



NEW MEXICO HEALTH EQUITY PARTNERSHIP

New Mexico Health Equity Partnership Statewide Policy Strategies

Background and Context

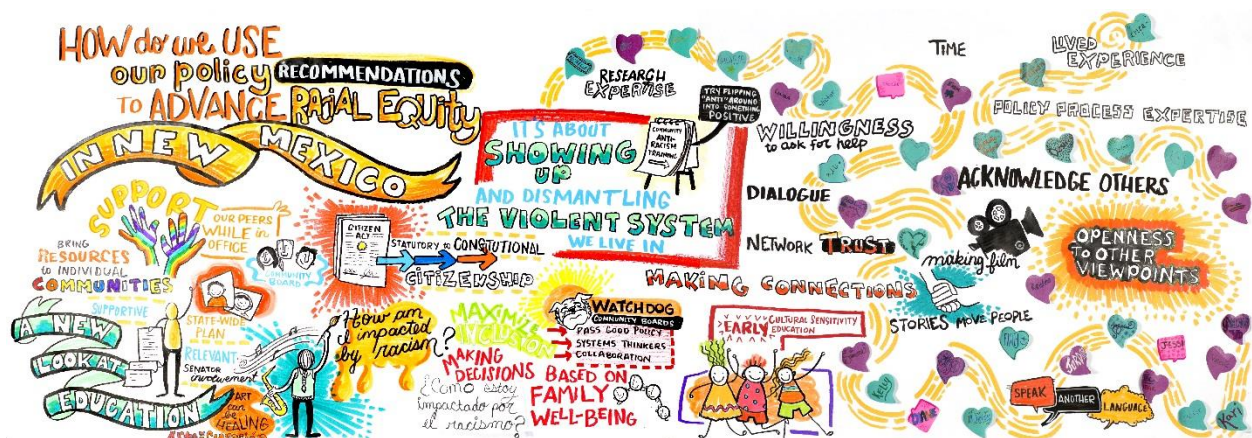
The New Mexico Health Equity Partnership (HEP), an initiative of the Santa Fe Community Foundation, believes that every New Mexican should have the opportunity to lead a healthy life, to live in neighborhoods where our children and families can thrive and have a say in the decisions that impact their communities and lives. For us, health means many things. It means fair resource allocation; safe and affordable housing and transportation; access to doulas; and the availability of healthy food and clean water, just to name a few. HEP focuses on improving healthy living conditions in our communities by connecting people and community groups to each other as we are more powerful as a collective.

Over the past year, HEP members have been on a journey to develop a policy platform under a Health in All Policies (HiAP) framework. HiAP is an approach which takes into account how community health is affected by policies across sectors and seeks to improve community health and ensure equity across populations. Our Partnership's understanding of HiAP has been informed by the completion of 10 Health Impact Assessments (HIA) and three which are actively in progress. Through the HIA process, partners have collected and utilized data and community narratives to make recommendations to inform proposed policies and demonstrate the effects on community health.

In fall 2015, 16 community leaders affiliated with HEP traveled to Los Angeles to participate in the Policy Link Equity Summit. Community leaders engaged in follow up conversations about issues that mattered most to them. In spring/summer 2016, four HEP partners hosted action-oriented small group gatherings to strengthen critical relationships, participate in advocacy training, and move to action on specific issues.



In June 2016, 64 representatives from across the state - engaged in HEP activities, ranging from HIAs to the Equity Summit delegation to small group gatherings - came together at the Statewide Health Equity Gathering to make policy recommendations based on their lived experiences. Participants were asked to identify issues that advanced racial equity; were rooted in community strengths; and were informed by ongoing evidence-based work. The dialogue was graphically recorded by artist, Erica Bota with Think Link Graphics. The graphic illustrations are presented throughout this document to provide visual context to the narrative.



