

# COVID Assistance Funds for Mercy Urgent Care

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*RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

## ***Sisters of Mercy Urgent Care***

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# Application Form

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## *Question Group*

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Buncombe County requests proposals for projects to help the community recover from and respond to COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts.

Buncombe County has been awarded \$50,733,290 in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Recovery Funding), as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. This infusion of federal resources is intended to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.

Buncombe County is committed to investing these funds in projects that:

- Align to county strategic plan and community priorities
- Support equitable outcomes for most impacted populations
- Leverage and align with other governmental funding sources
- Make best use of this one-time infusion of resources
- Have a lasting impact

Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP and any addenda issued hereto.

[Click here for the full terms and conditions of the RFP](#)

## **Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds\***

Name of Project.

COVID Assistance Funds for Mercy Urgent Care

## **Amount of Funds Requested\***

\$150,000.00

## **Recovery Fund Eligible Category\***

Please select one:

COVID-19 treatment and medical services

## **Brief Project Description\***

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

The pandemic forced local, not-for-profit Mercy Urgent Care to implement telemedicine so it could continue to serve seven days a week, at eight locations, in five counties offering care, telemedicine, testing, vaccines, and treatment. The grant will allow Mercy to upgrade its telemedicine outreach by improving internet connectivity and updating equipment and by providing adequate personal protective equipment to

keep its weary staff and our care-leery patients safe during care while also ensuring convenient access to accurate testing and results. The grant will assist Mercy in continuing to work with public health officials to eradicate the corona virus as well as employers across all spectrums, and provide much-needed technology support to assist healthcare professionals exhausted from the demands of the ongoing environment created by the pandemic.

## Project Plan\*

Explain how the project will be structured and implemented, including timeframe.

If granted, Mercy Urgent Care will immediately utilize the funds to continue to contribute to the local economy by updating our technology, providing improved access to 500 hours of care each week in Buncombe, Haywood, Polk, Transylvania, Yancey and contiguous Counties. Since the pandemic, Mercy's dedicated staff work as an extension of county health centers, performing more than 32,000 COVID tests in the parking lots and drive throughs of our facilities in all types of weather in the first nine months of the pandemic alone! The grant will help remove barriers to care, allowing COVID testing, care, treatment, and required reporting to continue through improved equipment, connectivity, adequate personal protective equipment, and testing supplies.

For Mercy Urgent Care, serving our community in its time of dire need has come at a literal cost. Mercy Urgent Care pivoted at a significant cost to keep our staff and patients safe and well by implementing telemedicine so that patients could be assessed remotely, limiting the spread of the virus. The extra costs continue to challenge our nonprofit's sustainability, with the operating margin per patient dropping from \$2.68 in 2020 to -\$2.96 in 2021. The virus and its variants are still present in our community, and patients continue to test positive, to be hospitalized, and to die.

In April 2021, Mercy Urgent Care partnered with the Lutheran Church of the Nativity for space, Asheville-Buncombe Community Christian Ministry for volunteers, and Mountain Area Health Education Center for expertise, along with our vendors to publicize and offer more than 440 Moderna and Johnson and Johnson COVID vaccines through mid-May. The offsite clinics specifically targeted under-served populations, offering translators and information on the safety and efficacy of the vaccines.

Since May 2021, Mercy Urgent Care continues to offer care, telemedicine, testing, vaccines, and treatment at all eight locations, seven days a week, and is conducting on-site vaccine clinics for employers. In addition, Mercy offers monoclonal antibody infusion – one of the only known treatments for the corona virus.

In the summer of 2021 staffing challenges have become more of an issue, with staff burnout, lack of qualified applicants, and life reevaluation resulting in multiple openings. Having updated equipment, increased connectivity especially in rural areas, and adequate supplies helps Mercy provide the resources needed to fulfill our mission of putting patients first in this pandemic environment. For patients this will mean all services continue to be available at eight locations.

## Statement of Need\*

Describe the need that this project will address. Include data to demonstrate the need, and cite the source of the data.

