

**FINAL  
REPORT**

- Summary of results from three community forums
- February through March, 2013

**CONVENER**

CHRISTUS St. Vincent Regional Medical Center

**FACILITATOR**

New Mexico First

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# INTRODUCTION

## Community Health

Community health is a discipline that studies and strives to improve the health characteristics of community members in a specific geographic region. CHRISTUS St. Vincent is a community-based, private, not-for-profit hospital serving more than 300,000 people in seven counties in northern New Mexico. The organization has a long history of contributing to the community through the provision of medical services, monetary contributions, in-kind donations, and staff time. The organization's vision is to provide Exceptional Medicine, Extraordinary Care to Every Person, Every Day.

Understanding the health needs in the community, identifying health priorities, and taking action to address these priorities is important to preventing disease and helping people who suffer with health issues cope more effectively. Health issues like cancer, heart disease, diabetes, substance abuse, and mental illness affect the lives of many people in Santa Fe County. The lives of families, neighbors, and caregivers are also affected. When community members work in partnership with healthcare professionals to find practical ways of preventing and managing major health issues, community health can be improved. For these reasons, CHRISTUS St. Vincent convened three community health forums in Santa Fe County, February-March, 2013.

## Community Health Needs Assessment

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act requires hospitals claiming tax-exempt status conduct a community health needs assessment every three years and develop a strategy to address the needs identified. This new requirement presents the opportunity to develop and implement an organized, enterprise approach to improving the health of community

As part of the needs assessment process, CHRISTUS St. Vincent collected data from various sources:

1. Statistical health data for Santa Fe County to understand the prevalence of major diseases, the leading causes of death, and indicators that measure the health level of the community.
2. Focus groups with educators, healthcare and social service practitioners, hospital associates and practitioners, and any other interested parties with insight on community health issues.
3. Community health forums with members of the general public to determine practical ways community members and groups could work with the hospital to have a positive impact on important health issues.

This information will be incorporated into a Community Health Implementation Plan which will guide hospital policy and decisions over the next two years.

## Forum Process

As part of the community health needs assessment, three community health forums were conducted to gain insight into potential community-based interventions that would help people live healthier lives. These ideas could lead to programs or initiatives that the community and CHRISTUS St Vincent can champion in order to have a positive impact on the health of community members.

Over 65 people participated in the forums. During the forums, participants engaged in a small group discussion in which they suggested practical recommendations that will support positive change in community health. In these discussions, forum participants addressed the following questions:

- Health issues like cancer, heart disease, diabetes, substance abuse, and mental illness affect the lives of many people in Santa Fe County. How have these illnesses affected your life and the lives of your neighbors?
- How can members of the community and CHRISTUS St. Vincent work together to prevent chronic illness or help people deal with chronic illness?
- Knowing your community, what are the three most achievable ideas?

The forums were specifically held with faith organizations to reach members of the Santa Fe community who might otherwise not have participated in events held in other venues. Forums were held at the following organizations:

- San Isidro Catholic Church (both English and Spanish-speaking groups)
- United Church of Santa Fe
- Santa Fe Jewish Communities (held at CHRISTUS St. Vincent Foundation)

Additional faith organizations announced the forum to their members. Members were encouraged to attend the forum that fit their schedule best. The forums were open to the general public and were announced in the Santa Fe New Mexican and Albuquerque Journal North newspapers.

## Forum Convener

CHRISTUS St. Vincent Regional Medical Center provides healthcare, emergency, and specialty services. With a medical staff of 380 providers covering 34 specialties, CHRISTUS St. Vincent serves more than 300,000 residents. The organization was founded in 1865 by the Sisters of Charity and is New Mexico's first hospital and the largest private employer in Santa Fe. In April 2008, CHRISTUS Health and St. Vincent finalized the formation of a partnership that allowed St. Vincent to benefit from the resources of the international 40-hospital system.

## Forum Facilitator

**New Mexico First** engages people in important issues facing their state or community. Established in 1986, the public policy organization offers unique town halls and forums that bring people together to develop recommendations for policymakers and the public. New Mexico First also produces nonpartisan public policy reports on critical issues facing the state. These reports – on topics like water, education, healthcare, the economy, and energy – are available at [nmfirst.org](http://nmfirst.org).

