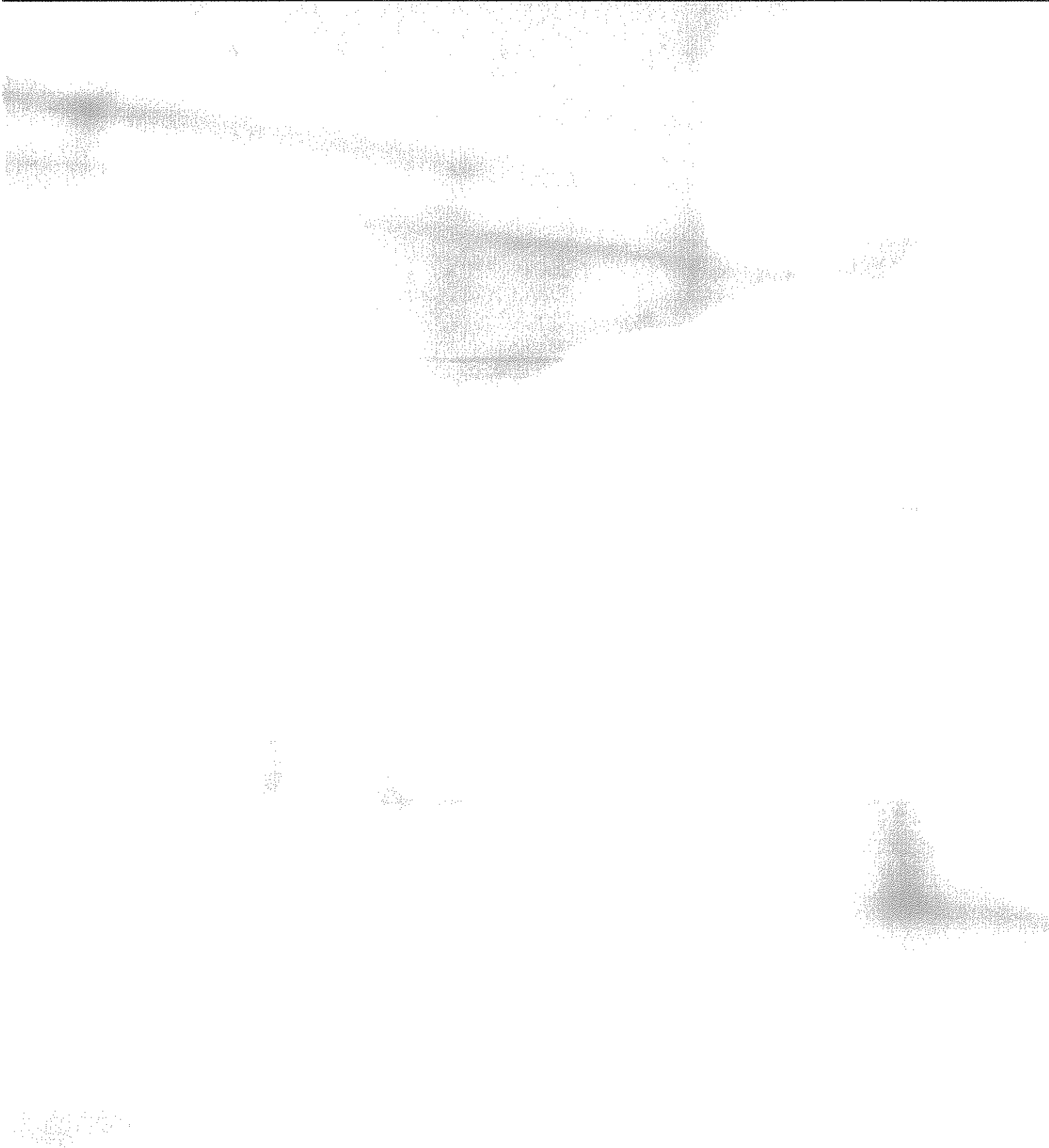
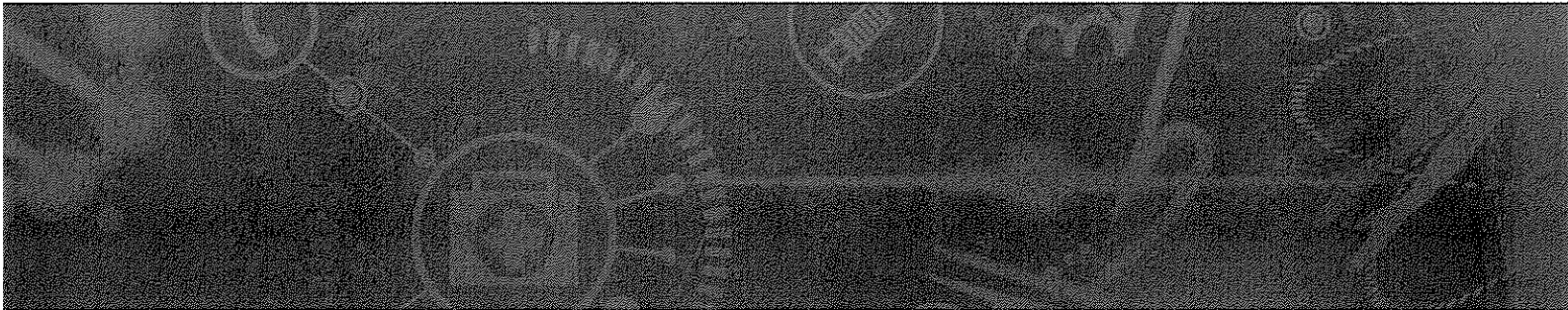