Annual audit results confirm that since 1985 Mercy Urgent care has cared for the non-life-threatening illnesses and injuries of more than 1.5 million patients [more than 50,000 patient visits annually that have increased to more than 60,000 visits as hours and locations have increased from three to eight, with 61,418 visits for FYE September 30, 2020]. The pandemic challenged Mercy Urgent Care to overcome supply chain issues for supplies and personal protective equipment, to implement telemedicine, and to work closely with

local agencies, communities, and employers to provide testing, care, reporting, and vaccines. The grant will allow us to overcome the barriers to care that were more pronounced in the pandemic as we upgrade computers, internet access and servers, and procure the necessary supplies to do so safely, efficiently, and conveniently. As a nonprofit, Mercy Urgent Care offers care in Buncombe and in four rural counties with unmet needs, providing care regardless of a patient's ability to pay. Audit results confirm \$41,000 in charity care, with acceptance of Medicaid, Medicare, Veterans Administration, and funding to the Council on Aging resulting in \$446,206 in community benefit in 2020, work that continues in 2021.

### Link to COVID-19\*

Identify a health or economic harm resulting from or exacerbated by the public health emergency, describe the nature and extent of that harm, and explain how the use of this funding would address such harm.

Losses in patient revenue for local, not-for-profit Mercy Urgent Care caused by corona-virus-leery patients postponing care until it is critical, by the implementation of telemedicine, and the cost of COVID-related PPE and supplies, resulted in a loss in April 2021 alone of \$207,000 and a loss per patient of -\$2.96 through the end of March 2021. The funding from the Corona Virus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds will allow Mercy to sustain our mission in four locations in Buncombe County as well as in Haywood, Polk, Transylvania, and Yancey Counties by increasing access to patients, communities, and employers in western North Carolina through better computer equipment, connectivity in rural areas and in our parking lots/drive throughs. Mercy has been and continues to be committed to working with local, state, and national authorities to help stop the pandemic. The grant can help Mercy Urgent Care continue to provide access to vaccines, safe care, and treatment, especially when a patient's primary care physician might not be available, thus avoiding the use of emergency rooms, hospitalizations, and death.

### Population Served\*

Define the population to be served by this project, including volume and demographic characteristics of those served.

Mercy Urgent Care provides care for anyone seeking it from ages six months and up. While demographics vary by county served, Mercy has historically provided care to equal numbers of males and females and a disproportionate number of those ages 65 and older compared to many areas of the country, following the nature of the area as a tourist and retirement destination. Mercy's patients mirror the counties served, plus include nearly 20% tourists during the summer. Preliminary July 2019 U.S. Census data indicates:

Buncombe 261K, 52% female, 89% white, 20% age 65 and older.  
 Haywood 62.3K, 51.7% female, 95.9% white, 25% age 65 and older.  
 Polk 20.7K, 52% female, 92.8% white, 32% age 65 and older.  
 Transylvania 34.4K, 51.8% female, 93.4% white, 34.4% age 65 and older.  
 Yancey 18K, 50.8% female, 96.4% white, 26% age 65 and older.

### Results\*

Describe the proposed impact of the project. List at least 3 performance measures that will be tracked and reported. If possible, include baselines and goals for each performance measure.

1. COVID testing reports on patients identified by age, location, gender, race, type of test, and result or as required by authorities. Goal: Continue required reporting. Baseline: Reporting COVID testing results by age, location, gender, race if available, and type of test.

2. Mercy is able to curtail the losses caused by the added expense of COVID testing supplies and PPE. Goal: Breakeven. Baseline: \$207K loss in April 2021.

3. Access is improved for our patients to telemedicine and via connectivity, and to more efficient care through adequate equipment at all locations. Goal: 20% of computers and headsets are upgraded, along with additional access points for internet coverage and upgrading the internet server. Baseline: Spotty to no internet coverage in at least two of eight locations; all locations affected by old server outages.

## Evaluation\*

Describe the data collection, analysis, and quality assurance measures you will use to assure ongoing, effective tracking of contract requirements and outcomes.

1. Monitoring and testing will continue along with required reporting.
2. Quarterly financial data will be reviewed by CFO who is a CPA and reported.
3. Equipment purchases and upgrades will be tracked as they occur and reported quarterly or as required.

