Health: Body, Mind, and Spirit Statewide Town Hall

On August 5th, community members from across New Mexico will be gathering, virtually, for a month-long series of conversations about how to improve the health of our communities and residents. For months, the staff at New Mexico First have been crisscrossing the state, engaging in conversations with members of 20 communities about the importance of health, the challenges and the proposed solutions that community members would like New Mexicans to hear. Throughout the six Town Hall sessions, community members, administrators and elected officials will all come together to find common ground on policy recommendations that can move us forward to a healthier New Mexico.

Attendance at the Town Hall is at capacity. But if you are not able to join us, there are still ways you can be involved. First, we invite you to explore the knowledge gained in these months from the community conversations and in the several background briefs that staff have put together using a variety of sources of information. These reports are described below.

Second, following the final session on September 2nd, when consensus policy recommendations will be announced, the implementation phase begins. All interested New Mexicans will be invited to sign on to one of the implementation teams, to work towards making the policy proposals a reality.
If you would like to stay in touch with the Health: Body, Mind, Spirit initiative, we invite you to email us with your interest and contact information. In the meantime, there is much we can do now to minimize the impact of and to build on the lessons revealed by our current COVID-19 health emergency.

Community Voices on a Healthy New Mexico

For this Town Hall, New Mexico First made the decision to start early to build engagement and information-gathering beginning at the community level. With a commitment to equity and building on prior work of organizations such as the Con Alma Foundation, we looked for places and communities where health disparities exist and where we could build up and on civic engagement. Originally our aim was 12 community conversations; the number increased to nearly 20 events in which residents shared community values, assets, and challenges regarding health.

Community Conversation Summary and Highlights 2020 gathers the themes emerging from these community conversations. The report complements the policy briefs prepared for the town hall by highlighting the assets, opportunities and solutions that are working in communities across New Mexico. By grounding our town hall deliberations in the wisdom and experiences of diverse communities across New Mexico, we need not search for solutions that have little hope of working well in New Mexico. By explicitly addressing health values and beliefs, we are more capable of finding solutions that go beyond partisan political perspectives. By considering health in terms of body, mind, and spirit, we’re better able to tap
into our deep cultural and relational assets and avoid policy recommendations and strategies that have damaging unintended consequences.

Read Community Conversation Summary

![Continuum of Care Diagram]

**Policy Brief: New Mexico’s Continuum of Care**

From health promotion and prevention to treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care, the health of New Mexicans is improved when people have access to high quality and appropriate levels of support to achieve good physical, mental, and behavioral health outcomes across the age span. When there are gaps in the continuum of care, people may not receive the support necessary to maintain health and prevent the snowballing of illness and disease.

New Mexicans in search of resources to survive and thrive face several key challenges. First, the resources may not be available. Second, there may be a lack of awareness of resources that do exist. Third, New Mexicans can face obstacles in accessing available services. These obstacles may be economic, social, linguistic, cultural, physical, environmental, and/or structural. These challenges are particularly evident in New Mexico’s non-urban, rural and frontier communities.

Challenges abound. But New Mexico is not without assets and proposed solutions.

Read Continuum of Care Brief
Policy Brief: New Mexico’s Health Workforce

The range of occupations of those who are involved in keeping New Mexicans healthy can be defined narrowly, as those who deliver or assist in the delivery of health services or help operate healthcare facilities. Or it can be more encompassing, to include all those who contribute to the health of our communities and their residents. This background report takes the more expansive view.

The NM Department of Workforce Solutions classifies many of these jobs as comprising the Health Care and Social Assistance sector, which currently accounts for 17% of private sector jobs in New Mexico and is the largest employment sector in half of our counties.

In spite of this sector’s prominence in our state, New Mexico remains one of the most medically underserved states in the country. Moreover, there is increasing recognition that improving health and achieving health equity will require broader approaches that address social and structural determinants of health. In addition to technical skills, quality healthcare requires an ability to understand, communicate and respond respectfully to people of all cultures, in a manner that affirms the worth and preserves the dignity of individuals, families, and communities served. This is particularly true given New Mexico’s multicultural heritage and present lived experiences.