**Northwest Arkansas Comprehensive
Plan for COVID-19 Contact Tracing,
Testing, and Coordination for
Special Populations**





▶ Northwest Arkansas is a diverse region and is home to large Hispanic/Latinx and Pacific Islander populations who make significant contributors to the state's overall economic success.

The city of Springdale is the area's most diverse place with a population that is 38% Hispanic/Latinx and 7% Pacific Islander. Two of the largest school districts in the region are composed of a majority of students of color. COVID-19 has disproportionately affected these minority communities.

In Northwest Arkansas, Hispanic/Latinx and Pacific Islander residents have had rates of COVID-19 infection that are ~400% higher than the general population. In addition, the severity of COVID-19 symptoms have resulted in much higher rates of hospitalization and death from COVID-19 among Hispanic/Latinx and Pacific Islander patients. Because COVID-19 has a disparate impact on these communities, effective outreach for testing, contact tracing, and enhanced case management is essential to managing the spread of the virus in Northwest Arkansas.

Under the leadership of the Northwest Arkansas Council, the Northwest Arkansas Health Care Transformation Division includes: Washington Regional Medical System, Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas, Northwest Health System, Community Clinic, Arkansas Children's Northwest, Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks, Whole Health Institute, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Science (UAMS). The Northwest Arkansas Council's Health Care Transformation Division is uniquely situated to establish a comprehensive regional response to testing, contact tracing, and coordination for special populations in Northwest Arkansas.

Division members have led a collaborative, coordinated approach to COVID-19 in Northwest Arkansas that include the following activities:

- Coordinating region-wide public health messaging
- Establishing a regional asset and status tracking interface
- Developing a joint PPE surge stockpile
- Developing common definitions and tracking for impact to core clinical staff across institutions
- Establishing region-wide testing coordination, including Community Clinic, which is a Federally Qualified Health Center
- Educating local employers regarding opening safely
- Partnering with the Arkansas Health Department (ADH) on communications, education, and testing of hard-to-reach populations in NWA.



The Northwest Arkansas Council proposes to establish the Northwest Arkansas COVID-19 Comprehensive Response Plan that ensures collaborative effort for Northwest Arkansas testing, contact tracing, and an enhanced case management approach for special populations, which would include:

Component 1: A collaborative approach to testing in a distributed manner that leverages the current resources and enhances these efforts through targeted testing with culturally and linguistically appropriate navigation of testing for special populations in Northwest Arkansas.

Component 2: A dedicated contact tracing center in Northwest Arkansas with bilingual Spanish and Marshallese staff that: a) fully coordinates with the Arkansas Department of Health software, policies, procedures, and sub-contractors and b) fully integrates with employers to support the workforce. Additionally contract tracing support will be provided to Spanish-speaking individuals in Randolph, Independence, Yell, and Sevier Counties.


Component 3: Enhanced case management and supported quarantine to ensure connections with services to support special populations in Northwest Arkansas.

This Response Plan will be essential for a ensuring a continued thriving economy for the region and the state.