As a follow up, on November 30, 2016, HEP network members joined together at the action-oriented small group gathering to deepen our knowledge of four important strategic issues initially identified at the statewide gathering. These included: 1) transforming education; 2) decolonizing policy makers; 3) immigrant and refugee rights; and 4) citizenship for native people. The focus areas were identified based on a survey conducted with participants in preparation of the gathering. The survey asked individuals to rate each priority area identified at the statewide gathering based on "the impact it would have on racial equity" and "the impact it would have on improving community health". Additionally, individuals were asked whether they were currently working on the issue. The first three strategic areas listed above, HEP network members are engaged in. These areas also scored high for potential impact on racial equity and improving community health. The final topic area (citizenship for native people) also rated high for potential impact. While network members were not currently working on the issue, they were interested in learning more. HEP has set up an online forum to further facilitate dialogue around these important long-term policy strategies.

Approach

New Mexico needs residents actively involved in making a difference, and it needs a strong set of community-based organizations that are a galvanizing force and able to inform policy makers. Through the Statewide Health Equity Gathering, action-oriented small group gathering and online forum, HEP is building on the foundation to make this possible. The approach of having community representatives from across the state share policy recommendations based on their lived experiences is important because it provides context that policy makers don't have on issues that matter most to communities. Furthermore, what emerged were not quick fixes, but long-term policy strategies. This process has been an opportunity to work from community strengths to build bridges across diverse communities and issue areas that represent different parts of a complex system that impact our health and lives. We are grateful to have so many champions within the HEP network working in these strategic areas. We hope these strategies will also be useful to other communities organizing and mobilizing to create a healthier and more just New Mexico.

Overview of Policy Strategies

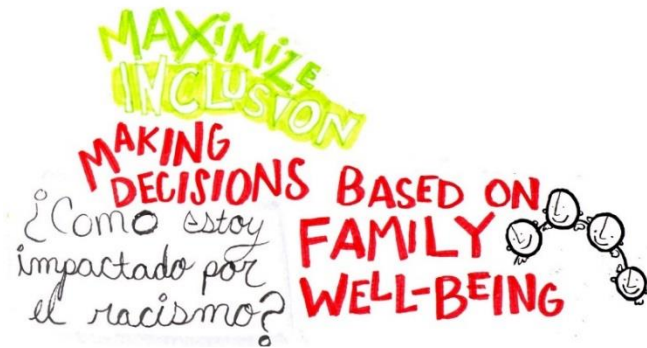
We share HEP's policy strategies, based on gathering participants' lived experiences, to advance racial equity and improve health in New Mexico. In the following section, we provide descriptions of the strategies. Because many of our partners, network members, and allies are actively utilizing these strategies, we share examples of their efforts.

- Important strategies network members are already using
 - Make Decisions based on Family Well-Being and Equity
 - Transform Education
 - Decolonize Policy Makers
 - Ensure Refugee and Immigrant Rights
 - Establish Diverse Community Board's or a People's Congress
 - Develop a Human Bill of Rights
 - Establish More Inclusive and Equitable Definitions of Neighborhood
- Important strategies where there is interest in learning more
 - Guarantee Full Citizenship for Native People
 - Get Money Out of Politics

Description of Policy Strategies

Make Decisions based on Family Well-Being and Equity

Going beyond a HiAP framework, participants recommended that all *policies should be vetted through the lens of health and well-being for families*. In line with this, it was suggested that *policies should be developed using an equity lens* and make the distinction between equity and equality. Equity recognizes that some groups of people need more resources



due to a long history of injustices towards them. When using an equity lens, it is important to understand power relations and the historical context of injustice (i.e. colonization) currently sustained through systemic racism and the economic system. Based on this, we need policies that will repair the injustices of the past and present; ensure fair resource allocation; and provide families what they need to enjoy healthy lives. Moreover, we need to make sure immigrant and refugee families and youth have a real voice and seat at decision making tables. They should have the opportunity to share their insights, ideas and solutions on how to develop policies on key issues that matter most to them.

Members of the HEP network are currently using HIA to elevate the impacts of proposed policies on health and equity. In San Juan County, there is interest in conducting a full HIA on the health impacts of fracking. Some network members are using community mapping as a tool to engage community members and educate decision makers on community solutions designed to ensure the health and well-being of families. In Doña Ana County, community members have been taking photographs of their neighborhoods, serving as listening post, and engaging them on issues that matter most to them.

