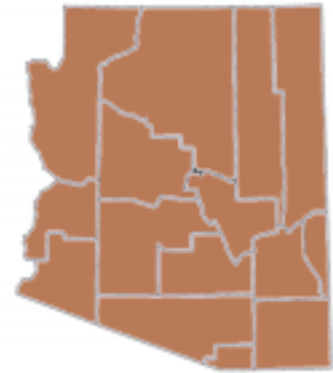


AHCCCS SOUTH
INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT
COMMITTEE

2020-21 ANNUAL REPORT



Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System



August 31, 2021

The Honorable Douglas A. Ducey
Governor, State of Arizona
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

The Honorable Karen Fann
President, Arizona State Senate
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

The Honorable Russell Bowers
Speaker, Arizona House of Representatives
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Dear Governor Ducey, President Fann and Speaker Bowers,

On behalf of the Arizona Department of Administration (ADOA) – Southern Arizona Independent Oversight Committee (NAIO), it is my pleasure to present to you the 2020 Annual Independent Oversight Report for Southern Arizona. The report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of A.R.S. § 41-3804(G).

Please contact me at 1-520-730-8763, Susan Hyder, Vice-Chair at 1-520-730-2218 or Barbara Carling, Vice-Chair at 1-206-909-9093 if you wish to discuss the contents of this report. Thank you for your support of our work.

Sincerely,

Ken Karrels, Ph.D.
Chairperson
Southern Arizona Independent Oversight Committee

Responsibilities

As outlined in A. R. S. 41-3804 E:

Each Committee shall provide independent oversight to:

1. Ensure that the rights of clients are protected.
2. Review incidents of possible abuse, neglect or denial of a client's rights.
3. Make recommendations to the appropriate department director and the legislature regarding laws, rules, policies, procedures and practices to ensure the protection of the rights of clients receiving behavioral health and developmental disability services.

2020 was a challenging year due to Covid 19 reaching Arizona in late February-March. The virus greatly hampered the Committees' ability to perform many of the duties required, in particular the ability to conduct site visits, conduct in person meetings, and, in many cases, recruitment efforts.

With the assistance of ADOA, the Committee was able to move quickly from in-person meetings to an online platform. Consequently the Committee was able to meet 12 times during the 7/20/2020 to 6/30/21 fiscal year. All of those meetings were held virtually. The online platform has been successful and will remain in place after dangers of the virus are lifted. This will be essential in recruiting new members from outlying areas.

MEMBERSHIP

The Southern Arizona IOC currently has 8 volunteer and voting members. The members are diverse, extremely committed and dedicate an average of 3-4 hours monthly to their IOC work. We are fortunate to have representatives from ADOA and AHCCCS serve in the role of liaisons and support. Regular representatives from numerous Behavioral Health organizations attend our monthly meetings which has proved invaluable.

Ken Karrels, Ph D.	Chair/Medical
Barbara Carling, MSW	Vice-Chair/Professional
Susan Hyder	Vice-Chair/Community Advocate
Joe Mucenski	Family Member/LOA
Joanna Keyl	Coyote Task Force/ Cafe 54
Sharon Faulkner-Gillespie .	Foster Care Licensing Coordinator
Phyllis Grant	Children and Young Adults Foster Parents
Sergeant Jason Winsky	Mental Health Support Team, Tucson Police Department
Tyson K. Gillespie, MSC, LA	Executive Director, Desert Rose and ACT Teams
	Community Partners
Susan Moreno	LOA/Family Member
Larry Allen	ADOA liaison
Fredreaka Graham	AHCCCS liaison

In addition we are grateful for the continued support from guests representing numerous organizations:

Division of Community Advocacy and Intergovernmental Relations, AHCCCS

Arizona Complete Health

Mercy Care

Banner University Health Plan

United Healthcare

Arizona Dept. of Disability Law

Various Provider Agencies

SITE VISITS

Due to the virus only one site visit was conducted during the 2020/2021 fiscal year. Members were understandably concerned about visiting facilities both for their own and client safety. SAIOC will follow directions from Arizona Complete Health and the CDC as to when site visits should begin and continue.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

The change for DCS kids to Mercy Care has had some problems: some doctors are not taking the new CHP insurance, payments to foster families are being delayed, assignments of kinship are not happening which prolongs their clothing allowance and payments and general assistance. The CFT process is struggling, fewer practitioners of the process who have a good understanding and family voice have not always not always been respected or heard. AHCCCS is collaborating with FIC to improve the training of CFT and family support partners. There is however a lot of collaboration between community resources.

Foster care and therapeutic foster care are struggling with prior [authorization](#) issues.

Foster care homes have seen an increase in covid cases since schools re-opened.

However the community came together for back to school drives to make sure our children are taken care of at home and in school in regards to supplies and clothing.

CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM

The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) is a community partnership of law enforcement, mental health professionals, individuals who live with mental illness, their families and other advocates. It is a police-based crisis intervention training program provided to Tucson Police and Sheriff Departments.

In 2020/2021 as part of the program over 50 additional Police and Community Service Officers were trained in mental health first aid and deescalation.

In 2021 the first CIT training included 57 law officers across 8 organizations in Pima County. This was the largest class to be held since the implementation of CIT in Pima County.

With the assistance of Joe Mucenski, SAOIC committee member, CIT is now in place in all 50 states after 20 years.

In coordination with the Pima County Sheriffs' Department, CIT was converted to an online format and will be delivered in 2021.

COYOTE TASK FORCE

Coyote Task Force (CTF) provides a spectrum of employment-focused services for adults recovering from mental illness in downtown Tucson, from formal work adjustment training and job placement at [Café 54](#), to self-directed, voluntary work activities and job development in the peer-run community of [Our Place Clubhouse](#). CTF also teaches its own peer support class, and operates a thrift store, [ReThreads](#), through Our Place Clubhouse.

The COVID-19 pandemic had vastly adverse impacts on the nonprofit sector, but it especially impacted Coyote TaskForce's mission. Like all restaurants [Café 54](#), a client run restaurant, had to shut down for months, severely limit capacity, and continues to struggle with reduced revenues, but unlike other restaurants, CTF also had corresponding losses in training opportunities and capacity for the clients served.

The Clubhouse was built to be an in-person community but, for the members' own safety, many of them were asked to stay home, that they shouldn't come to the one place they felt they really belonged. CTF performs outreach every day and offers many remote options, but the reality is that, for people with mental illness, living in poverty with limited access to technology, it's not the same. Many have heard the statistics of increased mental health crises in the wake of the pandemic and CTF can verify that they are absolutely real and painfully present in southern Arizona. Overdose deaths in Pima County have almost doubled from pre-pandemic levels and suicide rates have increased similarly. Social isolation is the most significant risk factor for suicide and overdose, and, correspondingly, social connectedness is the most significant protective factor against those outcomes. As a Clubhouse member once said, "It's the difference between being nobody nowhere or somebody somewhere." At the heart of it,

CTF makes their members somebody somewhere. CTF has been able to do that throughout the pandemic because they had developed such a strong presence in the community. Once the pandemic subsides, Coyote TaskForce will work to rebuild the community they've spent the previous 27 years building.

TRAINING

Trauma Informed care training given providers to aid in understanding the impact of trauma on clients. Condensed version given to SAIOC.

An additional QM Portal training/refresher course was provided by AHCCCS to the SAIOC. This will allow us to assign and review the reports by sub-categories.

A presentation was provided to SAIOC by David Bridges, AHCCCS Director of Housing, regarding the upcoming implementation of housing for the homeless and mentally ill population to be in place October 1, 2021.

2020/2021 TO-DATE OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED/IMPLEMENTED TO DATE:

IOC by-laws for all IOC's were finalized and implemented.

Quarterly meetings of the IOC's chairs and Vice-Chairs were implemented and co-ordinated by ADOA.

Review of IAD reports through the QM Portal began. Of note were consistent errors in redacted information, particularly in the age of the client. This was identified as a training issue and with the assistance of Fredreka Graham has to a significant degree been corrected.

TOP OBJECTIVES FOR 2021

1. Increase site visits once health restrictions are removed. SAIOC has requested an updated list of unlicensed and licensed homes so we will be able to move quickly once in-person site visits have been approved.
2. Identify unlicensed facilities where multiple SMI reside, collaborating on site visit flowcharts with other IOC's as to what we do when we see things such as licensing, environmental and possibly lack of therapeutic activities.

3. Increase review of IAD reports. Assign committee members are a subcategory to review, i.e., SMI, SMI-Special Assistance, Child/Adolescent, Death, Accidents, etc.

4. Actively recruit from outlying areas. As SAIOC is a volunteer organization, the need for administration assistance is great. While recorded minutes provided by ADOA are extremely helpful, committee members find it cumbersome to listen to those minutes rather than having written minutes also available. To this end SAIOC will actively recruit from students at University of Arizona for an administrative position.

In addition, recruiting from the local NAMI, and representatives from outlying areas will remain a priority.

5. Work with other IOC's in state to develop or create additional items that will aid in the review of IAD reports, i.e., redactions of age, cause of death, etc.

The Committee expresses its appreciation for the timely, and extremely competent work by Larry Allen and the Arizona Department of Administration. Mr. Allen has supported the Committee in many ways from providing guidance to technical support.

We continue to experience an on-going, notable improvement in the relationship between AHCCCS and this committee. We are particularly grateful for the efforts of the AHCCCS IOC liaison Ms. Fredreka Graham and Quality Management Manager, DHCM C. J. Loiselle.