



**Arizona COVID Mitigation Funding Plan 2021 (MH)  
For  
Mental Health Block Grant**

**October 1, 2021**

## COVID Mitigation Funding Plan 2021 (MH)

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Dr. Miriam Delphin-Rittmon  
Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use  
Department of Health and Human Services  
Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Dear Dr. Delphin-Rittmon:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the attached narrative and spending plan proposal for implementation of the COVID Mitigation award; funding was authorized under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 (P.L. 117-2) and Section 711 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 711(c)).

The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), which serves as the which serves as the Mental Health Commission for Arizona, is proposing to expand access to COVID-19 testing and spread mitigation strategies for individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) and Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED) in congregate care settings, including behavioral health residential facilities (BHRFs), crisis stabilization units, day treatment programs, and shelters. This proposal includes a request to expand the availability of onsite testing through the purchase of FDA-authorized OTC at-home serial screening tests as well as expanding a mobile-based COVID-19 testing option, specifically targeting rural and tribal regions of our State.

I welcome any further questions or requests for additional information.

Sincerely,

*K. Coler Challacombe*

Kristen Challacombe  
Arizona Single State Authority Director

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### COVID-19 Response Work Plan Narrative to Address COVID-19 Mitigation and Testing Needs in the Public System for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) or Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED)

#### Overview of Strategy

The state's public system serving individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) or Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED) is divided into three distinct geographic service areas (GSAs) with oversight provided by Integrated Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (RBHAs) and Tribal Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (TRBHAs).

In order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and enhance screening and testing in residential and other congregate settings serving individuals with SMI or SED, AHCCCS proposes a multi-pronged approach that takes into consideration the current COVID-19 testing finite resources (i.e., testing supply availability given supply chain issues), staff capacity to conduct testing (i.e., workforce availability, training), and other resource limitations such as transportation in geographical rural and tribal regions of our State. This multi-pronged approach involves:

1. Expansion of onsite rapid screening utilizing FDA authorized over the counter (OTC) at-home serial screening in congregate care settings serving individuals with SMI or SED;
2. Expansion of the availability of mobile-based COVID-19 testing for congregate care settings serving individuals with SMI or SED in rural and tribal regions; and
3. Enhancement of COVID-19 spread mitigation strategies in congregate care settings serving individuals with SMI or SED.

#### 1. Expansion of Onsite Rapid Screening Utilizing FDA-authorized Over-the-counter (OTC) at-home Serial Screening in Congregate Care Settings Serving Individuals with SMI or SED

Given COVID-19 rapid screening through FDA-authorized OTC at-home serial screening is now available,<sup>1</sup> AHCCCS proposes expansion of current provider, city, county, and State efforts to purchase this testing, with specific focus on congregate care settings who serve individuals with SMI or SED; these congregate care settings will include crisis stabilization units, behavioral health residential facilities (BHRFs), day treatment programs, and shelters.

AHCCCS proposes to expand this current COVID-19 rapid screening option for congregate care settings serving individuals with SMI or SED by working with RBHAs and TRBHAs to:

- A. Conduct targeted outreach to congregate care settings who serve individuals with SMI or SED to determine if they are currently utilizing FDA-authorized COVID-19 OTC at-home serial screening;
  - a. If setting is utilizing FDA-authorized COVID-19 OTC at-home serial screening, evaluate:
    - i. Funding source;
    - ii. The current supplier and any supply limitations impeding ability to conduct;
    - iii. Policy and procedures adopted in order to deploy, including staff training.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-fda-continues-advance-over-counter-and-other-screening-test-development>

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- b. If setting is not utilizing FDA-authorized COVID-19 OTC at-home serial screening, evaluate if congregate care setting is interested in implementing.
- B. Conducting needs assessment of FDA-authorized COVID-19 OTC at-home serial screening needs for congregate care settings serving individuals with SMI or SED, including:
  - a. Utilizing information gleaned from targeted outreach to these settings;
  - b. Collaboration and coordination with local health departments;
  - c. County-based COVID-19 infection rates.

