



## GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE BUSINESS BAND TOGETHER TO BUILD RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

In February 2013, more than 20 organizations in Arizona successfully demonstrated their ability to engage in life-saving activities during an emergency. The Arizona Department of Health Services led a Strategic National Stockpile full scale exercise with the participation of multiple state-wide partners. Maricopa and Pinal County Health Departments conducted the largest portion of the exercise for the state with 11 agencies engaging in closed point-of-dispensing (POD) operations. Closed PODs are critical components of communities' preparedness and response portfolios – especially when threatened with dangerous biological agents.

State and local public health departments are prepared to dispense life-saving medications from the SNS at locations within their communities, typically schools, arenas, or other public places. These locations are referred to as open PODs. However, even with extensive planning by the health departments, it is challenging to dispense medication to an entire community in a timely manner. With the support of CDC, specifically PHEP and the Community Resilience Activity, many public health departments are engaging with private sector partners, non-governmental organizations, and faith-based organizations to establish alternative PODs, or closed PODs, in their communities. The closed PODs are available exclusively to these organizations' employees and family members, alleviating the pressure on open PODs.

A total of 15 counties and 11 Maricopa County partner agencies participated in the Arizona full scale exercise. The Maricopa County partners included four cities, four county agencies, and three private businesses, resulting in more than 152,000 fewer people relying on open PODs for essential medications in a public health emergency. According to Maricopa County Public Health Department staff, closed POD partnerships and associated exercises are not possible without PHEP funding. PHEP funding supports outreach efforts and partnership building, which increases awareness of the availability of closed POD plans for other private organizations. One staff member said, "PHEP funding is the core of developing and exercising these closed PODs. It enables us to hire the personnel that create the relationships to get these critical partners to the table."