# FORUM PARTICIPANT PRIORITIES

Overall, forum participants supported finding ways community members and groups could partner with CHRISTUS St. Vincent to work on issues jointly and include community leaders as part of improving community health. Many good ideas were voiced during the forums. At each forum, participants reviewed their ideas and identified the top three to four ideas they viewed as most achievable. The priority ideas are listed below. The additional ideas are listed in the Appendix on pages 8-9.

**Note: CHRISTUS St. Vincent is not in a position to advance *all* these ideas.** However, all will be carefully considered for possible inclusion in CHRISTUS St. Vincent’s community health plan.

| Education  |  |
|--|--|
| THEME  | RECOMMENDATION   |
| <b>REC 1:<br/>Educate children</b>                 | Educate children about healthy habits in their schools and faith-based organizations.  |
| <b>REC 2:<br/>Provide community education</b>      | Find ways to expand existing community health programs, such as the annual hospital flu vaccination drive, to become full Health Fairs where health information and basic medical tests are available, healthy foods and exercise are demonstrated, and prevention education about symptoms and risks of chronic diseases are explained.     |
| <b>REC 3:<br/>Develop public health campaigns</b>  | Develop public health campaigns about various health services, including the need to get regular check-ups.  |
| <b>REC 4:<br/>Develop community health website</b> | Develop a community health website that would provide educational information and include a directory of healthcare resources, as well as a way to contact a healthcare professional who could give expert information and referrals.<br><br>This information could also be provided as a brochure for those who do not access the internet. |

| Community Support                                   |   |
|---|---|
| THEME   | RECOMMENDATION  |
| <b>REC 5:<br/>Provide information to community`</b> | Communicate ways that neighbors can support each other, for example, the use of social network sites like <a href="http://www.nextdoor.com">www.nextdoor.com</a> which allow neighbors to connect with one another for help and support.<br><br>For those residents who do not access the internet, provide English and Spanish information about health services in public places such as faith organizations, schools, libraries, social services agencies, and healthcare locations. |
| <b>REC 6:<br/>Expand homecare services</b>          | Expand homecare services to support patients and their caregivers once patients leave the hospital and return to their homes. These services could be provided by volunteer groups or by for-profit organizations.  |

| Prevention  |  |
|---|--|
| THEME   | RECOMMENDATION   |
| <b>REC 7:<br/>Promote prevention through education</b>            | Promote prevention and wellness through education on various diseases, diet, exercise, sex, and drugs.                       |
| <b>REC 8:<br/>Promote prevention through alternative medicine</b> | Establish a healthcare team in a shared facility that promotes prevention and wellness using alternative medicine practices. |

| Behavioral Health  |  |
|--|--|
| THEME  | RECOMMENDATION   |
| <b>REC 9:<br/>Encourage discussion</b>                           | Invite community members to come together to talk about topics like mental illness to reduce the stigma.     |
| <b>REC 10:<br/>Establish more clinics</b>                        | Establish more community mental health clinics.  |
| <b>REC 11:<br/>Establish support after release from hospital</b> | Establish support for patients with mental illness and addictions after they are released from the hospital. |

| Healthcare Process                           |   |
|--|---|
| THEME  | RECOMMENDATION  |
| <b>REC 12:<br/>Create professional teams</b> | Create professional teams so that each person involved with a patient's illness can get the full picture and can manage the person's illness effectively. This support should expand beyond the person's hospital stay in order to alleviate the risks associated with the illness. |
| <b>REC 13:<br/>Ensure coordination</b>       | Ensure better coordination between doctors and other healthcare professionals before, during and after a patient's hospital stay.   |

| Healthcare Cost   |  |
|---|--|
| THEME   | RECOMMENDATION   |
| <b>REC 14:<br/>Provide information on low cost care</b> | Provide information about where to find low cost or free healthcare services and establish more places where healthcare services are less expensive. |
| <b>REC 15:<br/>Support additional tax revenues</b>      | Support additional tax revenues to support services for substance abuse.   |

# APPENDIX

Listed below are additional ideas that were voiced by forum participants. Similar ideas from participants have been combined. Many of these ideas can be championed by individuals, families, neighborhoods, and community organizations.

