

BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF ARIZONA

COVID-19 RAPID-RESPONSE REPORT



A Historical and
Archived Narrative



“
**For most of us,
the COVID-19
pandemic is a
significant life
event unlike
anything we’ve
ever experienced.”**

—Pam Kehaly

Every day we learned more about this disease and its spread, as we endured the sudden stress of going to the grocery store only to find the shelves vacant of the supplies and food we needed.

COVID-19 came with many physical and social side effects, triggering disruptions far and wide—all while taking a profound toll on our health, and too often, our finances. Many of our family and friends throughout our community have been negatively impacted by work, establishment, and school closures.

Colliding together, these factors created a sense of uncertainty that was challenging to navigate.

As the pandemic spread across our states, it called on our country and our company to quickly pivot to create a new normal. Unprecedented times called for unprecedented actions and acts of service.

And Blue Cross® Blue Shield® of Arizona (BCBSAZ) wasted no time working to ensure the care of our members, our employees, our community, and our state.

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Inspiring health in Arizona is our purpose. Corporate social responsibility is our guiding compass. Our commitment to supporting our community’s health is at the heart of every critical action we’ve taken to respond to, and prepare for, this global pandemic.

For your reference, we have developed this COVID-19 Rapid-Response Report with information gathered from our Executive Leadership SWAT Team.



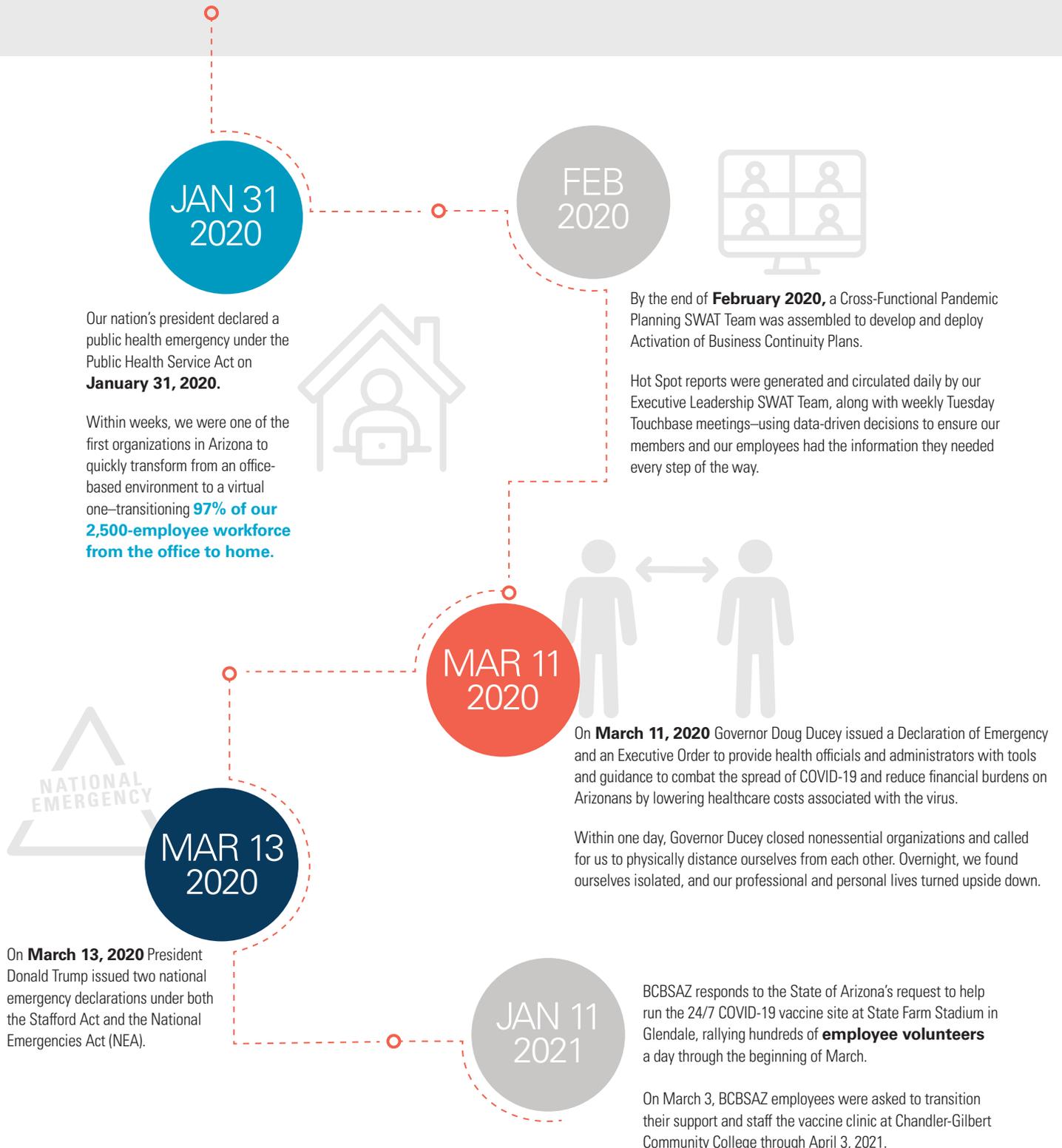
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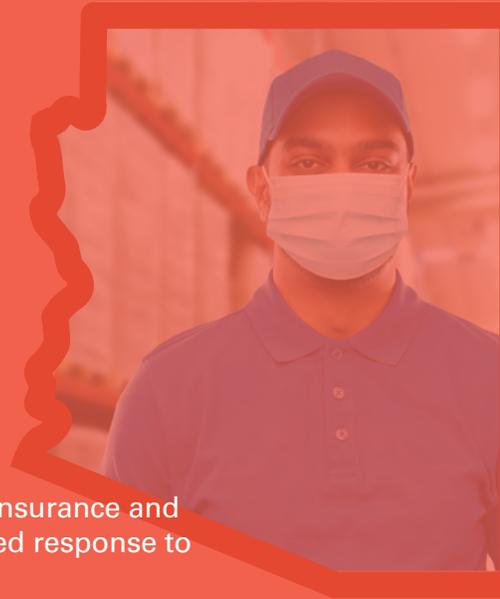
Timeline