Additionally, Ona Porter, President & CEO of Prosperity Works who presented at the Statewide Health Equity Gathering shared about the Family Impact Analysis tool which provides decision makers a series of questions to bring families' interests and needs into decision making. The Family Impact Analysis tool makes family well-being an assumption, minimizes the negative impact on families, and improves outcomes for families and children.

Transform Education

Michelle Valverde, Diane Torres-Velasquez and Vanessa Urbina with the SUN (Somos Unidos para Los Niños) Project, shared about their efforts with the SUN Project at the Statewide Health Equity Gathering. The overarching goal of the SUN Project is to create a public education framework in New Mexico that is responsive to culturally diverse learners across the state. The hope is that the framework will inform the development of a long-range plan for education in New Mexico that will guide the trajectory of existing and future preK-12 education policies. All subsequent education policies and practices would be aligned with the cultural values and languages of our communities. Ultimately, students would thrive and there would be improvements in health and well-being. Michelle and Diane provided an update on their efforts at the Action-Oriented Small Group Gathering. In an effort to build many things simultaneously, Diane also spoke to separate but overlapping efforts to create a statewide initiative around ethnic studies so we can articulate and honor our own histories and cultures. At the gathering, participants also engaged in what began as a traditional power mapping exercise on education. What emerged was an informative dialogue about our interdependence and the need to build consensus, harmony and balance in our efforts rather than further divides.



Through discussions at the statewide gathering, participants identified a need to ensure students and families are reflected in their education; teachers and school leaders are supported; community voices are heard when decisions are made; the curriculum reflects our cultures, identities, and languages; and we have opportunities for experiential learning. Participants also would like to end the school to prison pipeline. This refers to the increasing contact students have with the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems as a result of racial bias, school discipline policies, and the use of police in schools which have a disproportionate impact on students of color. Participants recommended *transforming education utilizing a holistic model that is multi-cultural and multi-lingual with a focus on child and family wellness*. This model would focus on human relationships, fully embrace and lift-up ethnic studies, and connect healthy food to our school tables, to name a few. We recognize that in order for this to transformation to take place, we need more decision making and flexibility at the community level. Additionally, through our interactions and learnings at the small group gathering, we re-emphasized that in education, we need to harness our biggest asset in New Mexico – our diversity.

Decolonize Policy Makers

Participants engaged in dialogue about the importance of shifting from a system focused on colonization, racism, extraction, etc. to one rooted in holistic healing, balance, harmony, cooperation, spiritualism, the sacred, and human dignity.

Participants envisioned a world where decision makers centered indigenous ways, the feminine and equity, thus prioritizing the well-being of people and the earth. Participants called for a need to decolonize decision makers (and ourselves) to change the value system in which decisions are made. This includes working to instill norms of basic human values emanating from the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights to Indigenous People.s Participants recommended that: 1) *decision makers receive training on dismantling racism;* 2) *community members need to work together as peers to cultivate our own leaders to get into office and support their leadership when there;* and 3) *we need to address colonial trauma using a healing lens.*



At the Statewide Health Equity Gathering, Strong Families New Mexico shared that they produce a Legislative Report Card to hold decision makers accountable. They examine legislation in five categories: civil rights and criminal justice, economic justice, education equity, health equity, and anti-families which Strong Families opposes. The legislation selected meets at least one of the Strong Families policy criteria. In summary, the criteria focuses on whether the legislation: 1) recognizes and supports families of all formations; 2) promotes or achieves equitable outcomes for all families; 3) expands government programs and services that support family wellbeing and the individual wellbeing within families; 4) removes barriers that harm families in accessing government programs and services; and 5) protects families and the individuals that comprise them against discrimination, profiling, and harassment.

Additionally, Doña Ana Communities United, at the small group gathering, shared how they are working with both community members and the City of Las Cruces, where they discuss equity issues. They emphasized the importance of learning and practicing ways of being in true dialogue with each other. The process is organic and it is about figuring out ways to make new just systems together. There is no one way to do this work. Another partner in San Juan County identified that they are centering the Navajo Wellness Model as a way in their decolonizing efforts.

