

Rural Health Extension for the Health of NM's Communities: a UNM HSC Priority

Goal: The goal is to create a partnership between the UNM HSC and NM communities to achieve the greatest improvement in health status of any state. NMSU (via their Cooperative Extension Program) and the DOH (via County Health Councils) will participate as active partners.

Source of Proposal: Our proposal grows out of community input and recommendations as to how the HSC can best help communities achieve greater capacity to address their own needs and improve their measures of health. It builds on the strengths and needs of New Mexico's communities and on the community-oriented experience and programmatic successes at the HSC.

Components:

1. **Community-based Health Extension offices and Agents across the state** that are charged with linking community needs with HSC resources in all mission areas—service, education, research and policy
2. **Campus-based** programmatic support to respond in a timely way to community requests and to provide special support in community-identified priority areas.

Community-Driven Engagement: our approach involves long-term community-campus engagement, trust-building actions, HSC programs developed and/or better oriented toward community needs, increased community capacity to address local health problems, and community and HSC access to needed health-related data and evidence to drive policy decision-making.

Infrastructure – Office for Community Health: A centralized HSC Office for Community Health (OCH) will provide an integrated and efficient way of responding to community health priorities and needs via a single point of contact, and will serve as a central data repository for community use. The OCH will provide training to rural agents, and assist communities to build capacity needed to address a wide range of health-related concerns.

Building Health Workforce Capacity – Community-based training for health professions students: The OCH will help build community capacity for effective youth recruitment and community-based training of local health workforce via Office of Diversity, CNAH, AHEC, RHIP, RAPS/GAPS and expansion of the Rural Residency.

Supporting Community Practices:

Retaining Health Providers: The OCH will respond to community health provider needs for practice relief, service coverage and more comprehensive health access via the Locum Tenens and SES program, the 24/7 Nurse Advice Line, and by assigning medical homes through primary care dispatch. OCH will link communities with Community Planning services at UNM.

Providing comprehensive services:

The OCH will facilitate provision of needed services and build local capacity via programs in Rural/Community Behavioral Health, Rural Grief Counseling, Oral Health, Project ECHO, Locum Tenens/SES and via collaboration with the Colleges of Pharmacy and Nursing as well as the Allied Health Programs in the SOM.

Facilitating Community Health Research:

The OCH will help build community research capacity and performance via RIOS Net and the Institute of Public Health.