Clearly, we were in new and uncharted territory. COVID-19 was a deadly disruptor, and it will have short- and long-term consequences. To understand where we are today, let's look at how we've persevered together, even when faced with a significant challenge like the coronavirus.



Leading the State on Safety and Surge Strategies



We knew that, as a health insurance company, the way we could amplify impact was as a changemaker and catalyst for action. In the face of a global pandemic, our CEO Pam Kehaly was among the first to step up and tackle the emerging challenges in healthcare throughout Arizona.

Chairing the *Greater Phoenix Leadership Health Care Task Force*, Kehaly established an advocacy position and led on scientific response with Governor Ducey—providing education to the Maricopa Association of Governments Regional Council and

proactively coordinating insurance and hospital leaders in a unified response to the pandemic.

By joining forces with many organizations throughout the state, we accomplished much more than we ever could have done alone—a true testament to the power of community. Together, our collective efforts were immeasurable and will create goodwill for years to come in Arizona.

Commitment to Our Members:

Our members needed us more than ever. It was vital that we sustained our superior customer service in challenging times. We implemented swift strategic actions to enable our members to easily receive needed care—while helping reduce financial stress—during this public health emergency:

- **Mailed 532,000 members masks**
- Waived prior authorization for COVID-19 testing
- Covered COVID-19 diagnostic testing and treatment with no cost share
- Increased telehealth capacity through Sharecare®
- Launched a microsite to provide resources, updates, and support for our members
- Shared weekly updates related to benefits, health and wellness, and preventing the spread of the virus
- Provided free telehealth visits (whether via BlueCare AnywhereSM or simply a video visit between a member and their PCP)
- Waived preauthorization for skilled nursing facilities to free up hospital beds
- Waived medication refill limits on 30-day prescriptions to avoid medication shortage issues

We were candid about service being handled from our homes and found that the people we served were so appreciative of the help, especially at a time when many service centers were closed or seriously understaffed.