Ensure Refugee & Immigrant Rights

Kay Bounkeau, Executive Director of the New Mexico Asian Family Center and member of Global 505 shared about their work on a panel at the Statewide Health Equity Gathering and the Action-Oriented Small Group Gathering. New Mexico Asian Family Center is New Mexico's only service provider tailoring its services to be culturally and linguistically appropriate for the Asian Community. Global 505 is an action-oriented network of immigrant and refugee leaders representing voices of Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and Latino populations within the International District and South Valley of Bernalillo County. HEP was honored to have New Mexico Asian Family Center and Global 505 representatives participate in the gatherings and share their experiences, strengths, needs, and ideas. Participants recommend *prioritizing refugee and immigrant rights and ensure their voices are centered in decision making processes.*

Currently, Global 505 is working to ensure the Albuquerque Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs provides a supportive environment for immigrant and refugee communities. Issues of critical importance for the New Mexico Asian Family Center include: language access implementation; providing racial equity training to law enforcement; and ensuring national data is disaggregated for Asians and not clumped together.



At the Action-Oriented Small Group Gathering, we had an opportunity to dive deeper into some of the issues facing refugee communities. For instance, bullying in schools and hate crimes were highlighted as critical issues, particularly following the recent presidential election. There is a great need for mental health services, including more counseling. Additionally, it is important to keep an eye out for the National Security Entry Registry System which has parallels to Japanese internment camps that took place in New Mexico. Protecting voting rights is also essential.

Within the HEP network, the McKinley Community Collaborative for Health Equity, as part of the McKinley Workers Justice Coalition, is also working in the area of immigrant and workers' rights as they finish up a HIA on wage theft. Wage theft impacts families when workers are not paid overtime, misclassified, not paid the minimum wage, or simply not paid. The HIA will be an educational document used design to educate the general public and decision makers about the significance of protecting and expand protections of low-wage workers. The HIA has also been opportunity to bring communities (Spanish Speaking Immigrants and Native Americans) to come together across cultural differences to build the power of the people. Please stay tuned for future information about how to get involved and learn more about the work of the coalition.

Establish Diverse Community Boards or a People’s Congress

Participants identified a need to develop more inclusive and participatory processes where community members can actively engage with decision makers and review and inform policies. Participants recommended *a separate individual entity comprised of individuals’ representative of our communities be established to vet policies before they are passed and implemented.* The community boards would serve as systems thinkers, setting standards for policy using an equity lens. For indigenous communities, it is fundamental to use core values on these boards to build consensus. Participants recommended having community boards at every decision making level which are selected by the community. However, there must be fair and equal representation on the boards and barriers to participation must be removed. For, example, establishing a fund so everyday folks could serve in this role. For example, a mother who needs to pay for child care when she is vetting policies could utilize the fund for this purpose.



Develop a Statewide Human Bill of Rights

Initially, participants identified the need to develop a “Citizen’s” Bill of Rights. Through dialogue, we realized that not all of us are considered citizens by law and are therefore left out. We need something more robust to ensure that all of us are assured rights. Therefore, *developing a Statewide Human Bill of Rights* was recommended along with offering trainings to support this. Through the survey, we further learned that there is a need to make a distinction between human and indigenous rights as outlined in the Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



At the Statewide Health Equity Gathering, Tomás Rivera, Executive Director of the Chainbreaker Collective shared on a panel about his organization’s HIA on gentrification and efforts to create a community-led “Bill of Rights” that can help make lives better for the people who are bearing the brunt of the housing affordability crisis in Santa Fe. The Resident’s Bill of Rights resolution identifies five pillars to ensure equity in public infrastructure investment and land use planning: 1) affordability; 2) quality, sustainability, and health; 3) accessibility, fairness, and equity; 4) stability and protection from displacement; and 5) community control.