Component 1: A collaborative approach to testing. The Northwest Arkansas COVID-19 Comprehensive Response Plan for Special Populations will facilitate testing in a sustainable and distributed manner that leverages the current resources of Community Clinic, Walmart, ADH, reference lab testing, and local health care providers, and enhances testing efforts through culturally and linguistically appropriate navigation of testing for hard-to-reach populations. Testing will focus on systematic testing of non-symptomatic persons who have had contact with a COVID-19 case, and will focus on hot spots within organizations and/or communities. (COVID-19 testing within this proposal will focus on diagnostic molecular testing for the SARS-cov-2 virus, not on antibody testing). Specifically, the Northwest Arkansas COVID-19 Comprehensive Response Plan for Special Populations will coordinate capacity for culturally and linguistically appropriate navigation of testing for special populations:

- Ensuring bilingual staff are deployed at local testing sites (Mercy, Washington Regional Medical Center (WRMC), Community Clinic, ADH, UAMS, and Northwest Medical Center) in Benton and Washington Counties.
- Coordinating targeted population-based testing in hotspot neighborhoods, households, and worksites with bilingual staff.
- Serial testing of contacts when there is a symptomatic test.
- Ensuring access to free COVID-19 tests for the uninsured through community testing events in community locations that are easily accessible by the population.
- Providing a bilingual screening hotline and a bilingual screening website.
- Providing educational information and materials about screening, testing, and safety precautions in Spanish and Marshallese.





Component 2: A dedicated contact tracing center for special populations in Northwest Arkansas.

The Northwest Arkansas COVID-19 Comprehensive Response Plan for Special Populations includes a dedicated contact tracing center in Northwest Arkansas that fully coordinates with ADH and utilizes the same software, policies, and procedures as ADH for the identification and follow-up of all persons who may have come into contact with a person infected with COVID-19. The contact tracing center for special populations in Northwest Arkansas will be staffed with bilingual contact tracing staff, nurses, and social workers. The contact tracing process is outlined below.

