



**Evaluations, services and  
resources for members with  
serious mental illness**  
UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Arizona

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# SMI eligibility, status and evaluation

- The purpose of this presentation is to provide general education for primary care providers (PCPs) about serious mental illness (SMI) in the state of Arizona.
- After reviewing these slides, you should be able to:
  - Describe what an SMI is
  - Determine if your patient(s) has an SMI designation
  - Recall how to request an SMI evaluation
  - List the steps of an SMI evaluation and how to appeal the results



# What is an SMI?

- While as many as 1 in 5 individuals receive a diagnosis of a mental health disorder at some time in their lives, only 4% of the U.S. population suffers from an SMI.<sup>1</sup>
- According to the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), an SMI is defined as a mental, behavioral or emotional disorder resulting in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.

<sup>1</sup>National Alliance on Mental Health



# How does AHCCCS define SMI?

In Arizona, there are two required components of being eligible for an SMI diagnosis.

1. **A functional impairment**, which AHCCCS defines as having long-lasting impairment in at least one of four domains:
  - a) Inability to live independently without supervision
  - b) Risk of harm to self or others
  - c) Dysfunction in a role such as school or work
  - d) Risk of further deterioration
2. **A qualifying diagnosis**
  - a) AHCCCS maintains a list of qualifying diagnoses [here](#). These diagnoses include depressive disorders, mood disorders, psychotic disorders and post-traumatic stress disorders.



# What services are available for members with an SMI designation?

- Individuals who have an SMI designation are likely to benefit from specialized ongoing care for their behavioral health condition.
- There are agencies throughout the state called Behavioral Health Homes (BHH), many of which are prepared to treat SMIs.
- Common services for someone with an SMI designation include: case management, medication management, peer/family support and in some instances, assistance with housing.
- Not all individuals who have a qualifying diagnosis for SMI are designated as having an SMI by the state.
- An evaluation process must occur in order to give someone the SMI designation and allow them to receive the additional benefits that this status provides.



# Is my patient receiving behavioral health or SMI services already?

- If you suspect your patient suffers from an SMI and would benefit from additional supports, start by determining if your patient already has an SMI designation. You can do this through the [AHCCCS patient eligibility website](#).
- The below example shows a member who has an SMI designation. If a patient is listed as having a General Mental Health (GMH) status, this means they do **not** currently have an SMI designation.

The screenshot displays the 'Member Eligibility Verification: Eligibility And Enrollment' page. On the left is a navigation menu with options like 'Member Verification', 'Member Address Change', and 'Support and Manuals'. The main content area includes a member photo, a 'Requested Data' table, and a 'Returned Data' table. A red arrow points to the 'Requested Data' table. Below these is a table for 'Behavioral Health Services' with columns for SMI Category, Begin Date, End Date, SMI Code, and SMI Service Type. A red circle highlights the 'SMI Category' column.

SMI Category	Begin Date	End Date	SMI Code	SMI Service Type
0 - GMH	02/15/2020		62-200 - SUB	OH MENTAL HEALTH FACILITY - OUTPATIENT



# How do I initiate an SMI evaluation for my patient?

- There may be times when you have a patient who you believe would qualify for SMI designation, but they currently have a GMH designation. If this occurs, start by talking with the patient to determine if they have an existing BHH that could complete an SMI evaluation.
- In Maricopa County, Crisis Preparation and Recovery (CPR) will complete evaluations for any member. You can call them at 480-804-9542 to start the referral process. Additionally, their [website](#) has helpful information related to SMI evaluations.
- If you have questions or need assistance with this process, please call Provider Services at **800-445-1638**.



# What if my patient doesn't want an evaluation?

- There may be instances in which your patient does not want to participate in an SMI evaluation.
- If this occurs, you have several options:
  - a) Provide the patient with information on GMH services at a nearby BHH that they may be interested in.
  - b) If the patient appears to be a threat to themselves or others, contact your county's respective crisis line to request assistance with the emergent court-ordered evaluation (COE) process.
  - c) If you suspect your patient cannot properly care for themselves due to their mental health condition, contact your respective crisis line for information on pursuing a Persistently and Acutely Disabled (PAD) petition or guardianship for the patient.





# What does the SMI evaluation process look like?

- After an SMI evaluation has been arranged, the patient will meet with an evaluator to complete an assessment.
- The assessment will help determine if the patient has a diagnosis that meets the criteria for SMI designation.
- It's important to note that there are instances in which, despite a functional impairment and qualifying diagnosis, a patient can still be found ineligible for an SMI designation.
- The primary reasons someone may not receive SMI status are:
  - Their symptoms are due to substance use
  - Other disabilities may be causing the functional impairment
  - They have a diagnosis that isn't on the qualifying diagnosis list



# What does the SMI evaluation process look like? (cont).

- The SMI evaluator will submit the patient's file to the Crisis Response Network (CRN) who will determine if the file is complete or if additional information is needed to determine an SMI status.
- If additional information is needed, CRN will contact the patient's behavioral health providers.
- If the evaluation is complete, CRN will assign the member's file to a Behavioral Health Medical Professional (BHMP) for a decision.
- Next, the BHMP will determine if more time is needed to make a determination. Situations in which this may be helpful would be when a file requires additional information, or if the patient requires a period of abstinence from drugs or alcohol



# What does the SMI evaluation process look like? (cont).

- After the file has been assigned to a BHMP at CRN, a decision will be made within three business days.
- Once an SMI determination has been made, it will be uploaded to the AHCCCS portal within one day.



# What happens if I disagree with the determination?

- If you disagree with your patient's SMI determination, you can submit an appeal to CRN within 60 days of the determination.
- Appeals are assigned to a grievance specialist at CRN who will review the case within seven days.
- The BHMP may make a supplemental decision regarding SMI status, which would overturn the original decision. A state fair hearing may also be requested.
- For more information about the evaluation and appeals process, please refer to [section 320-P](#) of the AHCCCS Medical Policy Manual.



# Resources

- **To schedule an SMI evaluation in Maricopa County:**

- Crisis Preparation and Recovery (CPR)

- **Online:** Go to [crisispreandrecovery.com](https://crisispreandrecovery.com)

- **Phone:** Call 480-804-9542

- **For more information about SMI determinations:**

- Crisis Response Network (CRN)

- **Phone:** Call 602-845-3594 or 855-832-2866

- **Online:** Go to [crisisnetwork.org/smi](https://crisisnetwork.org/smi)

- **Crisis line by county:**

- Maricopa County: Call **800-631-1314** or **602-222-9444**.

- Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz and Yuma Counties: Call **866-495-6735**

- Apache, Coconino, Gila, Mohave, Navajo and Yavapai Counties: Call **877-756-4090**

- Gila River and Ak-Chin Indian Communities: Call **800-259-3449**

- Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community: Call **855-331-6432**





**Thank you.**