Based on targeted outreach and needs assessment, AHCCCS will work with the RBHAs and TRBHAs and local health departments to implement plans to expand access to FDA-authorized COVID-19 OTC at-home serial screening for congregate care settings serving individuals with SMI or SED, taking into account any supply chain issues as a potential rate-limiting step.

### **2. Expansion of the Availability of Mobile-Based COVID-19 Testing for Congregate Care Settings Serving Individuals with SMI or SED in Rural and Tribal Regions**

Arizona currently has mobile COVID-19 testing available in the public behavioral health system, including teams stationed in Yavapai and Maricopa counties who can be deployed anywhere in the state to serve all 15 Arizona counties. COVID-19 testing scheduling is completed through a dedicated phone line that is operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Same-day COVID-19 testing can be accommodated under most circumstances and pop-up pod sites can be created for higher volumes of individuals needing COVID-19 testing. Individuals receive results of their COVID-19 test electronically.

AHCCCS proposes to expand this current COVID-19 mobile testing option for congregate care settings serving individuals with SMI or SED by:

- A. Conducting targeted outreach and educating congregate care sites serving individuals with SMI or SED about this mobile COVID-19 testing option; and
- B. Conducting needs assessment of COVID-19 mobile testing needs, including utilizing information gleaned from targeted outreach, county-based COVID-19 infection rates, and SMI or SED congregate care setting location distribution.

Based on this targeted outreach and needs assessment, AHCCCS will work with the RBHAs and TRBHAs to create an additional mobile COVID-19 testing unit in a new geographic location in Arizona for congregate care settings that serve individuals with SMI or SED. The current mobile COVID-19 testing availability and operational standards will be retained and expanded as follows:

- Mobile COVID-19 testing staff will travel on-site and conduct testing for congregate care setting staff and individuals being served that request testing;
- Phone line to schedule testing will be operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
- COVID-19 testing availability will be available same-day in most circumstances;
- COVID-19 testing pop-up pod sites will be created for higher volumes of individuals requesting COVID-19 testing, such as staff and individuals with SMI in homeless shelters;
- COVID-19 testing results will be available electronically as well as by phone for individuals who do not have access to an online account.

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This targeted mobile COVID-19 testing approach will expand availability for testing for individuals with SMI or SED in congregate care settings and help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in conjunction with Strategy 3.

### **3. Enhancement of COVID-19 Spread Mitigation Strategies In Congregate Care Settings Serving Individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) or Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED)**

In concert with enhanced COVID-19 screening and testing availability, a core component of limiting the spread of COVID-19 in congregate care settings serving individuals with SMI or SED is the implementation of policies and procedures consistent with county and state health department guidance and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations. This includes the development or use of standard policies aimed at reducing the spread, such as the Maricopa County Department of Public Health COVID-19 Guidance for Behavioral Health Residential Settings.<sup>2</sup> In order to expand the adoption of these COVID-19 spread mitigation policies in congregate care settings serving individuals with SMI or SED, the following actions are proposed:

- A. Updating COVID-19 spread mitigation guidance documents for congregate care settings, in collaboration with county and state health departments;
- B. Communicating the availability of these guidance documents with congregate care settings across the state;
- C. Funding supplies and other resources for congregate care settings to implement recommendations from guidance documents based on the setting's need, including:
  - a. Hand sanitizer;
  - b. Hand soap and soap dispensers;
  - c. Hand washing stations;
  - d. Personal protective equipment (PPE) including masks and gloves;
  - e. Surface disinfectant;
  - f. Physical barriers;
  - g. Cost of facility maintenance fees associated with ventilation system evaluation and updates; and
  - h. Cost of cleaning fees associated with utilizing an environmental services vendor.
- D. Providing technical assistance to congregate care settings to implement policies and procedures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in their facility; and
- E. Funding staff training participation stipends.

These COVID-19 spread mitigation measures, in concert with the expansion of COVID-19 screening and testing in congregate care settings serving individuals with SMI or SED, will be instrumental in addressing the current needs within the public behavioral health system.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.maricopa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/60019/Behavioral-Health-Guidance?bidId=>