## Education

1. Support parent academies, youth organizations, and early childhood programs to educate, model, and reinforce important health messages with parents and children.
2. Offer classes that are free or on a sliding fee scale to all ages that emphasize healthy lifestyles.
3. Support peer-to-peer healthy living workshops.
4. Illustrate what can happen when people do not have healthy habits (e.g., obesity and how it can affect movement and mood).
5. Provide nutritionists to educate children in schools.
6. Provide healthy menus and cookbooks, but also incorporate the cultural foods that are familiar to people.
7. Support existing programs like Cooking with Kids and exercise education.
8. Provide Cooking with Adult programs and nutrition materials through parent-teacher organizations and school communities.
9. Support Marshal Rosenberg's nonviolent communication and restorative justice programs.

## Public Outreach

1. Advertise the existing health services and programs available.
2. Advertise workshops using public service announcements on radio and television.
3. Start a collaborative campaign (e.g., healthcare providers, schools, faith-based organizations) that communicates the need for supporting babies and families.
4. Promote the message that love is the answer and truth is the foundation. Encourage these values throughout the week, not just on Saturday and Sunday.
5. Provide information about healthcare insurance, Medicaid, and other types of healthcare assistance.

## Community Support

1. Have a presence at Santa Fe events throughout the year to provide information, education, and basis tests.
2. Organize community members to phone or visit people who cannot leave their homes.
3. Sponsor more support groups for chronic pain, behavioral health, obesity, etc. and advertise them well.
4. Expand and promote existing community-based support for those who have life threatening illnesses and train their caregivers in palliative care.
5. Establish more urgent care centers.
6. Provide more adult care services.
7. Provide more free or sliding scale services for people living in poverty.
8. Convene meetings to share information and ideas in a non-hierarchical way.
9. Convene health meetings on a periodic basis so that hospital experts can share their knowledge with the community and the community can share ideas with them.



## Prevention

1. Convene meetings like this one through faith-based organizations or in schools to discuss prevention and wellness issues.
2. Subsidize, and make more available, supplements which prevent illness, e.g., Vitamin D, Omega 3, anti-inflammatories, etc.
3. Teach people how to "listen" to their own bodies so they will be more likely to seek out preventative healthcare faster.
4. Provide stress management programs.

## Healthy Habits

1. Provide healthy snacks at public meetings, churches, schools, etc.
2. Provide healthy foods in the hospital and provide education by a nutritionist to patients and their caregivers.
3. Provide meal menus that are descriptive (e.g., list healthy foods for breakfast, lunch and dinner).
4. Provide walking paths with signs that are descriptive (e.g., achievable goal, amount of calories burned, etc.) to motivate use.
5. Establish more "satellite" community centers with workout facilities that are low-cost or free.
6. Provide a central place, with childcare, where people can exercise in safety.
7. Organize fitness and healthy eating classes in housing centers for seniors.
8. Coordinate activities of subsidiary organizations and work with them to become part of a central operation to have a greater impact on health issues like obesity which cause other diseases.

## Behavioral Health

1. Educate parents to be more aware of problems like substance abuse and encourage them to be more invested in teaching and supporting their children.
2. Provide more transition support for patients who are discharged for substance abuse and mental health issues.
3. Expand substance abuse rehabilitation programs in the jails and after discharge from jails.

## Healthcare Process

1. Identify and expand existing health networks that are following best practices and communicate this information.
2. Develop a shared, medical data system that allows people use it without fear and makes them aware of the risks involved in common diseases.
3. Be more accessible for appointments.
4. Provide a central advocacy operation that can help people get the services and support they need.
5. Invite community representatives to meet with hospital administrators about the needs of the community at large.
6. Provide a space that would be inviting and comfortable to people of all faiths to rest, reflect, pray, or worship. The current chapels display imagery that is only reflective of Christianity.
7. Improve the image of the hospital in the community.