

COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY HEALTH PLAN— EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

April 2006

At its Strategic Planning meeting in April 2006, the Catron County Healthy Council conducted its annual assessment and confirmed that the priorities for 2007 remain those of the past 2 years.

The major concerns of the community are 1) coverage and access to health and wellness services and 2) reducing the impact of substance abuse (both alcohol and drugs) on our communities and especially our youth. These priorities are aligned with the State Strategic Plan 2007.

Residents of Catron County are generally a healthy group. The population is aging, with only 22% under age 20 and 21.1% over 65 years of age. The birth rate is low (0.92 per hundred thousand) and stable. Low birth weight, teenage pregnancies, and access to prenatal care are of concern. Deaths in Catron County are similar in cause to those for New Mexico as a whole, especially when corrected for the age distribution. Unusual causes are an increase in deaths for males from influenza and pneumonia and a high rate of suicide. Accidents are also a frequent cause of death including alcohol related traffic accidents.

The Catron County Health Council is a 15 year old entity with no public health professionals or epidemiologists, but it has conducted an assessment , produced an updated Health Profile, and determined community needs and concerns through community meetings and surveys. This data has been used to establish the priorities for work over the next 3 years.

Catron County has 1.2 FTE physicians to serve over 3,500 individuals living in an area of almost 7,000 square miles. The entire county is designated as a Health Professionals Shortage area.. Medical care is provided by the Catron County Medical Center/Presbyterian Medical Services that is open 5 days per week and has one satellite clinic in Quemado. The nearest hospitals are 80 to 100 miles away. There are no specialty services, no pharmacy, no paramedics, and no public transportation. There are no teen pregnancy prevention or support programs and no prenatal care. The 18 month old Public Health Office is threatened with decreased funding and services. Catron County has a low employment rate, low per capita income, and low rate of insurance coverage. Mental health services are provided through Border Area Mental Health Services, Inc.

Serious and frequently cited barriers to obtaining health care include long travel distances, lack of transportation, lack of insurance coverage, lack of child care, lack of medical specialists, limited clinic hours, lack of emergency care, expensive referrals, privacy concerns and poor health literacy. Unavailable services include lack of infrastructure to house health care services, adequate physician coverage, specialty services, adequate substance abuse services, home health care, physical and occupational therapy services, health education, and social service supports.

Priority 1. Coverage and Access to Health and Wellness Services

Strategies include: 1) Increase enrollment in Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance plans.

- 2) Provide more health care sites and services in Catron County.
- 3) Improve communications about health and wellness
- 4) Improve health care awareness
- 5) Increase activity level of Catron County residents.
- 6) Improve awareness of the problem of obesity, diabetes, and metabolic syndrome

- 7) Improve the Health Care infrastructure by locating additional sites for health care services.
- 8) Create an indigent fund for Catron County.
- 9) Explore and research ways to address concerns of the county residents and issues raised in the Health Profile for which no obvious solutions are apparent.

Priority 2: Substance Abuse

Strategies: 1) Enforce current laws regarding public intoxication, drinking while driving, and use of illegal drugs.

- 2) Change community norms about the use of alcohol and drugs.
- 3) Participate in the Judicial District 7 Behavioral Health Collaborative in order to make the needs of Catron County known with respect to treatment of substance abuse and co-occurring disorders.
- 4) Impact the epidemic of methamphetamine usage and other drug abuse by education the county residents and enlisting the aid of businesses and community leaders.