

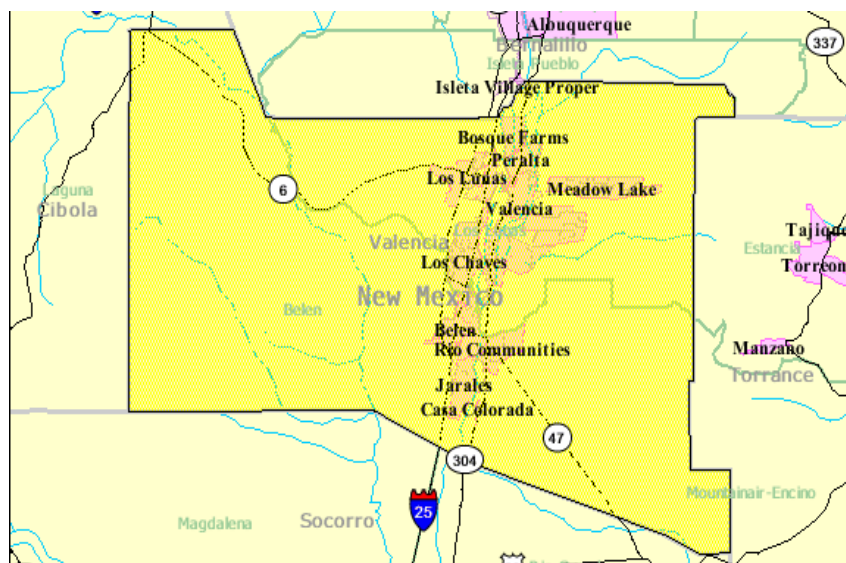
INTRODUCTION

The 2009-2010 Health Profile for Valencia County was developed by the Valencia Community Partnership Health Council to provide a comprehensive and current description of health and well-being in the county. The VCP Coordinator, Leadership and council members researched the most recent published demographic and health data for the county. The results from 377 Community Quality of Life Surveys, along with anecdotal information from community meetings and key-informant interviews, looked at the perceptions of county residents in incorporated and unincorporated areas of health and well-being in their communities. Incorporated areas (townships or villages having local governments) include Bosque Farms, Peralta, Los Lunas and Belen. All other neighborhoods or communities in the county are considered unincorporated. This primary and secondary information was presented at general membership and public meetings for review and discussion and was then combined utilizing feedback from these meetings to develop this profile.

The Profile identifies health and well being perceptions, issues and trends as well as community assets and resources county-wide, including a comparison between incorporated and unincorporated areas where possible.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Geographic Description



Valencia County is roughly rectangular in shape and has an area of 1,068 square miles with less than one square mile of surface water. It is bordered on the north by Bernalillo County and Isleta Reservation, on the east by Torrance County, on the south by Socorro County and on the west by Cibola County.

The landscape is largely desert plains that slope down to the fertile Rio Grande valley. The plains are interspersed on the west side of the county with picturesque canyons and lava flows (insert pictures) and bordered on the east side by the Manzano Mountains, (insert pictures)

Native cottonwood dominated bosques border the Rio Grande that runs from the northern to the southern county borders and fertile fields are abundant along the river valley.



Three bridges allow traffic access across the river in the county, one in Los Lunas, one in Belen and one south of Belen.

Population Description

Demographics: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, State & County QuickFacts, in 2008 the population estimate for Valencia County was 72,207 persons, which represents a 9.2% growth rate between 2000 and 2008. Approximately 49% are females and 51 percent males. The following table describes the age distribution.



Age Range	Under 18	18 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 and Over
Percent of Population	27	10	27	25	11

One possible extrapolation that could be made from the above data is that 62% of the population in the county, those between the ages of 18 and 64, are, in one way or another, responsible for much of the care and maintenance of the remaining 38%, and the percentage of individuals 65 and over is increasing.

Race/Ethnicity: As the following table shows, the majority of the Valencia County Population is of Hispanic or Latino origin.

Race/Ethnicity	White (not Hispanic)	Hispanic or Latino	Native American	Black	Other
Percent of Population	38.8	55.3	3.9	1.9	.1

Twenty eight percent of the county residents speak Spanish in their homes, and 6.6% speak English less than “very well”.

Poverty: The U.S. Census Bureau 2005-2007 American Community Survey reports that 19% of all people in Valencia County lived below the poverty level in the past 12 months, as did 9-10% of the people who are 65 years and older. Of the 2,500 women in the county raising their own children under 18 years with no husband present, 51% of these families lived in poverty. Twenty eight per cent of all children under 18 dealt with conditions of poverty at some time during this two-year period. That's 5,600 of the approximately 20,000 children in the county.

Education: Again according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 78.8% of Valencia County residents have a high school diploma or higher. Fourteen percent made it to high school but did not graduate and 7.1% didn't make it to the ninth grade. The dropout rate is highest for Hispanic/Latino males. The rate of 21% that do not have a high school diploma corresponds remarkably well with the 19% poverty rate.

Disabilities: Almost one in five county residents 5 years and older are living with some sort of disability.

Population Location: The greater majority of the Valencia County Residents whose families have lived in the area for generations live in incorporated towns and unincorporated rural neighborhoods and communities along the Rio Grande valley. (insert pictures)

Many of the predominantly Spanish speaking, documented and undocumented immigrants and other low-income residents live in the often substandard housing that's available in the El Cerro Mission area on the East mesa above Los Lunas



Abandoned structures, gang activity and graffiti are common in this area.