Read Health Workforce Brief
Policy Brief: Food Security and Resilient Local Food Systems

According to the New Mexico Department of Health, “Inconsistent access to adequate amounts of nutritious food can have a negative impact on the health of individuals of all ages. The USDA estimates that as of 2017, 326,000 people, including over 118,000 children, in New Mexico are food insecure. That means 1 in 6 individuals (15.5%) and 1 in 4 children (24%) live in homes without consistent access to adequate food for everyone to live healthy, active lives. Although food insecurity is harmful to any individual, it can be particularly devastating among children because they are more vulnerable to potential long-term consequences for their future physical and mental health and academic achievement.”

A cross sector approach is essential to alleviating food insecurity and strengthening local food systems. The causes of profound hunger across the lifespan point to the need for deep systems change, from peoples’ relationships with food, how food is grown, sourced, and distributed to how families access food during community-wide emergencies and personal emergencies. From stakeholders who care about emergency food relief, sustainable local food systems, and poverty alleviation to ethical uses of natural resources, economics, and health policy, multiple perspectives and resources must be brought to bear to gain positive momentum on food security and building healthy local food systems.

Read Food Security Brief
Policy Brief: Toxic Stress, Trauma, and Resilience

The impact of trauma and toxic stress throughout a person’s life has a significant impact on behavioral, mental, and physical health outcomes. The relationship between household dysfunction, abuse, and child maltreatment and the leading causes of illness and death have been identified in the foundational Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study in the 1990s and confirmed in ongoing studies. According to Child Trends, 53% of New Mexico children have experienced one or more reported adverse childhood experience. Fourteen percent of those children have experienced three or more adverse childhood experiences at least once, but many report multiple occurrences. In addition, too many New Mexicans are members of communities that are affected by trauma from historical and on-going oppression.

There are three categories of ACEs: Adverse Childhood Experiences, Adverse Community Experiences, and Adverse Climate Experiences. While the causes and solutions vary, our brains do not distinguish between one kind of toxic stress and another. If not adequately addressed, trauma and toxic stress have long-term impacts on individual health and well-being, community-wide health, and healthcare costs.

Read Toxic Stress Brief
Supporting New Mexico’s economy for the next 10 years takes just 10 minutes. Your response to the 2020 Census helps bring funding to New Mexico for small business loans, job training, and provides data that businesses use to expand. Completing the census is easier than ever — you can take the 10 question form all without having to wait for a census taker to visit your house. So take your census today! Go to 2020Census.gov, call (844) 330-2020 or mail the questionnaire back in.
VOTE!
Are you registered to vote? Do you want to request an absentee ballot? Keep up with the latest voter information for New Mexico. The [NM Voter Information Portal](https://voterinformation.nm.gov) is our one-stop shop for voting information! You can use this site to register to vote or update your current voter registration, request an absentee ballot online, find a voting location, view important election dates, request a military or overseas ballot, or look up third-party voter registration agents.

Our Secretary of State, Maggie Toulouse Oliver, will keep looking for ways to improve the voting process in New Mexico so please feel free to contact her office if you have any ideas or suggestions. And if you have any election-related questions or concerns, contact the SOS office at 505-827-3600 or email at [sos.elections@state.nm.us](mailto:sos.elections@state.nm.us) for assistance.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TIP

“Seeking accurate perceptions as an organization or community does not mean that everyone will see things the same way. That would merely be uniformity. Accuracy in perception is about honoring individual views and building broad coalitions.” ~ Dr. Jeffrey Linkenbach, *Seeds of Fire, Roots of Hope- Seven Principles of Inspiration for the Courageous Leader.*

Similar to Dr. Linkenbach’s reminder, the New Mexico First Town Hall is not aiming for uniformity in our consensus building efforts about Health: Body, Mind, and Spirit. While our policy briefs are designed to build some common understanding about how key health issues are playing out in NM, the knowledge and experiences of New Mexicans are firmly centered at the core of building understanding. Each topical track will explore values, beliefs, understanding of core issues, possible solutions, and make recommendations for a policy and systems change agenda for consideration by a diverse group of town hall participants. Each recommendation that has the support of at least 85% of participants will become part of NMF’s health policy agenda that action teams will work together to move forward. By creating a broad coalition that is respectful of multiple perspectives, we have the ability to work together to strengthen health in NM.