

Overview

La Plazita Institute is a non-profit organization engaging New Mexico's youth, elders and communities in a comprehensive, holistic and cultural approach.

Mission

“Designed around the philosophy of ‘La Cultura Cura’ or culture heals, La Plazita’s programs engages New Mexico’s youth, elders and communities to draw from their own roots and histories to express core traditional values of respect, honor, love, and family.” – La Plazita Institute website

Constituency

- All ages (0-65+)
- African American
- Latino (Chicano/Mexicano/Hispano)
- Native American/American Indian
- Alaska Native (Urban Natives from multiple tribes and reservations)
- LGBTQ
- Foster children
- Relative caregivers
- Homeless
- Immigrant
- Undocumented
- Formerly incarcerated
- Adjudicated youth
- Victims of domestic violence
- People with disabilities (learning, physical, or mental)



Local Conditions & Critical Issues Impacting 0-5 Childhood Health in Albuquerque

Poverty & Related Issues

25% of children live in high-poverty areas with rates highest among Native Americans (64%) and Latinos (28%).¹

Poor Food Environment

Which contributes to hunger and food insecurity. Seventeen percent of New Mexico households received assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in 2015;¹ SNAP rates are highest among Native Americans (27%), African Americans (19%), and Latinos (24%).¹

“Even though there’s fast food places around every corner or gas stations, people are struggling with malnutrition and you can see that through the high levels of obesity and the high levels of hunger. Often times, people don’t connect obesity with hunger, but they’re directly related because of malnutrition and food desert realities in our community.”

“Poverty, violence, and drug abuse are three things that I see most often in my community that are heavy stressors that impact people’s everyday life. Homelessness is also connected to poverty...we have a lot of people in my community that are either living out of their car or jumping from house to house.”
–Joseluis Ortiz, Agricultural Director

Land Loss Tied to Loss of Culture

According to the National Coalition to End Homelessness, between 1970 and 1995, the gap between the number of low-income renters and the amount of affordable housing units in the U.S. went from almost no gap to a shortage of 4.4 million affordable housing units.²

“We see that [land loss for this region] has a huge impact on our community [and culture], especially the youth not having a connection to their land-based or traditional cultures; it removes their identity and that’s a huge impact on where our folks are headed in life.”

Key Indicators of Childhood Health in Albuquerque

27.2%

of children in the state are at risk of **hunger**; making it second among all states for childhood hunger.³



of **asthma** hospitalizations in Bernalillo County were for children ages 1-14.³ From 2006-2010, there were 46 hospitalizations for infants less than a year old, and 516 for children 1-4 years old.⁵

43.9%

of American Indian kindergartners have the highest prevalence of **overweight/obesity** statewide, followed by Latinos (31.3%), and White kindergartners (18.3%).⁴



Babies born to mothers in Bernalillo County have the highest number of **infant deaths** in the state.¹

Current Wellness & Safety Efforts

- **Pathways Program**—is designed to reduce unmet needs, address health inequities, and improve the overall health of the residents of Bernalillo County. Community health workers (also known as Promotoras/Navigators) help at-risk residents navigate healthcare and other services. Teaching residents how to navigate these services creates community leaders able to aid their family, friends, and neighbors regardless of race, socioeconomic, or immigration status.
- **Community Supported Agriculture**—provides boxes of produce to 40 families every week that include culturally and linguistically competent recipes and cooking classes.
- **Making a Change” Programs**—provide mentorship and safe space for community members, including teens, women, etc.

“It’s amazing when you have a Chicano sort of gangster off the street come in here looking for help because they’re overcoming addiction, and then they hit the food piece and before you know it they’re bringing in kale salad and making healthy foods for their families.”



Community Defined “Best Practices” to Improve Childhood Health

Support People through Culture

“Something that has been a proven method that has worked for us is supporting people through culture...food, health, nutrition are all aspects of culture. That has a really huge impact. La cultura cura—culture heals, you know—is one of those practices that’s been very successful on our end.”

Expand on, Rather than Replace, Existing Practices

“Evidence Based Practices (EBP) has become elitist criteria, and those who don’t identify as EBP are left out and don’t qualify for government, state, federal, or city funding. [Even though] we don’t agree with EBP, we try not to participate in deconstructing it or replacing it, instead we expand on the criteria to fit our philosophies, our theories, and our practices.”

Love Thy Enemy

“We bring in our perceived enemies and engage with them on personal levels. Like, sharing food and time with them...they participate in a real way in the activities that we do to support our communities, which ultimately has a positive impact of change. You’ll see and often hear us (La Plazita) engaging with judges and probation officers and having really strong, solid relationships with those folks...we embrace our “enemies” so much so to where they no longer are our enemies and they become our families. The title to that sort of practice is Love Thy Enemy.”

LPI Accomplishments in Wellness & Safety

- **Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) Program**

“We're a national model now of how to create an alternative to incarceration program with youth. We take cultural practices, like growing food and have that be the alternative to their incarceration. All of the folks who have gone through our alternatives program, in one way or another, engage with the growing of their own food, preparing of their own food, and the understanding of how to create and access their own food systems and healthy food practices/healthy habits.”

- **Agri-Cultura Network**—started a small farmer training initiative 10 years ago that has grown from 3 farmers to over 30 and serves 375+ families per year in the South Valley area, providing sustainably grown, local produce.

Allies/Partnerships Working on Children’s Health

Centro Savila/CTI – Albuquerque, NM <http://www.centrosavila.org/>

American Friends and Services Committee – Albuquerque, NM <https://www.afsc.org/office/albuquerque-nm>

Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) – Bernalillo County, NM <https://www.bernco.gov/health-and-public-safety/jdai.aspx>

Native American Community Academy – Albuquerque, NM <http://nacaschool.org/>



Website: <http://laplazitainstitute.org/>
Address: 831 Isleta Blvd. SW, Albuquerque, NM 87105
Telephone: 505-508-1802
Facebook: : <https://www.facebook.com/La-Plazita-Institute-101413719901910/>



LMU | **LA**
Psychology Applied
Research Center

Loyola Marymount University

1. New Mexico Voices for Children. (n.d.). Kids Count in New Mexico, 2017 Data Book. Retrieved from <http://www.nmvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/NMKC-DataBook2017-Web.pdf>.
2. New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.nmceh.org/pages/homelessness.html>
3. Roadrunner Food Bank of New Mexico. (2017). Map the Meal Gap. Retrieved from <http://www.rafb.org/hungry-people-in-nm/mapthegap/>
4. New Mexico Department of Health. (2017, March). The Weight of Our Children. New Mexico Childhood Obesity Update: 2016. Retrieved from <https://nmhealth.org/data/view/chronic/2043/>
5. Reports & Plans on Affordable Housing and Homelessness in New Mexico: Summary & Recommendations for Future Research. (2008). Retrieved from: http://www.nmceh.org/pages/reports/Summary_of_Data_Reports2-14.pdf