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# SANTA FE COUNTY

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## ACCOUNTABLE HEALTH COMMUNITY

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We are building a system that helps residents navigate community services and offers providers access to data and information to better serve residents, improve health and reduce health care costs.



## **Healthy Babies = Healthy Communities.**

The Accountable Health Community focuses on creating a healthier community in Santa Fe County. Supporting pregnant women to have healthy babies is one way to reach that goal.

Consider Melinda who is six months pregnant. Melinda is 25 and has lost her job and car. She is couch surfing, staying with friends and family, and has moved four times in four months. She has a history of mental health issues and opioid use.

Melinda recently left a domestic violence situation, and in the move she lost her identification card, her social security card, and her birth certificate. An ID card opens the door to housing and Medicaid and is required to rent a post office box. The social security card is needed to replace the ID card, and the birth certificate is needed to replace the social security card. The father of her baby is erratically involved. He is using drugs and in and out of jail for misdemeanors.

Without reliable transportation, Melinda has missed all of her prenatal appointments. Lacking a stable home, she has no permanent address and didn't receive notifications of a court date for a shop lifting arrest. Notices of a benefits review and subsequent denial were sent to a previous address. With no home, no transportation and no income, the health of Melinda and her baby are at risk.

**What makes for a healthy baby?** A baby born at full-term and at a normal birth weight increases the chance that the baby is healthy and grows into a healthy adult. Birth weight of less than five and a half pounds (2500 grams) is considered low birth weight, increasing the risk of health challenges. Infants born weighing less than five and a half pounds have a higher risk for intensive care at birth, may develop chronic illnesses, and may have delayed social or motor developmental or long term learning disabilities. (CDC) Health care costs are higher for low birth weight infants. (NMDOH)

Risk factors that contribute to the possibility of a low birth weight baby can be both social and economic. Low income, low educational level, stress, chronic disease, domestic violence or other abuse, and smoking, alcohol, and substance use put women at risk. Prevention of low birth weight includes early and regular prenatal care that helps identify and address risk factors. (CDC)

The latest data from the NM Department of Health indicates that 9.7 percent of infants born in Santa Fe County are low birth weight as compared to the 8.0 percent national average. In Santa Fe County 55.6 percent of mothers with low birth weight babies had not received prenatal care, three and a half times that of the state overall. (NMDOH)

Santa Fe County, through its Health Policy and Planning Commission and its Community Services Department, has identified the reduction of low birth weight as a priority in the Santa Fe County Health Action Plan. The Community Services Department is now funding programs with La Familia Medical Center and Las Cumbres Community Services to serve women with high risk factors for having low birth weight babies.

La Familia screens for risk factors and behavioral health needs, provides prenatal care and education, nutrition consultations, smoking cessation classes, dental and home visiting referrals. La Familia also offers medication-assisted treatment services for pregnant women addicted to opiates regardless of their ability to pay, or insurance or immigration status.

Las Cumbres provides home visiting and navigation to address issues faced by women such as Melinda. Navigation provides non-judgmental support, allows for time to build trusting relationships, and helps to navigate myriad federal, state and local service systems. A navigator provides transportation, assistance to replace lost birth certificates, social security and ID cards, assistance with utilities and sustainable housing, and access to nutritious food and baby supplies. A navigator also serves as a link to other community services that may benefit the woman and baby.

Circumstances dictate priorities. The navigator remains flexible as the needs and priorities change. Connecting the mother to long-term community supports remain a goal towards the end of the pregnancy. A flexible fund serves as a payer of last resort for one time expenditures that can make a difference in the life of a woman who needs a secure hotel room for one night, or the application fee to get a copy of a birth certificate.

As the Santa Fe County Community Service Department builds the Accountable Health Community, we are exploring ways to strengthen teams that support women who are pregnant and at high risk for giving birth to a low birth weight baby. Screening for social determinants of health— where a woman lives, if she has reliable transportation, eats nutritious food, and is accessing prenatal care—is one component that will be built into the Accountable Health Community.

Sharing data collected on the social determinants of health, simple referral protocols, data and information sharing online and in real-time between organizations who are providing services and supports—all these will help reduce service duplication and inform an inter-agency team on progress and challenges. Tracking and reporting success, linking results to health indicators, and communicating those results will highlight what is working and what is not working so that we can all improve our efforts, and ultimately the health of mothers and babies.

For more information on the development of the Accountable Health Community please contact:

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