

# COMMUNITY HEALTH PROFILE

County or Tribe:	Union County
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## 1. Executive summary

Union County is a geographically large, sparsely populated, rural frontier county located in the extreme northeastern corner of New Mexico. Cattle ranching and feeding is the primary business. Approximately two thirds of the population of Union County resides in Clayton, which lies in the far eastern side, and is the county seat. There are two public school districts: Clayton Municipal Schools and Des Moines Municipal Schools. The Union County Collaborative Health Council (UCCHC) is a broad based citizen coalition with open membership and transparent operation. There are about twenty core members representing county government, city government, youth and adult mental health and substance abuse providers, the county hospital and family practice clinic, the nursing community, the public health office, the Clayton-Union County economic development partnership, the Clayton and Des Moines Public Schools, the Des Moines School Based Health & Wellness Center, workforce development, the District Attorneys Office, county and city law enforcement and state health and human service agencies. This core group has been working together for more than four years to map services, assess needs and gaps, coordinate, align and improve services in Union County in an overarching effort to improve community health. The UCCHC has worked in the priorities of immunizations and behavioral health and in the area of emergency management in an effort to develop and sustain programs in order to develop infrastructure and improve service delivery. Union County has a robust medical community with a county hospital staffed by three medical doctors, 20 or more nurses and a professional administrative staff. Des Moines has a newly organized School Based Health & Wellness Center. The Public Health Office is staffed by a Family Nurse Practitioner and a registered nurse, and an administrative assistant. There are three behavioral

health service providers all administered outside the county but two with local staff with some ties to the community.

## 2. Introduction

### a. Council Description

The Union County Collaborative Health Council (UCCHC) formed in October of 2004 when an informal group of local health and human service providers met together with a law enforcement focused juvenile task force, working primarily on issues of truancy and juvenile crime, to form a community health council in an effort to address health and human services needs in the community.

Since its inception, the UCCHC has met monthly on the third Tuesday of each month, in meetings which are open, regular and publicized with meeting minutes and agendas, planned and available in advance. Subcommittees on behavioral health and immunizations meet monthly. UCCHC members participate in emergency planning and serve on the Local Emergency Planning Committee and a full time, professional Emergency Manager was recently hired by Union County and the Town of Clayton. Regular council membership has distilled over time to include a core group of about 20 people representing local service providers, county and city government officials (elected and appointed), health care workers, law enforcement, workforce development (youth and adult) officials, public health officials, Clayton Public School nurse, teachers and administrators, Des Moines Public Schools administrator and school based health center director and school nurse and behavioral health providers. Because the county is so sparsely populated health, council participants wear multiple hats and represent a variety of health interests and concerns in their health council participation. The UCCHC email list is current and comprehensive and meeting notices are emailed; monthly meeting notices are posted

on the community web calendar; and articles and announcements of council meetings and activities appear in the local newspaper as often as the reporter covers them. Personal invitations are sent and emailed to individuals who have expressed an interest in specific subject matter. For information contact UCCHC Coordinator Judith Cooper; P.O. Box 572; Clayton, NM 88415; (505) 374-2993; fax (505) 374-8458; [jcooper@plateautel.net](mailto:jcooper@plateautel.net) or any health council member.

b. Mission, vision and purpose of council

The mission of the UCCHC is to be comprised of a diverse and representative group of citizens who are dedicated to improving the quality of life for the citizens of Union County, who meet in open forum to identify and prioritize needs, who work to address health issues and develop effective local plans for improving behavioral health and related human needs and who work to develop strong local voices to guide behavioral health planning and services for Union County. The vision of the UCCHC is, through planning, action and advocacy, we will work together collaboratively for a safe and healthy community. This profile of county health is to provide a comprehensive assessment of factors affecting health and wellness in Union County which incorporates secondary health data as well as primary health data gathered and analyzed by community members.

c. Definition of health

The Union County Collaborative Health Council, defines health broadly to include physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being. Union County is a rural, frontier community which is characterized by sparse population, inhabiting vast territory, with limited resources. The physical, mental, spiritual and social dimensions of the community are interdependent. One health priority is specific (pre-school immunizations), the other is general (behavioral health)

and both priorities envision an integrated service delivery system in planning for priorities improvement.