Being transparent, and a little bit vulnerable, opened a channel that we did not expect. People were patient with the circumstances, after all, we were all going through it together, and gracious in letting us know what they needed and what they preferred. We became more connected with each interaction and listened in a deeper way. Our hearts and ears were more open, and our customer scores improved.

Supporting Our Providers

As elective surgeries were delayed due to dwindling resources and hospital beds were in short supply, we stood by our providers—launching immediate emergency measures to offer operational surge support to help free up hospital capacity.



Enabled acute-bed availability by waiving authorizations for:

- Inpatient admissions
- Post-acute facility admissions
- Home care and related equipment
- Extended pre-service authorizations
- Pre-authorized requirements to support acute care
- Patient-Centered Medical Home Incentive Program

“The health of Arizonans is at stake, and these funds will **help provide stability** to our healthcare ecosystem.”

—Pam Kehaly

Financial Relief for Our Medical Providers

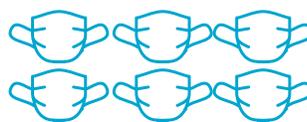
The **March 19, 2020 Executive Order postponed elective surgeries**, resulting in lower patient volumes for many Arizona medical providers. As soon as providers raised concerns, BCBSAZ increased the speed of claims processing to help ease the strain on cash flow, so they could provide critical care to Arizonans during the pandemic and beyond—while also reinforcing BCBSAZ as the Payer of Choice.

\$10 MILLION
IN ACCELERATED PAYMENTS
TO PROVIDERS
TO ASSIST WITH THE IMPACT OF COVID



5,000
HAND SANITIZERS TO AZDHS
for healthcare providers and first responders

980 N95 MASKS



**PROVIDED TO AZDHS
FOR FRONTLINE
HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS
DURING SHORTAGE**

23 **HIGH-FLOW
NASAL
CANNULA
DEVICES**
procured for
institutions in need

ACTIVATED WEBPAGE
to keep providers informed on

LATEST UPDATES, RESOURCES, AND SUPPORT



Helping Communities in Need

25 medically qualified employees volunteered to provide care and treatment to COVID-19 patients in healthcare facilities.

BCBSAZ supported trained healthcare specialists from within the company as well as our subsidiary, Health Choice Arizona, in returning to practice as physicians, nurses, and pharmacists to care for those in need.

DONATED MUCH-NEEDED MEDICAL SUPPLIES

\$5K DONATED FOR "GO KITS" INCLUDING 14K THERMOMETERS AND 14K MASKS FOR AZDHS 

5K ANTIBODY TESTS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PHOENIX SUNS CHARITIES 

6K RETURN TO OFFICE KITS TO CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

REACHING OUT TO HELP

\$25K FOR FOOD DELIVERY TO HOMEBOUND SENIORS

\$100K TO TGEN TO INCREASE COVID TESTING CAPACITY IN NORTHERN AZ, one of the hardest hit areas

\$4K AMANDA HOPE RAINBOW ANGELS TO ASSIST FAMILIES IMPACTED BY CANCER WITH FOOD

SODEXO: DONATION OF PERISHABLE FOOD TO AREA AGENCY ON AGING AND ST. VINCENT DE PAUL 

\$25K TO ADDRESS CHILD MENTAL HEALTH, TRAUMA, AND ABUSE EXACERBATED BY COVID-19

UPLIFTING LOCAL BUSINESSES

+\$5M TO PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM TO HELP PRESERVE 859 LOCAL JOBS

EXPANDED LOCAL FIRST ARIZONA'S ABILITY TO PROVIDE GRANTS OF UP TO \$2,500 to small, family-owned businesses through a **\$50,000** donation

\$50,000 TO ARIZONA GOVERNOR'S CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND

TRIBAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT

With federal funding support delayed, BCBSAZ stepped in to make an immediate difference:

\$5,000 TO COLORADO RIVER INDIAN TRIBES

\$10,000 TO NAVAJO NATION

\$15,000 TO HOPI TRIBE

750 INDIVIDUAL HAND SANITIZERS TO INTER TRIBAL COUNCIL OF ARIZONA for first responders and frontline workers

\$30K TOTAL

to tribal communities for COVID-19 response



Slowing the Spread

BCBSAZ led the way in protecting our community and curbing the spread of the COVID-19 virus with a broad distribution of cloth face masks. The masks were well received, and featured prominently on social media!



