



# WSCC Health Equity

# Prenatal/ Postpartum

# A Healthy start for every life

Western Sky Community Care (WSCC) is a Medicaid health plan in New Mexico. Health equity is central to the purpose of Western Sky Community Care: to transform New Mexico's health, one person at a time. Because we believe everyone deserves access to the best, most affordable health care for their individual health care needs, Western Sky is dedicated to closing unjust gaps in health to achieve health equity for all New Mexicans.

New Mexico is special in that it is a tricultural state, where languages and cultures blend, meld, and coexist in a unique way. The Spanish and English languages are both part of everyday life for everyone, and the American Indian, Hispanic, and European cultures intertwine to enrich all New Mexicans' lives just as they have for hundreds of years.

Our Health Equity Model is ideally suited for building and supporting effective, locally tailored interventions. At its core, our model seeks to cultivate trust-based relationships by encouraging transparent and open dialogue and treating people with integrity and respect. To that end, we approach health equity solutions from three domains: our community, our members, and our provider partners.

Our ongoing engagement is rooted in understanding the health disparities in our market and purposefully engaging critical stakeholders, such as neighborhood advocates who can help our members overcome barriers to better health, and other key partners who have a role in where our enrollees, live, work, eat, play, pray, and receive health services.

Several social and cultural differences exist between New Mexico and the rest of the U.S:

- Nearly 11 percent of New Mexicans identify as American Indian (representing the Navajo Nation, 19 pueblos, and the Jicarilla and Mescalero Apache tribes).
- Approximately 49 percent of our members report Hispanic ethnicity.
- Overall, 63 percent of New Mexicans identify as either a racial or an ethnic minority, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey.
- As many as a third of residents report speaking a language other than English at home (versus 22 percent nationwide).

One of the foundations of the model is our strong, accountable governance structure. It involves a restructuring of our governance; realignment of policies and procedures; a purposefully trained and diverse staff and provider network; integrated data systems; and culminating this work into meaningful partnerships and investments. Designed with insight from Valerie Billingham's words, "Nothing about me, without me," our approach focuses on listening to and empowering local voices. With Western Sky as the convener, integrator, and catalyst, we:

- Consult: Listening to the community and individual analysis and feedback to guide policies, programs, and actions
- Inform: Providing the community with balanced and objective information to support their assessment of the problem and formulation of opportunities and/or solutions
- Involve: Working with community leaders and trusted messengers to understand and incorporate local concerns and aspirations
- Collaborate: Partnering with CBOs and advocates in pertinent aspects of decision-making and solutions
- Create Autonomy: Place appropriate decision-making in the hands of the community, providers, and individuals.



WSCC's project through the DLP: The maternal health measures in the Las Cruces area of Doña Ana and Luna counties for Hispanic members. Western Sky has various interventions for the prenatal and postpartum measures; however, through evaluation of continued improvement we found opportunities for improvement in reaching our communities that have a disparity.

Per an analysis, utilizing our proprietary impactability scoring methodology, on the Prenatal and Postpartum Care measures for the seven zip codes in the Las Cruces area with sizable populations of Western Sky members. We determined that, for our Las Cruces area Hispanic members to achieve parity with their White counterparts in these HEDIS measures, we would need to ensure adequate maternal visits for more Hispanic women during pregnancy and postpartum period.

Doña Ana and Luna counties make up part of the nation's southern border. As a result, the true community need may not be visible. Many of the women and children most in need of healthcare are undocumented or are part of families with undocumented family members. For every person, the data shows they are not receiving adequate care – skipping childhood vaccines or presenting to give birth under the state's emergency Medicaid program without having had a prenatal visit, there are significantly more that we are unaware of.



These "network effects," of improving health for moms and their newborn infants – who will be citizens regardless of their parents' status – will extend over those infants' first few years, to well-child appointments; to other children in the family; to other adults in the family, who see that getting needed care is safe; and to neighbors and friends.

Our approach reflects an essential part of our state's values: the importance of tradition and of taking care of our community. If you help one person within a family, they have a network. They spread that word, spread the health. That's our vision with this initiative.