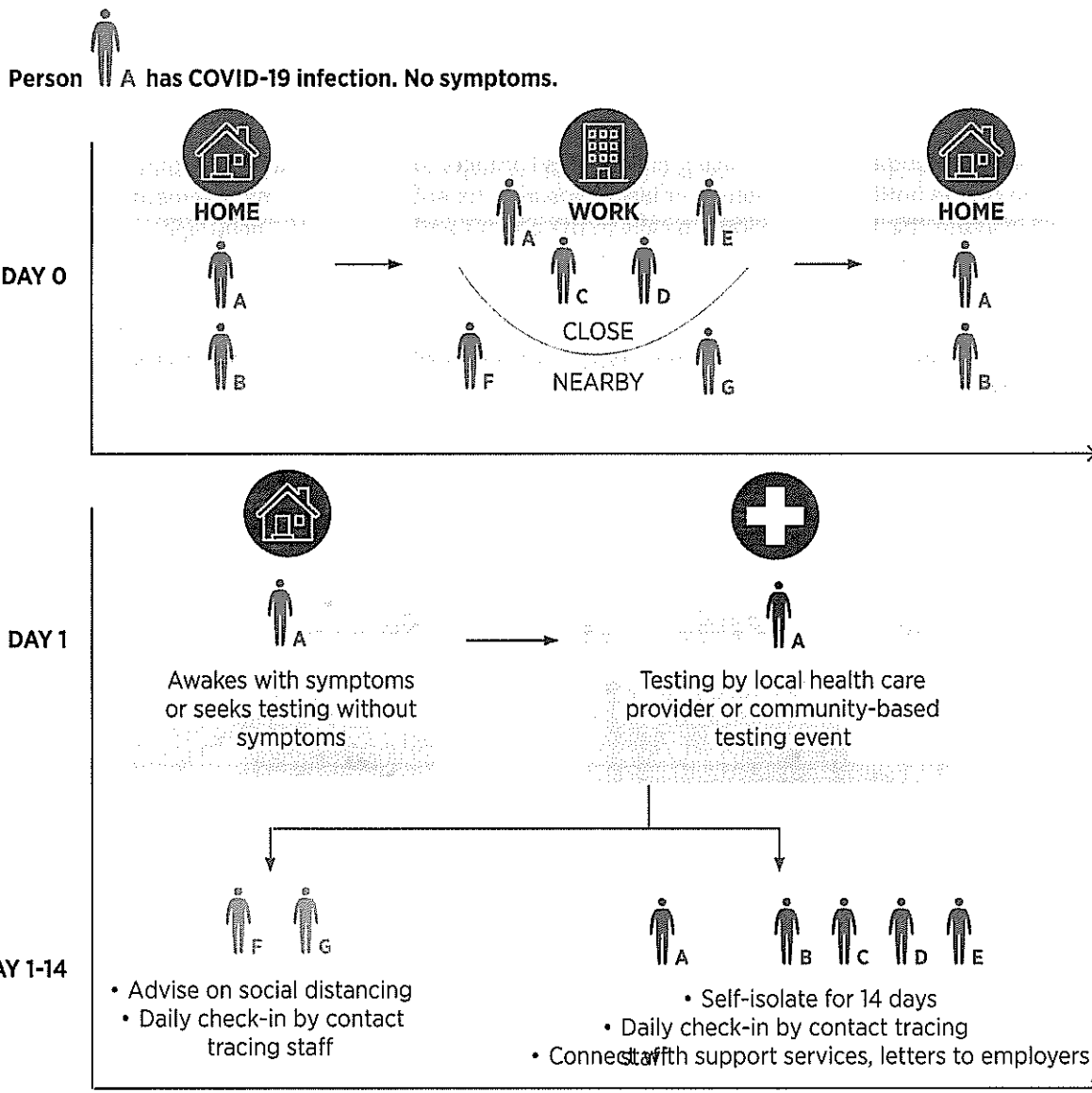
- A positive test for COVID-19 is a mandatory reportable diagnosis that must be immediately reported to ADH.
- New cases whose preferred language is Spanish or Marshallese and reside within Benton, Washington, Carroll, or Madison Counties will be referred by ADH to the Northwest Arkansas Contact Tracing Center for Special Populations. Additionally contract tracing support will be provided to Spanish-speaking individuals in Randolph, Independence, Yell, and Sevier Counties.
- Staff at the Northwest Arkansas Contact Tracing Center for Special Populations will reach out to the case and determine direct contacts for the case from two days before symptoms started until the case was quarantined. The case is asked to inform all contacts that someone from the contact tracing center will be calling them.
- Northwest Arkansas Contact Tracing Center for Special Populations will reach out to all contacts and instruct their households and any other direct contacts about quarantine.
- All contacts are enrolled in a surveillance system to be tracked for 14 days, with a daily call to all contacts under quarantine.
- All contact tracing data are entered into the appropriate software required by the ADH. Data are uploaded to ADH at the end of each day, following an existing protocol under a Memorandum of Understanding between UAMS and ADH.
- Contacts who need testing will be referred to a testing site, and home-based testing will be performed if needed (Component 1).
- Contacts who need assistance with food, housing, and medication will work with a social worker and bilingual navigators to identify resources to meet those needs (Component 3).

Training of Contact Tracing Staff. Contact tracing involves confidential medical information that must adhere to HIPAA policies. All staff will be trained in HIPPA, and all data transfer will be HIPPA compliant. Staff will be trained following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance for conducting contact tracing (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/keyinfo.html>). A case interview first begins with establishing trust and a rapport with the patient. Key information gathered during an interview includes: 1) demographic and location information; 2) health information about the patient's symptoms, clinical course, and pre-existing conditions; 3) risk factors; and 4) contact elicitation. The Northwest Arkansas COVID-19 Comprehensive Response Plan for Special Populations Contact Tracing Center will utilize the previously developed training modules by UAMS and that meet all CDC requirements.

Component 3: Enhanced Case Management and Supported Quarantine. The populations most affected by COVID-19 face socioeconomic challenges that are often exacerbated with a COVID-19 diagnosis. Once a case is identified, contact tracers must reach out to those who may have been exposed to the confirmed case to have them self-quarantine for 14 days. It is critical to provide vulnerable populations with the support services they need to self-quarantine including essentials like food and medications. Coordination with worksite and community behavioral health services to address stress on the individual and family is also essential. An enhanced case management program will expand the basic contact tracing. Subsequent to the initial contact tracing interview described above, an on-going enhanced case management process will follow each patient to monitor the patient's health status for any indications of worsening symptoms and work with existing referral patterns to ensure follow-up. In addition, the response plan will assess the patient's ability to self-isolate and offer resources and referrals for the patient, if needed. Standard contact tracing encourages contacts to stay home and maintain distance from others until 14 days after their last exposure. The enhanced case management process will increase this to make follow-up calls to the patient and contacts to encourage them to remain diligent with isolation, check on the contacts health and whether they develop symptoms, provide resources, education, information and connection with health care and community-based support organizations, and arrange for food deliveries and prescription drug refills, if needed. Social workers, nurses, and bilingual navigators will staff the enhanced case management team.