d. Purpose of profile

The purpose of the profile is to provide a comprehensive assessment of factors affecting health and wellness in the community which incorporates secondary and published health data as well as primary health data that is gathered and analyzed at the county level.

e. Profile development

This profile is an update of that profile submitted in December of 2007 which has been reviewed and modified with current information by the UCCHC Executive Committee and reviewed and modified by the full UCCHC. The profile is an articulation of the cumulative work of the health council since its inception throughout which time the health council has sought to study the community health improvement process, research and review existing data, gather and update information about current health and human services in Union County to identify assets and gaps including current critical health needs, and formulate a plan for improving the most needed services. The UCCHC works to facilitate and develop the comprehensive community health improvement process through council assessment, planning and coordination. The UCCHC has met monthly in full committee, executive committee and subcommittees to gather, exchange and analyze information about health and articulate how that information applies to the assessment and improvement processes in Union County.

### 3. Community description

#### a. Geographic description

Union County is located in the extreme northeastern corner of the state of New Mexico. It is a large geographic area, 3,830<sup>1</sup> square miles, with 4,470<sup>2</sup> total residents, resulting in a very low population density<sup>3</sup>. The population is located primarily in the town of Clayton which is situated on the eastern side of the county 140 miles from Amarillo, Texas, which is the closest major metropolitan city. Approximately 60% of Union County residents live in Clayton. The next largest population concentration is the village of Des Moines, population 154, which is located on the western side of the county. About 42 miles separate Clayton and Des Moines. There are several very small communities located in Amistad, Bueyeros, Capulin, Folsom, Gladstone, Grenville, Mount Dora, Sedan, Seneca and Stead.

Union County is primarily a farming and ranching community. There are 380 farms of an average size of 5770 acres, down 39 from 419 farms in 1997.<sup>4</sup> The top five commodities and cash receipts are cattle and calves (accounting for almost 90%), corn for grain, wheat, hay and silage, and horses and ponies.<sup>5</sup> Union County is the fifth highest producing New Mexico county

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<sup>1</sup> University of New Mexico, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, downloaded on 12/10/08 from <http://ibis.state.nm.us/query>.

<sup>2</sup> US Bureau of the Census, downloaded on 11/21/08 from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/gfd/states/35000.html>.

<sup>3</sup> University of New Mexico, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, downloaded on 12/10/08 from <http://ibis.state.nm.us/query>.

<sup>4</sup> United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service , downloaded 03/01/09 from [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov).

<sup>5</sup>Id.

in agricultural sales which comprised 8.4 percent of total state receipts of 1700.00 million dollars in 2007.<sup>6</sup>

Eighteen percent (18%) of the total acreage in Union County is state trust land.<sup>7</sup> A small federal land holding, the Kiowa Grasslands, is located in the eastern part of Union County. There is one state park, the Clayton Lake State Park, and one national monument, the Capulin Volcano National Monument.

b. Population description

The population of Union County in 2000 was 4,174.<sup>8</sup> Recently updated population estimates project Union County's population to be 4,474 residents in 2007.<sup>9</sup> In August 2008, construction was completed on a 625 bed level III men's prison which is owned by the Town of Clayton and operated by the GEO Group, Inc.<sup>10</sup> The prison population has likely effected the county's population.

Union County covers a geographic area of 3,830 square miles making the population density among the lowest in the state at 1.17 persons per square mile.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Id.

<sup>7</sup>Office of the Assessor, Union County, New Mexico

<sup>8</sup>Bureau of Business and Economic Research Population Estimates, University of New Mexico; <http://www.unm.edu/~bber>

<sup>9</sup>Id.

<sup>10</sup>NM Department of Corrections; <http://corrections.state.nm.us/prisons/nmcf.html>

<sup>11</sup>Id. Bureau of Business and Economic Research Population Estimates, University of New Mexico; <http://www.unm.edu/~bber>.