New expanding developments on the West mesa are providing homes for a steady flow of predominantly commuting individuals and families, who, for the most part, may work, go to school and take advantage of the services and entertainment opportunities in Albuquerque 20-30 miles to the north. (insert pictures) Others, including retirees, are relocating to the county because of the more suburban, rural or small town lifestyles and more affordable housing opportunities. (insert pictures) A small percentage of independent-spirited residents choose to live in the more remote areas of the county, some on poorly maintained roads, some without power, water and many of the other basic services within a 10 to 25 mile radius. (insert pictures)

Community Assets and Wellness

As the VCP Health Council has worked on the development of this profile, it has become clear that the community of Valencia County is rich in diversity, cultural identity, and independent spirit. Trying to bring people together to work on health improvement issues has not been without its challenges. Unfortunately, there have been times when the confrontations between groups with differing visions for the county have been heated and contentious. On the other hand, as a result of these interactions, community leaders are becoming apparent who might be enlisted to support health improvement efforts in their communities.

UNM-Valencia Campus, located midway between Los Lunas and Belen, provides higher education opportunities along with other programs and services such as GED preparation, English as a second language classes, health and well-being programs, small business development programs, among others. The campus has recently added a nursing program that leads to RN certification.



There is an extensive faith-based community in the county consisting of churches of all denominations. Many of these churches have educational and support programs for youth and families such as literacy, life skills, food pantries, and financial assistance programs, among others. At least one church can be found in most of the outlying communities.

Volunteer organizations, such as the Optimists and Pilots Clubs, work on a number of health and well being issues in the county from immunizations and early childhood development issues to scholarships. A number of neighborhood associations and community volunteer groups like the Valencia Community Action Network and the Valencia Community Garden Club have been formed and are focusing community coordinated efforts in their respective areas of interest.

There are a number of county-wide coalitions and councils, including the Valencia Community Partnership Health Council. Others are listed below along with a description of their mission purpose:

- **Local Emergency Preparedness Council:** Partners with local and state law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services, providers, the health council, and others to develop localized and county-wide emergency preparedness strategies particularly with regard to fires. The VCP Health Council has been working with the LEPC on pandemic awareness and preparedness.

- **DWI Council:** Members include representative from local and state law enforcement, non-profit organizations, substance abuse and mental health service providers, local and county governments, and others. The group's focus is primarily on prevention, harm reduction and treatment.
- **Community Coordinated Response Team:** Originally formed in response to a mandate from the Governor's office, this group is made up of representatives from state and local law-enforcement, domestic violence service providers, the district attorney's office, non-profits, the courts, and others. The focus is on coordinating services and efforts for victims of violent crime, particularly domestic violence.
- **Local Collaborative for Judicial District 13, Valencia Chapter:** The LC13-Valencia is a peer-lead group looking at mental health issues in the county. This group is currently in the process of recruiting partners and developing strategic goal around policy and advocacy.

There are a number of non-profit organizations in the county funded primarily with local, state, federal and foundation grants and other, subsidized, sources. These organizations provide a wide range of programs and services for a broad range of age groups and needs from infants and young children with developmental challenges, to prevention education and youth development for school-age youth, to senior citizens who need supportive living arrangements. These organizations are community-based and dedicated to providing their much-needed services for community members.

The VCP recognizes the wellspring of commitment, creativity, dedication, and the broad range of expertise that is working and living in the county. The Health Council's and the county's challenge now is to find ways to help bring it together in a thoughtful and coordinated way with respect for the variety of cultural views and traditions.

COMMUNITY HEALTH STATUS

Maternal-Child Health: According to the New Mexico Department of Health Indicator Based Information System (IBIS), the birth rate for teen girls, ages 15-17 is 31.5 per 1000 births which puts Valencia County exactly in the middle of all counties and slightly below the state rate. And the rates have been declining slightly for county, state and national values. But the county and state values are significantly higher than the national, and the rate is highest for Hispanic girls. This is important because, "Children born to teen mothers are more likely to have health and developmental problems, grow up in homes without fathers, experience abuse and neglect, fail in school, rely on public assistance and live in poverty." (New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, Teen Pregnancy In New Mexico)

Although there was a reported decrease in teen birth rates in the county between 2005-2007, there are indications that the rate is beginning to inch upward once more. Thirty five percent of the students in grades 9-12 who completed the 2007 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (YRRS) reported being sexually active and 45% of sexually active students reported no condom use. An eye-widening 50% reported ever having sexual intercourse and 7.2% said their first sexual intercourse was before the age of 13. Of the students who had sexual intercourse within the past 3 months, 11% admitted to using no method of birth control and 18% used withdrawal, other or were not sure. In other words, over 1/3 of our high school youth are regularly putting themselves at risk for pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted diseases and of that 1/3, 20% are at high risk because of using no method or inadequate methods of birth control and protection.

To further complicate the issue, the stories of younger girls, 10-14, getting pregnant are becoming fare too uncommon as are the stories of young women 18 and older experiencing unplanned pregnancies and dropping out of classes at the UNM-Valencia Campus.

The following table taken from the 2008 Kids Count Data Book for New Mexico provides a snapshot of child and maternal health in Valencia County.

2006 Infant Mortality	
Number	4
Percent (of state total)	2.4%
2006 Births	971
Births to Single Mothers	52.7%
Low Weight Births	7.8%
First Trimester Prenatal Care Began	75.9%
Second Trimester Prenatal Care Began	16.1%
Third Trimester Prenatal Care Began	2.7%
No Prenatal Care	1.3%
Unknown Trimester Prenatal Care Bean	4.0%

Of the 971 total births, only five actually occurred in the county. Four of these births were assisted by licensed midwives and one was unspecified. (New Mexico Selected Health Statistics Annual Report, 2006)

Mortality: