conference.

Health Improvement Plan (AzHIP) Rural and Urban Underserved Priority project and the Rural Health Professional Program (RHPP) while being a Registered Nurse at El Rio Health.

Riley Nelson, MPH, MBA, graduated from MEZCOPH with an MPH in Policy and Management and an MBA from the U of A in May 2024. Riley was a Graduate Research Assistant with the AzCRH Health Workforce and Data Analysis team.

Angel Oteng-Quarshie, MPH, graduated from MEZCOPH with an MPH in May 2024 with a concentration in public health policy and management. She supported and contributed to the AzHIP project and the Advancing Health Equity, Addressing Disparities (AHEAD AZ) CDC-ADHS-AzCRH COVID Disparities initiative.

Kavina Kamkhanthee was a Graduate Research Assistant that helped with AHEAD AZ CDC-ADHS-AzCRH COVID Disparities initiative trainings, database development, and product-informed development.

Fnu Kajal, MD, was part of the AHEAD AZ CDC-ADHS-AzCRH COVID Disparities initiative's Rural Library Champions program in preparation for a paper. She researched, conducted a literature review,

analyzed data, and identified appropriate journals for submission of the manuscript.

Celeste Harp, is an undergraduate student working with CDC-ADHS-AzCRH OD2A-S to help revise the overdose recognition and naloxone administration lesson plan and conduct a training. The purpose of this work is to build on the previous OD2A grant to include information about stimulants, polysubstance use, wellness, and health equity.

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

HPS 597A: - Family & Child Health in Urban Underserved Settings- **Jordan Upshaw** (DrPH student).

PHP 597C: - Border Health Service-Learning Institute - **Karina Duenas** (PhD student in HBHP)

PHPM 597D: - Rural Health - **Zoe Demitrack** (MS student) and **Jack Ringhand** (MPH graduated 2024)

Congratulations to our 2023-2024 AzCRH IREIP interns, graduate research assistants and graduates!
Bear down!



Angel Oteng-Quarshie asks a question during the 2024 Annual Public and Rural Health Policy Forum.



Kavina Kamkhanthee (left) helps facilitate a public health fundamentals training with AHEAD AZ for the Pima County Health Department.

Arizona Center for Rural Health Navigator Program

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

Navigator Accomplishments 2023-24



Assisted **772**
consumers through
completed appointments



Enrolled **503**
consumers in Marketplace,
AHCCCS and/or CHIP/
KidsCare applications



Hosted **369** total office
hours at libraries in Green
Valley, Sahuarita, and
Flowing Wells to provide
enrollment assistance to
community members

Arizona's Uninsured - Arizona has an estimated **769,100 uninsured individuals (10% of its population)**. Of those a disproportionate number and percentage are uninsured Hispanic or Latinos (H/L), American Indian/Alaska Natives (AI/AN), Arizonans with disabilities and other access and functional needs, and those living in rural, tribal, border, and urban underserved communities that have been historically disenfranchised and disproportionately impacted by health disparities and inequities. A pragmatic, multi-pronged approach to eliminating health disparities begins with increasing health insurance coverage through Medicaid and the Marketplace, assuring a well-trained and distributed health professions workforce to those areas and communities historically medically underserved and uninsured and assisting with eligibility, enrollment and renewal of health insurance coverage through Navigators and Certified Assistors.

The Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH) was a direct recipient of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) funding via a cooperative agreement from 2013-2018. When CMS allowed just one Navigator award, AzCRH has been a subawardee for Navigator funding from the Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers (AACHC) from 2018-2024.

The CMS-AACHC-AzCRH Navigator Initiative assists rural Arizonans with determining their eligibility and enrolling in Arizona's Medicaid program (AHCCCS and KidsCare), Affordable

2013

The AzCRH Navigator Program began in 2013.

Care Act (ACA) Federally Facilitated Exchange / Marketplace (FFE/FFM) or other health insurance coverage and public benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). AzCRH navigators provide education about health insurance options specific to individuals and their families, assist with eligibility forms, and help enroll consumers in health insurance coverage.

In project year 2023-24, AzCRH navigators reached an estimated 129,829 individuals through marketing and in-person efforts including distributing 12,677 flyers at 119 locations, having an article published in an Arizona bilingual newspaper, and doing five radio program presentations. In the past year, we partnered with new organizations including the University of Arizona Cancer Center Community Outreach; Menlo Family Resource Center; Tucson Sunnyside School District; Casa de los Niños; Pima County One Stop Resource Navigators; and Pima County Health Department's Oral Health Department.



Navigators Dina Suarez (left) and Gaby Sanchez (right).

Navigator Team:

Marc Verhougstraete PhD: Principal Investigator

Cody Welty, MSPH, PhD: Program Coordinator

Brooke McKalip: Assistant Program Coordinator

Dina Suarez: Navigator ▶ dsuarez6@arizona.edu

Maria Losoya: Navigator ▶ mlosoya@arizona.edu

Gaby Sanchez: Navigator ▶ gabrielasanchez@arizona.edu

Contact an AzCRH Certified Navigator:

Please visit our website at: <https://crh.arizona.edu/programs/health-insurance-assistance>

Schedule a Certified Navigator Appointment:

Website: coveraz.org/connector

AZCRH NAVIGATOR FORWARD

In July 2024, AzCRH submitted a proposal for the 2024-29 CMS navigator funding cycle (CMS-NA-24-001). Whether AzCRH receives a direct award, or is an AACHC subawardee, we will continue assisting Arizonans with health insurance coverage and reducing Arizona's uninsured.

Students Helping Arizona Register Everyone (SHARE)

Estefanía Mendivil, Daniel Derksen, MD

Project SHARE (Students Helping Arizona Register Everyone) aims to equip health professions students with the skills to navigate the healthcare system and become leaders in health.