Per capital personal income for 2007 was \$29,249, down 8% from 05-06), close to the statewide average of \$29,929 (up 6.2% from 05-06). Unemployment for 2007 was 2.3%, the second lowest in the state.<sup>12</sup>

Union County residents are somewhat older than the statewide average with 19% being persons 65 years old or over (12.7% statewide). Children under 18 were 22.8% of the total Union County population (25.4% statewide). Women slightly outnumber men.<sup>13</sup>

Racial and ethnic distributions are 63% white, 35% Hispanic and 2% other. There appear to be significant numbers of Spanish speaking only Mexican nationals working in area ranching and farming and the service industry who may not be accounted for in census data.<sup>14</sup> In the 2008-2009 program year there were 601 students in the Clayton Public Schools. Clayton student demographics showed 601 students in 2008-2009 whose ethnic distribution was equally split between caucasian and Hispanic students with about 2% Native American, Black and Pacific Islander. For the same time period Des Moines had 82 students; 59% caucasian and 39% hispanic.<sup>15</sup>

In 2007 there were 2,482 housing units in Union County. The home ownership rate in 2000 was 73%, a bit higher than the state wide rate, however, median household value was

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<sup>12</sup>Id.

<sup>13</sup>Id.

<sup>14</sup>U.S. Census Bureau; State and County QuickFacts;  
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/35/35059.html>

<sup>15</sup>New Mexico Public Education Department Enrollment by Ethnicity;  
<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/IT/os/13/03.09ethnicity>

\$49,800, less than half the state wide value of \$108,100.<sup>16</sup> The recent mortgage finance debacle should have a significant effect on this information which is unknown at this time.

Union County has two school districts: Clayton Public Schools (CPS), whose 2008-2009 student population was 601, and Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS), whose school population was 82. In the 2007-2008 reporting year, CPS had a 3.5% dropout rate (6 drop outs of 172 students) from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>. There were no dropouts during that time period among junior high or homebound students. DMPS had no drop outs for the 2006-2007 reporting period.<sup>17</sup>

c. Community assets and wellness

1. Sixty percent (60%) of the population of Union County resides in Clayton which is an incorporated municipality with two parks, an endowed memorial library and a museum and historical society. The town has no bicycle lanes though the streets are wide, lighted and mostly paved and curbed, though passable sidewalks are the exception.

The Clayton and Des Moines public schools each have sizable physical structures including various sports facilities. Schools and churches are generally generous with the use of their facilities, when they are not otherwise in use, allowing the use of gyms for indoor walking, aerobics, and intermural sports such as volleyball, basketball and softball. The Town of Clayton has a municipal swimming pool which is open in the summer and sometimes offers swimming lessons.

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<sup>16</sup> U.S. Census Bureau; State and County QuickFacts;  
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/35/35059.html>

<sup>17</sup>NM Public Education Department; 2007-2008 NM Student Dropout Report;  
[www.ped.state.nm.us/TT/fs/dropout/2007-2008](http://www.ped.state.nm.us/TT/fs/dropout/2007-2008).

Union County has many Protestant and Catholic churches and a wide variety of civic clubs which are primarily geared toward the elderly and rural populations.

The Town of Clayton has trash pickup service for town residents only; county residents must contract to have their trash collected or dispose of it on their own.

Union County has many artists, seamstresses, writers, jewelry and furniture makers and family and oral historians. The Clayton Arts Council sponsors an annual arts and crafts fair in the fall which draws art from a large area and sponsors art classes for the community. The Union County Historical Society sponsors frequent cultural events. There is a memorial museum in Clayton and a WPA collection permanently housed at the Clayton High School. The Folsom Museum in Folsom highlights local history. There is an annual school reunion, a 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration and a county Fair in Clayton each summer which draw large crowds. There are numerous celebrations, often involving masses or church services, throughout the county highlighting historical communities and their traditions.

The geography of Union County is arid, high plains. This has affected the population development of the last several hundred years by attracting few inhabitants, who are industrious and self-resourceful, to live lives of extreme independence and self sufficiency. Over time land holdings have consolidated and the nature of ranching operations has changed to require less man power. New Mexico's tax structure, originally designed to benefit family farms and ranches, now, encourage out of state land ownership which results in decreased population and reduced services. Union County inhabitants rely on family, friends and neighbors in an informal "good old boy" system for support and aid and information rather than social service agencies which are frequently poorly staffed and supported. This results in a system of mores and values which reflect the area more than the larger society.

