



Immediate Release

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New Mexico Department of Health Collaborates with Community Partners to Ensure Equitable Access to the COVID Vaccine and Build Long-term Health Support

Support to bolster vaccination equity efforts and long-term health and well-being efforts for New Mexico communities hit hardest by COVID-19.

NEW MEXICO – The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) is proud to announce the partnership with the Albuquerque Area Southwest Tribal Epidemiology Center, the Con Alma Health Foundation and the University of New Mexico Center for Social Policy to build on our established community-centered vaccination strategy to ensure racial equity, strengthen community support and address the long-term health needs of communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 in New Mexico.

Dr. Tracie Collins, Cabinet Secretary for the NMDOH has maintained a consistent focus on health equity throughout this vaccine rollout, stating “Ensuring equitable access to the vaccine is a must to help protect **all** New Mexicans from this pandemic.”

With grants totaling \$4.6 million from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, this collaborative partnership will work with community organizations to ensure that people of color continue to have equal access to COVID-19 vaccines, and rebuild and reimagine new quality health support systems to reduce racial disparity gaps in health indicators in the future.

As of June 16, 2021, 58.5% of New Mexicans were fully vaccinated against COVID-19. While New Mexico continues to rank among the U.S. vaccine leaders, with over 67.4% of New Mexicans age 16 or older having received at least one shot, that does not mean that the effort to vaccinate New Mexicans is over.

African American, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders and Latinos continue to die from COVID-19 at alarming rates. The devastating impacts on communities of color are a stark reminder that we must reimagine new health equity systems to ensure people of color, who often face the greatest barriers to quality health care and vaccination access, are provided the necessary health and well-being services to address their long-term medical needs.

“Working together will help us to examine how our respective organizations may be contributing to institutional barriers that create inequities or how we are dismantling them,”

says Michele Suina, Ph.D., Program Director of the Albuquerque Area Southwest Tribal Epidemiology (AASTECC). "It is critical that we recognize Tribal sovereignty and listen to Tribal communities about how they define health and the solutions they have to drive our efforts."

Post-pandemic, this partnership combined with community-wide efforts will focus on rebuilding health systems to address long-term health inequities for communities of color. "Thanks to this multisectoral partnership, the Con Alma Health Foundation is awarding grants to nonprofits, ensuring COVID vaccines are distributed equitably across the state and to support communities of color to address the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on them," says Denise Herrera, Executive Director of the Con Alma Health Foundation. "Focusing on the community rebuild and creating a post COVID-19 recovery plan focused on long-term policies and system-change strategies to advance health equity, Con Alma is partnering with the New Mexico Health Equity Partnership to expand the capacity of existing networks as well as leverage resources."

Another key element of this partnership is research and message testing to further build community trust in health care and vaccination throughout the state. "The statewide survey project included input from all of these partners and has been integrated quickly into community outreach efforts. The messaging survey is another example of the collaborative approach that has helped make New Mexico a national leader in vaccination, and that we believe will allow us to beat the virus" says Gabe Sanchez, Ph.D., Executive Director, UNM Center for Social Policy. "Although we are all focused on vaccination now, we know that there will be much more long-term needs in our communities. This partnership will ensure that we have data-driven solutions for these challenges that can us address the structural inequalities that have been exposed during the pandemic."

For more information on each organization, please see details below.

Albuquerque Area Southwest Tribal Epidemiology (AASTECC), <https://www.aastec.net/>

Con Alma Health Foundation, <https://conalma.org/>

New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH), <https://www.nmhealth.org/>

UNM Center for Social Policy, <https://csp.unm.edu/>

The results of the American COVID-19 Vaccine Poll including the New Mexico sample can be found here: <https://covidvaccinepoll.com/app/aarc/covid-19-vaccine-messaging/#/?nm=true>

Reports summarizing the New Mexico results can be found here: <https://csp.unm.edu/covid-19/index.html>

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