Project SHARE is a student group operating under the Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH), focusing on health insurance literacy, education, eligibility and enrollment. It trains undergraduate and graduate students from the University of Arizona Health Sciences (UAHS) Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, Pharmacy, and Health Sciences to improve their understanding of health insurance and assist with education, eligibility determination and enrollment efforts.

The primary goals of SHARE are to train health profession students to confidently answer health insurance-related questions within their personal and professional networks and to enhance consumers' ability to navigate health insurance coverage such as by referring them to Certified Assistors. To achieve these goals, SHARE provided Health Insurance 101 Trainings and attended Outreach Fairs across Pima County with Certified Health Insurance Navigators. These trainings offered information that helped consumers understand their health insurance coverage and the benefits and eligibility for Medicaid (AHCCCS or KidsCare in Arizona), Affordable Care Act (ACA) Federally Facilitated Marketplace (FFM) and other coverage. Outreach Fairs allowed SHARE students to disseminate health insurance information and help attendees schedule enrollment appointments.

SHARE focused on reaching uninsured and under-insured populations, helping consumers understand their eligibility for programs, and helping to ensure that health insurance becomes accessible to all. By demystifying health insurance, SHARE empowered

consumers to make informed decisions about their health coverage. SHARE connected individuals with Certified Assistors who guided them through the process of obtaining proper health coverage, further addressing their individual and family needs. This comprehensive approach not only enhanced the students' professional development, but also significantly contributed to improving public health literacy and access to health insurance in the community.

FY24 Project Share Accomplishments:

- Partnered with the Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers Health Navigator Program to deliver 10 Health Insurance 101 Trainings and host six events in Pima and Maricopa Counties.
- Developed resource materials on the website.
- Successfully trained a cohort of four students.

AzCRH Navigator Initiative Past History and Future Plans: Project SHARE was initiated as part of its Navigator initiative. AzCRH is ideally suited to carry out the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Cooperative Agreement to Support Navigators Federally Facilitated Exchange / Marketplace (FFE/FFM) requirements. AzCRH was a Navigator direct awardee from 2013-18. When CMS awarded only one grant per state, AzCRH collaborated as a sub-awardee through 2024 by formal contractual agreement with the Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers (AACHC). The new CMS Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) was announced 6/12/24, application due 7/8/24, expected start date of the new five-year Navigator funding cycle will be 8/27/24. Depending on whether the AzCRH is directly awarded funding by CMS or as a subawardee via AACHC, Project SHARE may be able to continue its important work in the Fall of 2024 in advance of the open enrollment period that begins 11/1/24.



AzCRH Deliverables – FY25: July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025

FY '25 1st Quarter Action Items:

FY '25 2nd Quarter Action Items:

AUG - DEC RHPP Courses

RHPP FY begins
7/1/24

AzSORH YR 4 of
5, 7/1/24

AzCRH Annual
Report: 8/30

CMS-AACHC
Navigator: 8/19

HRSA SORH PIMS
due: 8/30/24

AzFlex YR 1 of 5
begins 9/1/24

AzFlex Suppl.,
YR 1 of 2,
9/1/23

ADHS OD2A-S,
YR 2 of 4,
9/1/24

Marketplace
Open
Enrollment
11/1/24

AzFlex Annual
Report Due
11/15/24

ADHS OD2A-S
Qtrly Report:
11/30/24

SHIP NCC Released:
12/1/24

SORH NCC
Released: 12/1/24

RHPP Semi-Annual
Report: 12/30/24

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

**FY '25 3rd Quarter
Action Items:**

**FY '25 4th Quarter
Action Items:**

JAN - MAR RHPP Course (TUC)

**RHPP Course
(PHX)**

**Rural & PH Policy
Forum TBD 2/25**

**SHIP NCC Due:
Mid-Feb**

**ADHS OD2A-S
Qrtrly Report:
2/28/25**

**SORH CC Due:
Mid-Mar**

**Flex NCC
released: Mid-
March**

**RHPP Annual
Conference**

**Navigator
Quarterly
Report: 4/14**

**RHPP Community
Engagement**

**RHPP Tribal & Rural
Course**

**ADHS OD2A-S
Quarterly Report:
5/31/25**

**50th Annual
Rural Health
Conference June
2-4, 2025**

**SHIP Grant Yr
starts: 6/1/25**

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

Arizona Center for Rural Health Faculty and Staff

As of 6/30/24



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

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

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

Leila Barraza, JD, MPH
Associate Professor
Director, Arizona AHEC Program
lbarraza@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

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

Estefanía Mendivil
Community Outreach Professional I
emendivil@arizona.edu

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

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

Melissa Quezada
Executive Associate
melissaquezada@arizona.edu

Brianna Rooney, DrPH
Assistant Research Professor
brooney@arizona.edu

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

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

Dina Suarez, M.Ed
Certified Health Insurance Navigator
dsuarez6@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, PhD
Program Coordinator
codywelty@email.arizona.edu

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

A very special thank you for the many years of dedicated service from staff who are pursuing new adventures; Paul Akmajian (9 years), Agnes Attakai (18 years), and Rod Gorrell (23 years).



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

Suggested citation: Derksen D, Alcanzo B, Arora M, Attakai A, Barraza L, Bullock J, Coates S, Drake C, Erhart M, Gaither J, Garn A, Hospodar J, Koch B, Lara J, Losoya M, Mendivil E, Murphy B, Oteng-Quarshie A, Peters J, Quezada M, Ringhand J, Rooney B, Sanchez G, SantaMaria B, Suarez D, Smith J, Torres R, Verhougstraete M, Welty C:
University of Arizona Center for Rural Health Annual Report FY 2024