#### 4. Community Health Status

##### a. Maternal child health indicators

The fertility rate for Union County for 2005 was 11.4 very close the average fertility rate of 11.1% for the years 2001 through 2005. Hispanic mothers had 35% of the babies born in Union County and white mothers had 65% of the babies born in Union County and 30% of those babies were born to single mothers. The New Mexico rate for the same period was 14.6; 54% born to Hispanic mothers, 34% born to white mothers and 50% of all babies born in New Mexico were born to single mothers.<sup>18</sup>

Union County women are having fewer babies than the average New Mexico woman. Of those Union County women having babies, more are under the age of 20 than the state wide average.<sup>19</sup>

The northeast region of New Mexico, though excluding Union County, had a hier proportion of low birthweight infants than the state as a whole. From 2003-2005 the percentage of low birth weight births in Union County was 7.6%, a rise from the previous 2001-2003 reporting period of 6.3% but about 10% less than the state wide rate of 8.4%.<sup>20</sup>

In 2005 Union County women of all ages received high level prenatal care at a rate of 70%; mid level care at a rate of 20%; and 10% received low level or no care. Of those women receiving low level or no care approximately half were Hispanic and half were white. Of the total births occurring in hospitals or critical access hospitals all were attended by a medical doctor or

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<sup>18</sup>New Mexico Selected Health Statistics Annual Report, 2005. The State Center for Health Statistics Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics Published August 2007.

<sup>19</sup>Id.

<sup>20</sup>Id.

doctor of osteopathy; 71% of the births occurred in the Union County critical access hospital (Union County General Hospital); 10% in other New Mexico facilities and 16% occurred out of state. Infant mortality in Union County, 2001-2005 average was 3.7, significantly lower than the statewide rate of 6.1.<sup>21</sup>

From 2000-2005 Union County had 0.8% of births with congenital anomalies ranking it in the lower quartile for percent of live births with congenital anomalies along with adjoining Colfax to the west but in contrast to adjoining counties to the south - Harding and Quay which ranked in the highest quartile.<sup>22</sup>

In 2000, 161 chronic conditions in children under 20 years of age were reported to the state registry.<sup>23</sup>

For the last reported quarter, Jul-Sept, 2008, Union County Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD) reported that there were 1,141 children in the county in 2005 representing 0.22% of the state's total children under 18. While the county accounts for 0.22% of the state's total children under 18, Union County had 0.05% of the state's total children "in care" as of September 30, 2008, which is less than expected, based on population.<sup>24</sup>

Almost 10% of hospital discharges in 2000 were uninsured while 89% had Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance. This is about 3% higher than the state wide average of hospital

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<sup>21</sup>Id.

<sup>22</sup>Id.

<sup>23</sup>Id.

<sup>24</sup>NMCYFD 360 Degrees County Profiles, downloaded from <http://www.cyfd.org/content/360-degrees-county-profiles>

patients discharged without insurance. Estimates of the number of uninsured Union County residents are not readily available.

In 2007 29.1% of Union County children lived in poverty, slightly higher the state percentage of 25.2%. Children in poverty are those living in households with an annual income less than the Federal Poverty Threshold. The poverty threshold for a family of four in 2007 was \$20,650; 17.9% of all people in Union County lived in poverty, slightly higher than the statewide 16.8%.<sup>25</sup>

There is no licensed childcare facility in the county. Childcare is provided in homes, by relatives and friends but many school age children are not supervised when school is not in session. The summer of 2008 the Clayton Public Schools conducted a summer school and recreation program through Safe Schools Healthy Students grant which it is attempting to replicate for the summer of 2009. The Clayton Junior High conducted a 2008 summer program for students at risk of retention using Union County DWI funding to supplement the program funding. The Des Moines Schools have not had a summer program in some time.

