Sandoval County Health Council

Formerly Sandoval County Community Health Alliance - Revised September, 2013

Overview of Sandoval County

Sandoval County encompasses 3,716 square miles of diverse geography and people. It includes the incorporated municipalities of Bernalillo, Cuba, Corrales, Jemez Springs, Rio Rancho and San Ysidro, numerous unincorporated communities, the chartered community of Cochiti Lake, all or portions of nine Indian pueblos, three Navajo Chapters and part of the Jicarilla Apache Reservation. The County has evolved from a primarily rural and sparsely populated area just a decade ago to the home of more than 130,000 people. Ninety percent of the population live in three incorporated communities, Rio Rancho, Bernalillo and Corrales that are tucked in the southeast corner of the county.

As can be expected, the above characteristics present some special obstacles to providing health services to the less inhabited sections of Sandoval County. Added to the challenge is the task of coordinating health services with the sovereign American Indian entities within the county.

There is another important factor to consider, In 2008, the voters of Sandoval County authorized a levy on their property taxes that would be used to help pay for the operations of two new hospitals in in Rio Rancho. Presbyterian Rust Medical Center opened in October of 2010. UNM Sandoval Regional Medical Center opened in July of 2012. These are the first hospitals to be built in Sandoval County. This important step forward for Sandoval County also highlights one of the problems mentioned above. Rio Rancho is tucked in the Southeast corner of Sandoval County, far from those who live in the rural sections of the County.

History of the Sandoval County Health Council (SCHC)

The SCHC Mission: to develop, support and maintain healthy communities

The SCHC Vision: Sandoval County communities are healthy and supportive for individuals and families to have satisfying and productive lives

The Sandoval County Family Health Advisory Council (FHAC) -- the predecessor organization to the Sandoval County Community Health Alliance (SCCHA) -- was established by the County Commissioners in 1991, in response to passage of the New Mexico Maternal and Child Health Plan. The FHAC was comprised of Sandoval County health and social service providers that met regularly for ten years to coordinate service delivery for county residents. The Sandoval County Family Health Program provided staff support for this activity.

Recognizing that health issues of mothers and children need to be addressed within the context of healthy communities, in 2000 the FHAC members voted to recommend that the Sandoval County Commissioners establish a broad-based Community Health Alliance. In September 2001, the Sandoval County Commissioners established the Community Health Alliance and a 30- person Council to direct Alliance activities. Funding for the Alliance was provided through a contract between the N.M. Dept. of Health and Sandoval County. Between 2001 and 2010 annual funding ranged from a high of almost $200,000 to a low of $80,000. Funding ended in July 2010.

The SCHC is fortunate to have representatives from numerous other Sandoval County boards, councils, and citizen groups. These representatives play a vital role in helping to develop and promote Alliance activities with their constituencies. The SCHC provides for cross-fertilization of issues and ideas between organizations that otherwise would not have the opportunity to work together.

The broad-based nature of the Council provides an ideal forum for introducing and implementing environmental strategies (e.g. those impacting community norms, laws, policies, regulations, enforcement, community awareness, media efforts), which require input and collaboration from many community partners for design and successful implementation.

In 2011, the Board of the **Sandoval County Community Health Alliance voted to change its name to the Sandoval County Health Council (SCHC)** . In June of 2013 the County Commission reauthorized the SCHC.

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Past Successes of the Sandoval County Health Council

The SCHC has been successful in advocating for services that will contribute to the health of the residents of Sandoval County. Among the successes are:

- The creation of a Health Commons in Bernalillo that delivers direct services to low income County residents with special focus on expectant families and families with young children. Later advocated for dental services to be offered at the Commons.

- Supporting the creation of a Sandoval County transportation system that provides daily transportation to essential services for residents of rural Sandoval County

- Conducting a survey every two years to determine the status of major health indicators in the County. This survey has been used to help determine the health needs of the County.

- Developing Community Health Profiles for Sandoval County and from the information generated from those profiles, creating a Community Health Improvement Plan.

- Developing a resource directory of services in Sandoval County

The Future Goals of the Sandoval County Health Council

Facilitate communication and cooperation with providers and consumers in Sandoval County with special emphasis on projecting services to the rural areas of the County. Includes developing a web site and doing community outreach.

Communicating and coordinating with the tribal entities within the County to determine how the Alliance can assist in meeting their health needs.

Communicating with the three hospitals that serve Sandoval County with the following two goals in mind: First, to coordinate with County health providers to assure effective coordination when patients are discharged; Second, to work with the hospitals to see how their services can be available to those who live in the rural sections of the County.

Ongoing assessment of the health needs of the County. These would be summarized in a yearly report to the County. Based upon these assessments, the SCHC will advocate for increased services in the identified need areas.

Developing a plan on the structure and funding for the Sandoval County Health Council
Building the membership of the Council

Working with other County & Tribal Health Councils as well as the NM Alliance of Health Councils

Supporting the efforts of Sandoval entities that are seeking funding

Promoting health living behaviors by Sandoval residents

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