## Equity Impact\*

How will this effort help build toward a just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery? How are the root causes and/or disproportionate impacts of inequities addressed?

Mercy Urgent Care's core values of sacredness of life, human dignity, mercy, justice, service, and excellence guide our care so that it is seamless regardless of race, status, or location in which the care is sought, and we pay our employees a living wage. An excellent example of the equity impact occurred when a local pastor of a primarily poor, non-English-speaking congregation with suspected undocumented parishioners, was the first to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at Mercy's offsite vaccine clinic. The host church opened their facility free of charge to Mercy Urgent Care for multiple vaccine clinics, and the pastor of the marginalized congregation, the host church, and Asheville-Buncombe Community Christian Ministry helped Mercy publicize, call, and encourage congregants to receive their vaccine. Mercy provided information on the safety and efficacy of the vaccines in English and Spanish as well as translators. In addition to access to care and testing in eight locations, in five counties, seven days a week, Mercy will continue to partner with employers to offer the convenience of testing and vaccines at the workplace.

## Project Partners\*

Identify any subcontractors you intend to use for the proposed scope of work. For each subcontractor listed, indicate:

- 1.) What products and/or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and;
- 2.) What percentage of the overall scope of work that subcontractor will perform.

Also, list non-funded key partners critical to project.

Advanced Data and Network Solutions is contracted to provide Mercy Urgent Care with all IT support and technical expertise on an on-going basis. ADNS will assist Mercy with recommending equipment, solving identified internet connectivity issues across five counties, and with replacing the aging server. Regular meetings will be held to identify any necessary tweaks to the improvements afforded by the grant. Mercy Urgent Care will continue to provide all of the care, testing, reporting, vaccines, and treatment to help eradicate COVID-19.

## Capacity\*

Describe the background, experience, and capabilities of your organization or department as it relates to capacity for delivering the proposed project and managing federal funds.

The Sisters of Mercy have been caring for western North Carolina since 1900, operating the former St. Joseph's Hospital for nearly 100 years until its sale to Mission in 1998. Since 1985, independent Mercy Urgent Care has served as the area's only dedicated, not-for-profit urgent care network – now providing care seven days a week, in five counties, with eight locations – despite the pandemic. In fiscal year-end 2020, Mercy provided 100 jobs, providing \$6.2 million in salaries and benefits, and \$446.2K in community benefit, with an annual budget of \$10 million.

## Budget\*

Provide a detailed project budget including all proposed project revenues and expenditures, including explanations and methodology. For all revenue sources, list the funder and denote whether funds are confirmed or pending. For project expenses, denote all capital vs. operating costs, and reflect which specific expenses are proposed to be funded with one-time Buncombe County Recovery Funds.

Download a copy of the budget form [HERE](#). Complete the form, and upload it using the button below.

Recovery Funds budget template Mercy Urgent Care.xlsx

## Special Considerations\*

Provide any other information that might assist the County in its selection.

Since the pandemic began, Mercy Urgent Care has been on the front lines, in spite of the cost and risks, serving the people of western North Carolina. This level of service is embedded in our mission and is a part of the history of the Sisters of Mercy's service in western North Carolina since 1900, when the tuberculosis pandemic prompted the opening of the sanitarium that later became St. Joseph's Hospital. That history underpins our commitment today to continue to serve the public in a time of dire need, until we have conquered this pandemic and put it in the rearview mirror in western North Carolina once and for all. This level of commitment has meant sustained operational losses for Mercy Urgent Care, in the hope and faith that opportunities such as this exist to sustain us in our own time of need.

As the area market leader for urgent care for the past 36 years, Mercy Urgent Care is in a unique position to continue to provide care, testing, and treatment and to continue our partnerships with local, state, and federal authorities to work toward ending the pandemic. The grant will enable Mercy Urgent Care to sustainably provide access to safe, quality, convenient care, without regard to the patient's race or status across eight locations and remotely through telemedicine via enhanced connectivity especially in rural areas.

## File Attachment Summary

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### *Applicant File Uploads*

- Recovery Funds budget template Mercy Urgent Care.xlsx



<b>Total</b>	\$	150,000.00		
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