b. Mortality. There were 61 deaths to Union County residents in 2005 a significant increase in the average of 48 for the years 1996-2004. The age-adjusted death rate of Union County deaths per 100,000 U.S. standard population was the highest in the state. The statewide rate for 2005 is was 755.3, while the Union County rate for the same period was 1413.3. Union County deaths for 2005 were roughly comprised of 23% heart disease, 23% cancer, 8% accidents and 5%

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<sup>25</sup>United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service , downloaded 03/01/09 from [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov).

chronic lower respiratory disease, 5% influenza and pneumonia, 5% suicide , 5% cardiovascular disease.<sup>26</sup>

The death rate for residents over age 65 during the years 1996-2000 was 24% higher than the state wide rate with diseases of the heart accounting for almost half of those deaths at a rate almost twice that of the state wide rate. The county crude death rate decreased from 13.2 to 11.5 deaths per 1000 in 2003.<sup>27</sup>

The 2003-2005 New Mexico average death rate from injury, intentional and unintentional was 108.1; higher than the statewide rate of 92.3. Accident and suicide were the leading causes of death in the injury category. Injury average age-adjusted death rates for the county were for males: 160.2 and females 50.5 per 100,000 standard U.S. population. These rates are higher than the statewide rate for males of 134.3 and slightly lower than the statewide rate for females of 52.9. <sup>28</sup>

c. Leading causes of death. In New Mexico, the leading causes of death for 2005 were malignant neoplasms, diseases of the heart and accidents .<sup>29</sup>

d. Chronic disease indicators. Diabetes and asthma may be under reported. Self reported by high school age students in the YRRS show significant rates of ever told has asthma by a doctor or nurse, those who have been told they have asthma and much had an asthma attack.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Id.

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<sup>29</sup>Id.

<sup>30</sup>2007 New Mexico Youth risk and Resiliency Survey (YRRS) High School (Grades 9-12) Union County.

e. Infectious disease indicators. Information about infectious diseases in Union County is not available because, according to the entities responsible for collecting and reporting such information, the observed number of events is very small and not appropriate for publication.

f. Environmental health indicators. In the summer of 2005 th UCCHC undertook a community environment health assessment. Community survey demonstrated the leading public health concerns to be trash, community cleanup, water and air pollution, asthma and allergies, cancer and children's health.

Trash disposal continues to be an unresolved environmental health concern because Union County does not have a landfill. The Town of Clayton contracts with a private vendor to collect the trash of city residents but the County ended its trash service in 2004. Efforts by the Town of Clayton to build a new landfill have failed. Trash affects the presence of vectors and vector born diseases.

Dilapidated and abandoned buildings in the eastern county population center of Clayton and in the western county population center of Des Moines, Folsom and Capulin have long been a source of complaints from county residents. Lack of resources is the most often cited excuse given by local government officials for failure to address community cleanup and beautification. Mosquitoes and flies; rats, mice, skunks and prairie dogs; animals including stray dogs and cats; rabies, hantavirus and West Nile Virus are concerns to Union County residents. In 2007, the Town of Clayton expanded the an animal control officer position to include code enforcement.

#### Water

Water quantity and quality is a constant concern in Union County. The source of water in eastern Union County is the shallow edge of the Ogallala aquifer which is being drained by

heavy use. Western Union County draws its water from more shallow sources which are contaminated from years of accumulated animal waste. Abandoned dairies are a risk to water quality and septic tanks are the main source of groundwater contamination in Union County. Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) are carefully regulated for their effect on both surface and ground water and do not pose an immediate danger.

Air pollution and particulate are a leading environmental concern in Union County due to the persistent odor and visible particulate present above and leading to that large CAFO located on the edge of the Clayton city limits. The particulate and odor causing the pollution is not policed by the EPA or the NMED which offer only advisory suggestions to minimize or eliminate these hazards. The CAFOs are regulated by the DOH epidemiology department in the area of vector control.

There is little data regarding asthma and allergies in Union County though there is strong anecdotal evidence from teachers, health workers and Union County residents that these conditions exist in high incidents, especially among children.

Cancer and skin cancer are a concern in Union County with rates for some types being higher than statewide rates.

