



COLLEGE OF
POPULATION HEALTH
CENTER FOR HEALTH POLICY

2023 Annual Report

Robert G. Frank, Director
Center for Health Policy

About the Center for Health Policy

Overview

The NM Center for Health Policy (CHP, or Center) is an initiative of the College of Population Health within The University of New Mexico's Health Sciences Center. CHP's overall goal is to inform, support, and stimulate sound and creative state health policy in New Mexico and beyond. CHP has formed a unique partnership with the New Mexico Human Services Department, Medical Assistance Division (NM HSD-MAD) to address health care issues in the state. This is especially critical in New Mexico, where nearly half the population is covered by the Medicaid program. As part of the Center's overall strategic plan, we will build on established strengths of UNM faculty to inform public policy leading to better, more integrated, more affordable, and more equitable service delivery that improves the health of the population of New Mexico.

Our Mission

To improve health outcomes for all communities in New Mexico and throughout the United States by providing innovative, data-driven, inclusive solutions for health care's most complex problems.

Our Vision

New Mexico Center for Health Policy will be the pre-eminent resource for state, federal, and local policy makers to understand and facilitate affordable, accessible, high quality health services for all New Mexicans.

2023 Achievements

- **Advancement to Phase II Projects:** The Center successfully progressed from Phase I to Phase II, significantly expanding its project portfolio from 4 to 8 initiatives. This expansion signifies the Center's growth and capacity to engage in a broader spectrum of projects to serve HSD-MAD's needs.
- **Building Connections with Other Agencies:** Proactively fostering relationships with additional state agencies has resulted in promising opportunities for direct contract engagements. The Center's goal in building these relationships is to diversify funding and enhance the Center's ability to serve New Mexico's health policy needs.
- **Development of a Strategic Plan:** A pivotal accomplishment involved the creation of a 3-year strategic plan. This plan serves as a guiding framework, delineating the Center's objectives, emphasizing its strengths, and establishing its identity as an influential entity within the state-university partnership landscape.
- **Membership in State-University Partnership Learning Network (SUPLN):** The Center's membership in the SUPLN underscores its commitment to collaborative learning and knowledge sharing within a broader network. This affiliation opens doors to valuable insights and potential collaborations with peer institutions.
- **Notable Networking Engagements:** Dr. Robert G Frank and Dr. Alanna Dancis participated in a significant networking endeavor, visiting ForHealth Consulting in Boston, Massachusetts. This engagement included impactful discussions with the leadership team. Additionally, they

met with leaders from Ariadne Labs, a collaboration between Harvard T Chan School of Public Health and Brigham & Women's Hospital.

- **Staff Expansion and Retention:** The Center successfully recruited, and has retained, two full-time staff members. These additions contribute to the Center's capabilities and sustained growth.

Phase I began in 2022 and will conclude in early 2024. Phase I projects include:

- **Medicaid Survey**
 - **PI:** Dr. Gabe Sanchez, UNM College of Arts and Sciences
 - **Goal:** Learn more about the health care access needs, utilization, and priorities of New Mexicans
 - **Accomplishments:**
 - Collected data on a random sample of 1900 New Mexico residents about their health care access and social determinants of health
 - Identified initiatives NM residents would support using Medicaid dollars to fund
 - Of particular interest is the use of Medicaid funds for gun safety equipment
 - This project was such a huge success that it will be annual rather than biennial moving forward
- **Pharmacy/Preferred Drug List**
 - **PI:** Dr. Melanie Dodd, UNM College of Pharmacy
 - **Goal:** Develop an aligned formulary for Medicaid, across MCOs
 - **Accomplishments:**
 - Worked with HSD to form and facilitate the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee, with members from across New Mexico
 - Facilitated a workgroup for diabetes drugs to provide feedback on the therapeutic class review completed by CHP in collaboration with College of Pharmacy
 - Completed 53 therapeutic class reviews for the Preferred Drug List, with another 46 in progress of 168 total classes assigned for review.

Phase II work began in April 2023 and is scheduled to go through 2024. Phase II projects include:

- **OB/Maternal Health Deserts**
 - **PI:** Dr. Claudia Díaz Fuentes, UNM College of Population Health
 - **Goal:** Understand areas of New Mexico where maternity care is unavailable (OB/Maternal Health Deserts) and recommend ways to address them, with the aim of improving maternal mortality.
 - **Accomplishments:**
 - Deliverables addressing the Rural OB Access & Maternal Services (ROAMS) program in Northern New Mexico, Hub and Spoke telehealth models of care were completed by Dr. Shannon Sanchez-Youngman