6K

TO BCBSAZ & HCA
EMPLOYEES

15K EMPLOYERS
AND THE CITY
OF PHOENIX

33K FOR SCHOOL
DISTRICTS

24.5K FOR COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATIONS

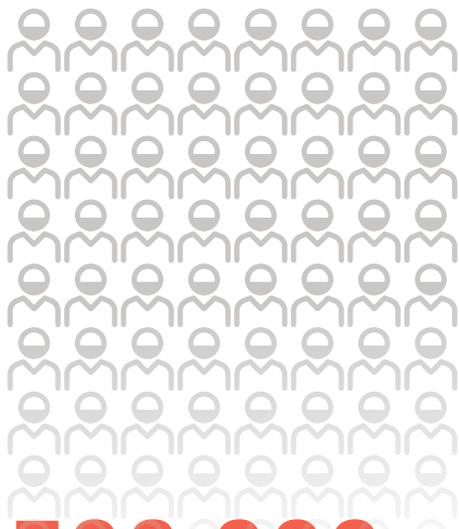
13K TO TRIBAL
COMMUNITIES

9.5K TO BASHAS'
AND FOOD CITY

26K



TO ST. MARY'S,
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, AND
YUMA FOOD BANKS



532,000
Members

Our platform promoted mask adoption through the public mask campaign “Mask Up Arizona,” informing the general public on how to prevent the spread of the deadly virus, emphasizing the practice of physical distance and social closeness—while encouraging wearing masks in public to help protect ourselves and others.

We increased our presence to better support every community in our state, sharing some of the good work we did close to home—while responding quickly to any questions or concerns. So no matter where you were or what you felt, Arizonans knew they weren’t alone.

Protecting Our Employees

As we started to develop our Workability Strategy, we understood our employees were placing their confidence and trust in their leaders to put their health and safety first. Collaboration was never more necessary in preparing and managing our new work environment.

So we assembled a Workability Task Force and created a best-in-class workforce strategy to bring employees back to the office safely. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that finding balance, happiness, and fulfillment in work and in life is essential.

Since the global pandemic did not come with a workforce instruction guide, we figured it out quickly, including technology, process, culture, service, innovation, and even how to have fun remotely. What we have learned is that regardless of our work setting, we can flourish. We have proven our Workability...our ability to continually be a highly productive and connected team.

ON THE SAFE SIDE

Office Availability (OA) preparations were underway since the moment that we deployed 97% of our 2,500 employees to a virtual environment in ten days.

Our plans for OA were based on input from our employees, and they expressed their appreciation for the consideration given to them and their families' well-being and safety—a driving factor in our plans to welcome our AZBlue family back to the office.

As telework proved to be highly effective, we expected this to be a part of our plan. The other nuance here is that we were totally transparent with our team and became comfortable telling people that we did not know all the answers just yet, and were quickly, and thoughtfully, working on solutions. That transparency, along with about 80 communication touchpoints every month, in fact, built more trust and increased our already high engagement scores.

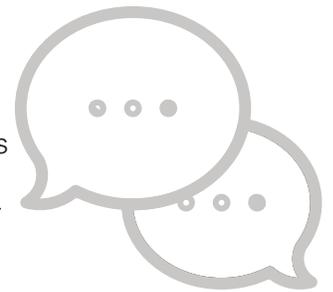


COMMUNICATION IS KEY

A robust marketing campaign was developed and deployed to connect with employees working remotely. Our *Blue Buzz* employee newsletter, all-manager meetings, all-employee emails, and videos kept employees updated on company news and how our response to the pandemic would inform our "new normal" at work. We were candid with customers about service being handled from our homes and found that the people we served were so appreciative of the help, especially at a time when many service centers were closed or seriously understaffed.