Concerns about Children and Environmental Health in the area of environmental education needed were difficult to interpret except in relation to the other expressed concerns which are often perceived as effecting children in a greater proportion than adults. The survey did not adequately allow for the expression of concerns about illegal substances such as methamphetamine which could be the focus of this concern. <sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Community Environment Health Assessment, , UCCHC, July 2005.

g. Injury, violence, substance abuse indicators. The third leading cause of death in Union County is injury which occurs three times more often among males than females and is evenly split between accidents and self inflicted injury.<sup>32</sup> Death rates due to firearms are higher than the statewide averages with alcohol induced being more than twice the statewide average and firearm being almost twice the statewide average.<sup>33</sup> Union County youth have higher rates of not using seatbelts, riding in a car with a driver who has been drinking and driving after drinking than the New Mexico averages.<sup>34</sup>

High school students in Union County are involved in a similar level of fighting as other New Mexico students but they are less likely to be victimized and have much better access to weapons, especially firearms.<sup>35</sup>

Union County teens reported similar rates of sexual violence such as hitting between couples but lower rates of physically forced sexual relations; higher use of tobacco, similar use of alcohol and less use of drugs. Suicidal behaviors occur at less than the statewide rate among Union County high school students; 18% of surveyed youths reported persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness, 11% seriously considered suicide and made a suicide plan.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Id.

<sup>33</sup>CDC, National Center for Health Statistics, downloaded from New Mexico Selected Health Statistics Annual Report, 2005.

<sup>34</sup>2007 New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (YRRS) High School (Grades 9-12) Union County.

<sup>35</sup>Id.

<sup>36</sup>Id.

h. Risk, resiliency indicators.

The 2003 and 2005 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (YRRS) demonstrated high incidents of alcohol consumption (and the resulting riding with drinking driver and driving after drinking), reduced use of seatbelts, easy access to guns, cigarette smoking and other tobacco use and asthma.<sup>37</sup>

Union County youth reported having more sex, more often, and with more partners than the average New Mexico youth. Further, they reported sexual activity more often after consuming alcohol or drugs and without use of a condom than the New Mexico average.<sup>38</sup>

Resiliencies higher than the state wide rates were demonstrated in the areas of more physical activity, get mostly As and Bs, don't skip school as often, planning to go to college, school involvement and caring relationships with adult in the community and high expectations from adult in the community..

5. Health disparities

During the 2008-2009 contract year, the health council reviewed rural disparities and Union County disparities and recognized that Union County suffers from low education levels, low income, prevalence of non English speaking population with out access to translation and a frontier environment which includes a lack of exercise opportunities, lack of health providers and lack of prevention services. Residents suffer from increased rates of diabetes and obesity, physical activity limitations and higher mortality rates, increased major depression, recent drug use, coronary heart disease, stroke, infectious diseases (Hepatitis B and pertussis) and high

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<sup>37</sup>Id.

<sup>38</sup>Id.

smoking rates. Disparities in access to health care include provider issues and deferred care due to cost and availability. Disparities in preventive services include less compliance with screening and less diabetes care.

Policy options to increase equity and reduce health disparities include wider availability of services and education and information from health care providers, such as the ability to provide dental services at schools, school based health centers and public health officers; availability of language translation (Union County lacks people fluent in Spanish although there is a significant Spanish speaking population), improved opportunities for and education around exercise and healthy eating and expanded behavioral health services.

## 6. Health related services

### a. Capacity, Access and Utilization

1. Hospital. Union County General Hospital is a critical access, full service hospital whose structures are owned by the county, operated by the non profit Clayton Health Services who in turn contracts for professional hospital administration with BRIM. The hospital is staffed by about 20 nurses, and four medical doctors, and has laboratory and radiological services and physical and occupational therapy, home health and rehabilitation. The hospital has a family practice clinic. The hospital accepts Medicaid and Medicare and all insurance. Reduced fee services are available only on a case by case basis at all of these facilities. The hospital has a small amount of county funding available for indigents. The county commission reviews all applications and supporting documentation and determines whether to grant funding on a case by case basis. The hospital offers a prenatal class four times a year which is open to all pregnant women and includes an immunization component.

c. Utilization

1. Hospital. Union County General Hospital (UCGH) is a critical access and home health facility whose structures are owned by the county, operated by the non profit Clayton Health Services who in turn contracts for professional hospital administration. It employs two physicians who work in its Clayton Family Practice Clinic; and between 15 and 20 nurses. The hospital has a lab, radiology, and rehabilitation with physical and occupational therapy. The county is in the process of a building project to renovate and expand its building.

