

# Growing Our Own Health Care Workforce: Semillas de Salud

Addressing the health professional shortage crisis since 2008 with recruitment and retention of health care professionals from our communities, our proven model has three components:

1. **Health Career Classrooms and Clubs:** Local middle school, high school, and undergraduate students have more opportunities to explore health careers, enhance STEM education, and receive youth mentorship. Students can serve as youth peer health educators on their school campuses and in their communities while training to become certified as Community Health Workers, Emergency Medical Technicians, Nursing Assistants, Personal Trainers and Phlebotomists. Some NM high schools currently offer health career classes or clubs, but many have neither. We provide support for all, including the new Virtual Learners Experience being developed for every student in NM. Sessions can be attended live, virtually, or recordings accessed via the virtual library. This broad exposure sets more youth on health career pathways, empowers academic success, and cultivates our homegrown future NM healthcare workforce. Health Extension Regional Office (HERO) Agents support school health staff and School-Based Health Centers (SBHC) to expand direct healthcare access via the Hub and Spoke model while addressing social needs for students and their families. This integration of services fosters cultures of wellness on our school campuses.
2. **Expanded Clinical Rotation Opportunities:** Securing health professional students the site placements critical to current efforts to expand health professional program class sizes simultaneously allow learners to experience our communities prior to their licensure. Clinical rotations serve as an excellent recruitment tool for healthcare agencies with a high return on investment. A well-supported opportunity to precept a future generation of health professionals as we were once taught helps fulfill and retain our existing healthcare workforce. Overall clinical quality improves as preceptors stay connected and updated on health innovation as volunteer faculty. Regional coordination expands capacity, opening the current bottleneck in the health professional pipeline. A new project led by NMDOH Office of School and Adolescent Health (OSAH) joins SBHCs and higher education programs to place students in SBHCs as part of their training. While on clinical rotation, these health professional students also pay it forward with mentoring in health career classrooms and clubs.

**3. Addressing Social Drivers for Learners:** HEROs support students on pathways to becoming health professionals with food, housing, transportation, technology, and other resources needed to overcome personal barriers and challenges to graduation and licensure. Social Drivers of Health (SDOH) also determine educational outcomes. Supporting economic stability, education access and quality, healthcare access and quality, neighborhoods and built environments, and social and community context ensures health professional students reach their goals. Community Schools or similar programming ensures students have support for basic needs. This alignment with Healthy People 2030 makes an immediate impact and ensures generational progress in data measuring wellness such as Kids Count and Childhood Opportunity Index.

## **Force Multiplying a Measurable Impact: Pipeline Partners**

- UNM Health Sciences Center Office for Community Health
- Montanas Del Norte Area Health Education Center
- New Mexico Department of Health, Office of School and Adolescent Health
- New Mexico Behavioral Health Institute
- New Mexico NE Region Public Health Offices
- New Mexico Highlands University
- Guadalupe County Hospital
- Alta Vista Regional Hospital
- Sunrise Clinics
- West Las Vegas School District
- Santa Rosa School District
- Albuquerque Public Schools