We held an all-employee Town Hall to discuss the Office Available plan, safety protocols, and answered employee questions and concerns.

Human resources launched training in our learning management system and established and communicated new guidelines for daily operations to all employees before returning to office. Our strategy and preparations continue to evolve as we look to meet employees where they are and ultimately ensure their safety while we put the needs of our customers first.



ENSURING A SAFE RETURN

- Hired extra janitorial staff to conduct deep and more frequent cleanings
- Added NanoSeptic film to door handles making the surface inhospitable to the virus
- Purchased ultraviolet wands to disinfect equipment
- Upgraded sanitation and facilities
- Implemented geographic distancing
- Minimized employee movement within buildings
- Administered pre-entry temperature checks
- Reduced meeting group sizes and encouraged virtual meetings
- Promoted personal protective equipment and hygiene practices
- Updated exposures and quarantine protocols



SUPPORTING EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

In partnership with EXOS, BCBSAZ provided online health and fitness resources to staff—including mental health support.



What are we thinking about next?

- We do not have a specific date to fully reopen our offices. Before we fully reopen offices, the COVID-19 positive PCR rate needs to be at 5% or less. With the Delta variant on the rise, we want everyone to be safe.
- Following CDC guidelines regarding masking and gathering in the office.

Safety Every Step of the Way

From January 2020 until today, the whole world has had to face the fact that COVID-19 has altered the course of many aspects of our everyday lives. BCBSAZ took a leadership position early on, and let our mission be our guide – focusing on what we could do to protect the health of all Arizonans. We continued to serve our members, providers, and brokers well.

Safe Is Essential

One positive to come from all this—the pandemic provided us the opportunity to pivot our workforce strategy. Our company-wide transition into teleworking was virtually seamless. So much so that we anticipate reintroducing only a thoughtful percentage of our employees back into the building.

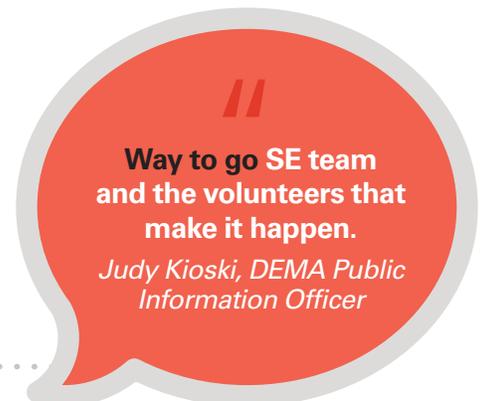
How and where we work will continue to evolve, and we are glad to be on the journey together. This is our opportunity to think bigger and differently while we will continue tracking trends to gauge when the science indicates safety across our state.

Our plan remains active and fluid; as new thinking and data-driven guidance becomes available we will adjust and keep our employees up to speed, holding Town Hall meetings as needed to provide employees with critical information on a daily and weekly basis.

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The story of how we've all come together to support our communities across the state perfectly illustrates the remarkable resilience of Arizonans. BCBSAZ is honored to serve our members, our employees, our providers, and our communities, and will proudly continue to do so—identifying what our AZ family needs most from us, and delivering it.

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The team at @BCBSAZ has been working around the clock to help run the @StateFarmStdm vaccination site. Thank you to @PamKehaly and the Blue Cross Blue Shield team!

*Governor Doug Ducey
via Twitter*

I was so overwhelmed by how many of the workers were actually volunteers. They stand on the hard pavement for hours 24/7 so we can get our shots as quickly as possible. Now that's real patriotism.

Vaccine Patient

Got my first vaccine today at the Chandler Community College. This was probably the most well-organized and run station I have ever witnessed. 20 minutes start to finish. Whoever was running it needs a raise. Highly impressed.

Vaccine Patient

12 hours of volunteering and with joyful tears in my eyes I received my first COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine.