2. Nursing Home. Clayton Nursing and Rehabilitation is a state licensed, Medicaid/Medicare certified nursing and rehabilitation facility providing short and long term 24 hour nursing care, rehabilitative services, physical, occupational and medically related social services. There are 45 beds and they employ between 8 and 10 nurses.

3. Home health. In Union County UCGH provides acute, intermittent, skilled care, physical therapy, occupational therapy, nursing and speech home health services. Golden Spread Rural Frontier Coalition and Professional Home Health Care from Las Vegas, provide custodial, in-home care.

4. Public Schools. Union County has two school districts: Clayton Public Schools (CPS), whose 2008-2009 student population was 601, and Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS), whose school population was 82. In the 2007-2008 reporting year, CPS had a 3.5% dropout rate (6 drop outs of 172 students) from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>. There were no dropouts during that time period among junior high or homebound students. DMPS had no drop outs for the 2006-2007 reporting period. CPS has a school registered nurse who works four days each week during the school year. Clayton Public Schools and Des Moines Public Schools each have part time school nurses. Des Moines has a new school based health clinic directed and administered by the school nurse. The

Des Moines School Based Health Center will provide physical and mental health services to students and up to an equivalent number of hours of services to the community in addition to wellness activities including aerobics, yoga, and chiropractic services. Both schools coordinate with the Union County Public Health Office to conduct targeted immunization events at the schools. Immunizations are monitored by school nurses who either refer them to Clayton Family Practice (the Vaccines for Children provider) or the public health office nurse who administer vaccines free of charge. The immunization subcommittee of the UCCHC has worked to implement the uniform record keeping Statewide Intake Information System (SIIS), increase availability through frequent and targeted immunization events and increase knowledge about access to immunizations all over the county.

5. Public Health Office. The Union County Public Health Nurse provides health services, WIC, Children's Medical Services, disease prevention, breast and cervical cancer early detection, Families First and Health Promotion. The staff includes a Family Nurse Practitioner, a Registered Nurse and a clerk, all long time members of the community and experienced healthcare practitioners.

6. Behavioral health. Except for some prevention services provided through the Union County DWI and the Clayton and Des Moines Public Schools, behavioral health services in Union County are provided by agencies remotely located who maintain offices in Clayton. Tri County Services is the core community health service provider for Union County, charged with providing wrap around services including 24 hour crisis line, suicide prevention and intervention, psychiatric evaluations and medication management, counseling, case management, patient assistance and pharmacy services, social detoxification in Taos and outpatient substance abuse counseling. Union County currently has domestic violence services through GSRFC who has

been operating under a CYFD grant since last year.. Teambuilders, Inc. provides youth behavioral management services including counseling for its clients and it currently has he Medicaid and CYFD contracts. Teambuilders, Inc. has recently hired a family services coordinator and a therapist who works two days per week in Union County. Union County General Hospital employs a master social worker social service referrals. The DMSBHWC contracts with Raton based Service Organization for Youth to provide 20 hours per week of behavioral health to its students.

7. State Offices In every category, Union County residents receive benefits from state and federally funded programs administered through state agencies at less than the statewide average.<sup>39</sup> Union County has an Income Support Division County Office staffed by one caseworker who is supervised from a county office in Raton, 90 miles away. Union County's New Mexico Works Service Providers are from Clovis and Albuquerque, 180 and 270 miles away with a single staff person. <sup>40</sup>. Children, Youth and Families Department Child Protective Services has a field office in Clayton staffed by two social workers and one clerk. JPPO has a full-time juvenile probation officer with a caseload of around 40.

