

## Recommendations to improve Healthcare Access

Otero County Healthcare Services Department

Full report available at: <https://www.co.otero.nm.us/374/Community-Health-Assessment>



### Health Insurance

- In 2017, **86.9%** of adults ages 18-64 in Otero County had health insurance coverage<sup>1</sup>
- In Otero County, approximately **10.3%** of the population aged 0-64 has no health insurance<sup>2</sup>
  - 790 children are uninsured
  - 5,341 adults aged 18-64 are uninsured
  - 104 adults age 65+ are uninsured
  - American Indian/Alaska Native populations account for 8.3% of the population in Otero County, but 29.7% of the uninsured population

#### *Why is this important?*<sup>3</sup>

- *Lack of health insurance coverage has been associated with delayed access to health care and increased risk of chronic disease and mortality*
- *People without health insurance are much less likely than those with insurance to receive recommended preventive services, such as cancer screening and immunizations*
- *New Mexico's uninsured rate (the percentage of persons lacking insurance coverage) has improved in the years since enactment of the Affordable Care Act and state Medicaid expansion; New Mexico's rate is now similar to the U.S. rate*

### Percentage of the population who had a dental visit in the past 12 months

- In Otero County, only **54.1%** of adults saw a dentist in the past 12 months compared to **65.1%** of New Mexicans overall<sup>4</sup>
- In New Mexico, barriers to dental care include access and availability of services, lack of awareness of the need for care, cost, distance to providers, and lack of Medicaid providers<sup>5</sup>

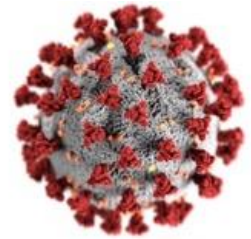


### Access to healthcare

- Access to high quality, affordable healthcare for all people is vital to community health and wellbeing
- Healthcare systems in Otero County benefit from the unique partnership between *Holloman AFB* and *Gerald Champion Regional Medical Center*, the leadership, services, and support from *New Mexico Department of Health*, the *Mescalero Indian Health Service*, and several *Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs)* within the County
- Our proximity to Las Cruces, Albuquerque, and El Paso, TX also enables residents to access additional specialty and higher-level care; however, some residents lack insurance coverage or transportation, and many people dealing with substance use disorders are not able to access the treatment they need locally
- Otero County is a designated *Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA)*, having fewer primary care physicians (**4.2** per 10,000 population), dentists (**2.1** per 10,000), and mental health providers (**26** per 10,000) than NM and US averages<sup>6,7</sup>
- There are **7.8** nurse practitioners per 10,000 population, which increases primary care availability; our local hospital system and our FQHCs continuously strive to attract and retain healthcare providers to meet community needs, but as in other HPSAs, this is an ongoing challenge

## Recommendations based on evidence, community input, and priorities

- Integrate *mental health and substance use screening* into primary care and other health settings
- Prioritize innovative approaches to improve *access to healthcare in rural areas* of the County (e.g., telehealth services, transportation between communities)
- Expand existing *medical residency and graduate education programs* in local healthcare settings
- Increase use of *Community Health Workers and Peer Recovery Support Specialists* in healthcare and other community settings
- Ensure that *all* people in our County, including *people without health insurance, undocumented immigrants, and people experiencing homelessness* have *access to healthcare*
- Advocate for state and federal policies that *expand access to health insurance coverage* (e.g., Medicaid buy-in programs at the state level)
- Expand and improve *access to dental health services*
- Support Community Schools efforts to increase *availability of services in school settings*
- Improve *communication and collaboration between local, state, and tribal healthcare systems* to meet the needs of all residents
- Improve the continuum of care to close the *Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment gap*
  - Provide additional support to *rural healthcare providers and mental health therapists* to facilitate SUD screening and treatment
  - Increase *availability of SUD treatment* – including medication treatment for opioid use disorder – at all points of entry including but not limited to primary care, emergency departments, syringe service programs, and corrections facilities
  - Dedicate resources for *treatment of alcohol use disorders* and the *growing misuse of methamphetamine*<sup>8</sup>



### Sources:

- <sup>1</sup>[Small Area Health Insurance Estimates](#); <sup>2</sup>American Community Survey, 2014-2018; <sup>3</sup>[NM-IBIS, Health Insurance Coverage](#); <sup>4</sup>[NM-IBIS, Dental Visit](#); <sup>5</sup>[Health Equity in NM](#); <sup>6</sup>[County Health Rankings](#); <sup>7</sup>[Rural Health Information Hub](#); <sup>8</sup>[New Mexico Substance Use Disorder Treatment Gap Analysis](#)