Vaccine Patient/Volunteer

Answering the Call to Action

In early 2021, BCBSAZ employees answered the call to action in response to the State of Arizona's request to help run the 24/7 drive-through COVID-19 vaccine site at State Farm Stadium in Glendale. Starting **January 11** and continuing through the beginning of March, we rallied **more than 300 volunteers** needed each day to staff the site, working three shifts a day, around the clock, in the wind, sun, rain, and hail. This historic and unprecedented collaboration with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), the Department of Military Affairs (DEMA), and the National Guard to launch a COVID-19 mass vaccination site was critical to our operational success and ensured an exceptional patient and volunteer experience.

During this three-month assignment, BCBSAZ volunteers logged nearly 15,200 shifts and more than 147,000 hours in the historic effort, helping Arizonans receive more than 491,000 vaccines—about 15% of the 3.7 million vaccine doses in the state (as of April 5, 2021).



Volunteers were met at the stadium by some of their BCBSAZ colleagues, who took an eight-week assignment to serve as site managers and site leads—rearranging their daily work and schedules to help manage the vaccine effort and serve fellow Arizonans. Non-clinical volunteers checked patients in, directed traffic flow, answered questions, scheduled second dose appointments, and restocked supplies. BCBSAZ employees and community members with clinical credentials were able to assist in the administration of vaccines.

On **March 3**, the state opened another drive-through vaccine clinic at Chandler-Gilbert Community College, and BCBSAZ employees were asked to transition their support and staff this newest site, where they continued to serve Arizona through April 3.

Normalizing the vaccination process

COVID-19 isn't going away anytime soon, and vaccination efforts are evolving. Despite vaccinating 491,000 Arizonans in three months, it is still unsafe for many who aren't vaccinated. This means reaching underserved areas, which includes our tribal communities, and working to remove barriers for those who struggle with access to care and other health-related resources.

Moving Forward with Resiliency

The vaccine sites provided heightened awareness on preexisting issues with access to care and health equity. In partnership with AZDHS, BCBSAZ created a POD playbook capturing best practices and lessons learned from our vaccination efforts at State Farm Stadium and Chandler-Gilbert Community College to support more vulnerable communities and normalize the vaccination process through pop-up and mobile vaccine sites. There is a need to increase awareness on vaccination availability and remove any barriers to care like transportation, language, and technology.

BCBSAZ shifted from leading two mass sites to supporting a family-friendly and youth pop-up event, as well as consulting on mobile vaccine sites across our state.

When it comes to customers and community members, we can humbly listen with our hearts and confidently ask how we can do better. We will continue to care for our state, learn from our teams, and adapt as vaccination efforts evolve. It will take all of us to inspire health and make Arizona a healthier place for all.



Excited for my first dose and proud to help and protect my family, my friends, and my community.
Vaccine Patient

Got my first dose last night at the Cardinals stadium, and just wanted to say **THANK YOU to all of the wonderful volunteers. Everyone was very kind, and seemed happy to be of service. The entire process, INCLUDING scheduling my second dose was great!!
THANKS AGAIN!!**
Vaccine Patient



Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona is honored to help Arizona recover faster. I've been at State Farm Stadium throughout the weeks, and have seen the great efforts of our team, the State of Arizona, the Arizona Department of Health Services, and the National Guard. **This is nothing short of a colossal act of love.**

Pam Kehaly, BCBSAZ CEO



The Arizona state government has been praised by **President Biden** for its 24/7 mass vaccination site at the State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, which has ramped up distribution to one shot every 10 seconds. At the heart of the effort are the volunteers—nearly 400 each day—staffed, organized, and managed by **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona (BCBSAZ)** in an unprecedented public-private partnership. Following this great success, the state has asked BCBSAZ to shift its support and volunteers to the second of three state-run sites: Chandler-Gilbert Community College in Chandler, Arizona. The company has been stationed there since **March 3.**

Forbes Magazine

For more about our efforts to give
Arizona a fighting chance during the
coronavirus pandemic, visit
azblue.com/coronavirus



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