- Dr. Díaz Fuentes produced a deliverable describing payment models in other states. The next deliverable will explore the impact of reimbursement schedules on provider revenue and maternal/birth health outcomes.
- **Palliative Care Benefit Design**
 - **PI:** Dr. Grace Chung, UNM College of Population Health
 - **Goal:** Develop a hospice-like palliative care benefit for New Mexico Medicaid recipients.
 - **Accomplishments:**
 - Formation and facilitation of monthly stakeholder meetings to provide consumer input. The stakeholder group will help develop a well-informed and comprehensive benefit for those who need it most.
 - Next step is to estimate potential utilization models.
- **Direct Care Workforce**
 - **PI:** Dr. Lexi O'Donnell, UNM College of Population Health
 - **Goal:** Understand issues facing the direct care workforce in New Mexico's health care industry and make recommendations to address those shortages
 - **Accomplishments:**
 - Two policy memos addressing the direct care worker shortage in New Mexico have been delivered to HSD-MAD.
- **Additional Phase II Projects:**
 - **Primary Care Workforce**
 - **PI:** Dr. Bob Frank, UNM College of Population Health
 - **Goal:** Identify the likelihood of success of novel ways of bolstering New Mexico's primary care workforce, such as through licensure of military medics.
 - **Nursing Facility Quality and Transparency**
 - **PI:** Dr. Bob Frank, UNM College of Population Health
 - **Goal:** Explore ways to improve the existing nursing facility value-based payment (VBP) program and identify quality metrics that improve residents' quality of life, enhance work conditions within facilities, and promote transparency of the nursing facility industry.
 - **Behavioral Health Core**
 - **PI:** Dr. Carli Bonham, UNM Community Behavioral Health, Department of Psychiatry, UNM School of Medicine
 - **Goal:** Better understand the behavioral health needs of Medicaid consumers in New Mexico by linking databases such as Medicaid Claims, criminal justice, and vital records to track outcomes.

2023 Financial Overview

The work completed this year by the Center for Health Policy would not have been possible without the significant support of Dr. Ziedonis, Executive Vice President for Health Sciences, CEO, UNM Health System and Dr. Tracie Collins, Dean and Professor, UNM College of Population Health.

In fiscal year 2023 (July 2022 - June 2023), the Center for Health Policy billed for \$346,300.89 in services to New Mexico Medicaid.

Center for Health Policy Staff

- Robert G. Frank, PhD, Professor, College of Population Health and Director, Center for Health Policy
- Amber Dukes, PhD, MPH. Senior Project Manager, Center for Health Policy
- Cory Dinter, MPH, MS, Research Scientist, Center for Health Policy

2023 Challenges Met & Overcome

- 1) **Adapting in Alignment with HSD Priorities:** CHP has diligently adjusted its focus in tandem with the shifting priorities of HSD. This flexibility has enabled the Center to align with the evolving needs of HSD-MAD and NM Medicaid Recipients.
- 2) **Diversification of Funding Sources:** A critical focus for CHP has been the exploration of diversified funding avenues. This strategic initiative aims to move the center towards financial independence.
- 3) **Transition to a Staff-Centric Model:** CHP is actively undergoing a transformation from a faculty-centric to a staff-centric operational model. This transition gives the Center enhanced agility, enabling quicker responsiveness to the evolving needs of our partnering agencies.
- 4) **Challenges in the Skilled Professional Medical Personnel (SPMP) Domain:** Collaborative efforts with agencies and stakeholders are underway to navigate challenges associated with claiming 75% reimbursement for the contributions of Skilled Professional Medical Personnel (SPMP). This remains an ongoing focus area for the Center's initiatives and progress.

2024 Tasks:

-
- Establish a clear process for letters of direction that guide projects in response to shifting HSD priorities
- Complete Data Use Agreements (DUAs) for Medicaid data and projects
- Complete process for accessing Medicaid Data; clean and process those data for analysis
- Carry out Phase II projects and develop agenda for new projects

2024 Roadmap

- **Enhancing Data Analysis Proficiency:** The Center will prioritize growing data analysis capabilities, specifically focusing on projects involving Medicaid Claims data. This strategic initiative aims to bolster the Center's proficiency in handling complex data sets for in-depth analysis and insights.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Actively engaging with stakeholders in health care utilization, palliative care, health care workforce dynamics, and prescription drug landscapes will remain a key focus area. These engagements are aimed at fostering collaborative relationships and ensuring the production of deliverables that best serve the needs of HSD and NM health care consumers.
- **Strengthening Partnerships with HSD-MAD:** The Center will continue to work on building the relationship with HSD-MAD. This collaborative effort aims to enhance mutual support, cooperation, and effectiveness in shared initiatives.
- **Agency Collaboration for Data Analytics and Surveys:** Continuing efforts to cultivate relationships with additional agencies persist as a strategic priority. The aim is to extend support in fulfilling their data analytics and survey requirements, fostering mutually beneficial partnerships.
- **Approval for Skilled Professional Medical Personnel Claiming:** The Center remains dedicated to working closely with HSD to navigate and secure approval for claiming skilled professional medical personnel at the 75% level.
- **Capacity Building for Learning Collaboratives:** An additional focus area involves building the Center's capacity to facilitate and foster learning collaboratives. This initiative aims to create robust platforms for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and fostering best practices within relevant sectors.

Anticipated Changes in 2024

- **Expansion of Center Personnel:** Strategically expanding the Center's workforce by hiring additional staff and research assistants is anticipated. The goal is to optimize responsiveness to the evolving needs of our partnering agencies, ensuring enhanced support and efficiency in our collaborations.
- **Augmentation with Direct Contracting:** The Center seeks a shift to direct contracts as part of its funding diversification strategy. This strategic shift will enable the Center to explore and secure a broader range of funding opportunities, improving financial stability and independence.
- **Refinement of Center Focus:** An ongoing initiative involves streamlining the Center's priorities and focus areas. This includes a strategic reevaluation to reduce emphasis on landscape analyses while focusing efforts in data analysis. This adjustment aims to allocate resources more effectively, focusing on high-impact areas that align closely with our objectives and partner needs.