Contact tracing finds cases quickly so they can be isolated and reduce spread.



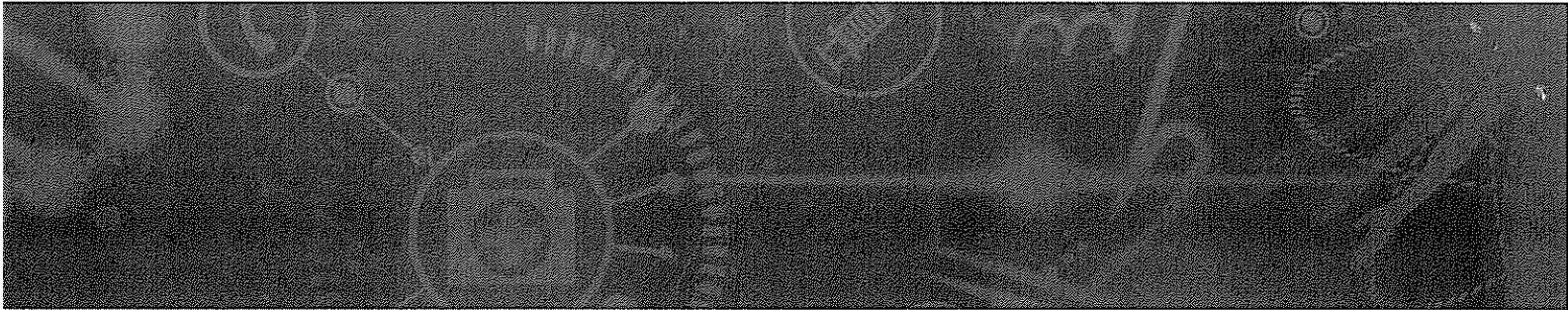
Comprehensive coordination, support, and integration across testing, contact tracing, and enhanced case management for special populations. Perhaps the most critical component of the Northwest Arkansas COVID-19 Comprehensive Response Plan is coordination and support. A distributed model of testing and contact training is optimal for our public health, workforce, and economy, and we are supportive and committed to seamless coordination between the ADH, multiple health care providers conducting testing and providing care, employers, and support services. We are supportive of other testing and contact tracing implemented by the ADH and will coordinate with their contractors and all efforts by the University of Arkansas Systems office. Northwest Arkansas Council works closely with each of these groups, and can leverage the capacity of UAMS Northwest, which will play a pivotal role to ensure successful implementation of testing and contact tracing as well as follow-up for special populations' care using existing referral patterns.

Lead Partners. The Community Clinic and UAMS Northwest will play a pivotal role in implementing a COVID-19 contact tracing program for the Northwest Arkansas region on behalf of the Northwest Arkansas Council that is fully coordinated with the existing testing and referral patterns of local health care providers. UAMS Northwest has already begun setting up the infrastructure for a contact tracing center and has access to the contact tracing software and secure data transfer interface. UAMS Northwest, along with other regional health care partners, have more than 70 employees who speak Spanish and/or Marshallese, which will allow them to reach vulnerable populations. The Northwest Arkansas Council will coordinate with the business community across Northwest Arkansas to ensure seamless integration between the Northwest Arkansas Contact Tracing Center and local employers for support isolation efforts.

The estimated cost of implementing the Northwest Arkansas COVID-19 Comprehensive Response Plan is ~\$7,000,000. The funding will be used to hire bilingual contract tracing and navigation staff and to provide resources for testing for uninsured vulnerable populations. This funding is minimal compared to the COVID burden that these special populations face.

Budget Summary

Line Item	Total
Contact Tracing and Navigation Staff	2,955,000
Enhanced Case Management and Supported Quarantine Operations	1,455,000
Testing Uninsured Special Populations Including Serial Testing and Community-based Testing	90,000
	<u>2,500,000</u>
Total Expenses	7,000,000



NORTHWEST ARKANSAS
COUNCIL