8. Community health events. The Union County Health Fair offers a variety of free and reduced fee screening at its annual health fair in Clayton. The Des Moines Emergency Medical Services group conducts a yearly health fair in Des Moines.

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<sup>39</sup>State of New Mexico, HSD, Monthly Statistical Report, April 2009 data, May 2009 issue. Downloaded from <http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/isd/files/MSR%2005-2009.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup>Who Can Help? Government Agencies in Your Area (revised 5/20/2008);<http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/pdf/UnionResources.pdf>.

9. Senior citizens. The Clayton Senior Citizens offers reduced fee meals to seniors and some information about diet, exercise and health. The director is knowledgeable about the health and needs of the senior community.

10. Dental. There is no dentist practicing in Union County. Union County residents travel to Trinidad, Colorado, Dalhart, Texas, Las Vegas or Raton for dental services. The GEO Group's medical services provider contracts with a dentist who lives in Pecos, New Mexico and commutes to the prison several days a week. The DMSBHWC has a dental grant to employ a dental hygienist to do screenings and cleanings which was implemented this school year. The Des Moines Public Schools and the Clayton Public Schools, pursuant to a referral from the NM Department of Public Health, arranged for the for profit Healthy Smiles for New Mexico Kids mobile dental clinic to provide dental services to each of their communities in the Spring of 2009. The DMSBHWC contributed funds from its dental grant to pay for the clinics travel costs. The second annual community health survey conducted by UCGH indicated a significant community desire for expanded dental services in Union County

11. Eye An optometrist, originally from Des Moines, presently residing in Amarillo, Texas, maintains an office in Clayton for the sale and repair of glasses and contact lenses. The optometrist has office hours two days a week and sees all ages of patients. He also provides services to Medicaid patients.

12. Transportation. Golden Spread Rural Frontier Coalition, the only local social service non profit in Union County, provides transportation services through the Medicaid approved, Rural Frontier Express (RFE). The RFE has two buses and one van which primarily travel to Amarillo, Dalhart and Dumas, Texas, Trinidad, Colorado, Guymon, Oklahoma, Raton, Springer,

Las Vegas, and Santa Fe. They recently received \$45,000 from the stimulus package which will be used to buy another van.

## 7. Summary and Interpretation

- a. Interpretation of health data.
- b. Major health issues or problems.
- c. Explanation/discussion from UCCHC perspective

Data reported for this report varies widely especially where there are estimates or projections. Disclaimers in census data state that rates based on fewer than 20 events are statistically unreliable and often there are fewer than 20 events.

Union County is a rural frontier county which is characterized as being rural, remote and under-served. The population density is low and the economic base is limited. There are higher than average rates of poverty and workers earn less than the average New Mexican. Union County residents suffer from high rates of substance and alcohol abuse, depression and suicide and engage in high rates of the risky behaviors unprotected sex, smoking and driving after drinking or in a vehicle with someone who has been drinking.

Union County has an adequate medical community including a funded and staffed county hospital. Physician and other health professional recruitment occurs continuously. Behavioral health is provided mostly remotely from providers located in Raton, Taos and Santa Fe who maintain mostly low level local staff. Because the behavioral health collaborative statewide purchasing entity is not a public agency, it is not obligated to disclose information about the services it is responsible for because it is not a state agency. The state agency does not keep data on behavioral health services rendered to its clients and therefore is not obligated to disclose it to

the public. This system results in poor accountability to the community and to the people who are supposed to be receiving the behavioral health services because there is no ability to access data about who is billing for services, who has been paid for services, and what funds have been expended. Except for the county public health office, which reflects the experience and commitment of the present staff, Union County state offices are administered as field offices by with staff who have less education and experience and who receive less supervision and support than is necessary to operate effectively.

Women's health services have been expanded significantly since the public health office was re-organized last year. Youth pregnancy is high and the use of birth control is low requiring increased prevention activities with that population. The health council has recently worked at broadening its immunizations priority to better address this and worked to coordinate a collaboration between health and human service providers and the Eastern Plains Council of Governments who has a CYFD Teen Parenting grant to implement that program in Union County. Provider participation has been a huge success. Recruitment of participants is the persistent challenge.