Establish More Inclusive and Equitable Definitions of Neighborhood

Participants identified a need to make sure rural voices are part of decision making processes so community members from these areas can be their own champions. Participants recommended *establishing more inclusive and equitable definitions of neighborhood*. This is important to



prevent a forced identity being put onto residents within the "invisible" boundaries we reside. What if instead we had definitions that unified communities that are strategically separated for purposes of political representation and resource allocation? We should seek for true representation and inclusion of communities. This can be accomplished

by policy makers and funders using an equity lens to inform definitions, as well decisions. In urban areas, disaggregation and focus on equity by "neighborhood" is important. In rural and frontier areas, the term "neighborhood" is very uncommon because of the tremendous geographic spread of a "community". Defining a boundary in ways that makes the most sense for the issue is important in developing strategies to address the issue, to use resources efficiently, and to address power dynamics. Susan Wilger, HEP network steering committee member and representative of the National Center of Frontier Communities has contributed to a policy position paper regarding the definition of frontier.

Guarantee Full Citizenship for Native Peoples

Through our discussions, participants learned about the Citizen Act of 1924 which gave Native people statutory citizenship versus constitutional citizenship. Participants identified the need to ensure full citizenship for Native Peoples. We recognize this is a federal policy that requires a local movement to influence change.



During this conversation and follow up survey, many questions were raised. For example, there were concerns about defraying treaty agreements, such as health care and autonomy for tribal nations. Alternative suggestions, such as working on full funding for Indian Health Services and enforcement of treaty agreements were offered. The Santa Fe Indian Center and University of New Mexico are currently working on a HIA which examines the impact of underfunding of the Santa Fe Indian Health Service Hospital on the Santa Fe Urban Indian community. Additionally, other perspectives were brought forth on the topic of "Full Citizenship for Native Peoples". Some people suggested that citizenship is not necessarily the answer, particularly when the current system is not healthy and is viewed as a colonial democracy and oligarchy which does not care about the earth.

Participants recommend *first looking deeper into this issue and educating and informing ourselves and those most impacted by this issue.*

Christina Morris shared additional information on this topic at the Action-Oriented Small Group Gathering and Deswood Tome formally presented at the 13th Annual New Mexico Public Health Policy Forum. These were opportunities for HEP network members to learn more about this issue. The following possible recommendations, which speak to some of the concerns raised above, were shared by Mr. Tome at the 13th Annual New Mexico Public Health Policy Forum:

- To begin a new era for Tribes and Nations in America, lead a presidential effort in calling on Congress to end the old Indian era.
- Invoke a 10 year plan with tribal consultation to create independence and sustainability.
- Pursue a Constitutional Amendment to make Native American people *first class citizens* by ending statutory citizenship.
- Turn over all federal lands known as "Indian Reservations" directly over to Native American Tribal control.
- Write and implement a new U.S.-Indian policy to replace "Self-Determination" with "Sovereignty and Independence."
- The Federal Government created the present day conditions for Native American Tribes and Nations, it therefore requires Congressional Action with the implementation by the President of the United States of America.

Get Money Out of Politics

Participants identified a need to get money out of politics. This would be accomplished through *public financing of elections, cap donations, and voter awareness and turnout*. While the network rated this strategy high on potential impact, this is not something the HEP network is currently working on. Members pointed to other groups utilizing this strategy that are better positioned to lead these efforts.



Acknowledgements

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** Doña Ana Communities United * Chainbreaker Collective * College of Population Health and Robert Wood Johnson Center for Health Policy, University of New Mexico * Farm to Table-New Mexico * Global 505 *Health Equity Partnership, Santa Fe Community Foundation* Health Matters New Mexico * La Familia Medical Center * McKinley Community Collaborative for Health Equity * National Center for Frontier Communities * New Mexico Asian Family Center * New Mexico State University Borderlands Center for Educational Studies * New Mexico Breastfeeding Taskforce * New Mexico Women.org – New Mexico Community Foundation * New Mexico Women's Global Pathways * New Stories * One Billion Rising in New Mexico * San Juan Community Collaborative for Health Equity * San Miguel Health Impact Assessment Team * Santa Fe Art Institute * Santa Fe Indian Center Health Impact Assessment Team * Somos un Pueblo Unido * Strong Families – New Mexico Forward Together * SUN (Somos Unidos para Los Niños) Project * Tewa Women United * Tularosa Basin Downwinders**

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