

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Secretary Alfredo Vigil, MD

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Department of Health Awards Mini-Grants to Create Healthy Environments for Children
31 Community Programs Across the State to Receive \$5,000 Grants

(Las Cruces) -- The New Mexico Department of Health announced today that it is awarding 31 mini-grants to support innovative programs that will create healthy environments for children and help reduce obesity rates in New Mexico. The Department of Health is distributing the one-year, \$5,000 grants through its *Healthy Kids New Mexico* project.

Awardees were selected from across the state after demonstrating that their project will focus on motivating children to adopt one of the following behaviors: increase physical activity, increase fruit and vegetable consumption, decrease television and other screen time, and decrease consumption of sweetened beverages or high-energy dense foods. The primary target group is children and youth, especially those who are at the greatest risk for obesity.

“We know the behaviors we want to address, but the communities will show us the best ways to address them,” said Patty Morris, a senior advisor for the Department of Health who directs *Healthy Kids New Mexico*. “They have proposed innovative approaches, using the foundation of programs that already exist, which will likely continue after the initial funding is spent.”

Department of Health launched the community-wide obesity prevention project *Healthy Kids Las Cruces* in 2007. The *Healthy Kids* project connects and enhances community efforts to motivate children, teenagers and families to eat healthier and be more physically active. The Department of Health leads the project, which involves local and state government, education, health care, social services, agriculture, non-profit organizations, foundations and businesses. The Department plans to expand the *Healthy Kids* initiative statewide and is working on developing a program in Chaves County and in tribal communities.

Healthy Kids Las Cruces was recently named one of the top 10 models in the nation for helping to reduce childhood obesity by the HSC Foundation, which is dedicated to improving access to services for individuals who face social and healthcare barriers due to disability or chronic illness.

The Department of Health collaborates with state and local agencies and community partners across New Mexico to help communities develop policies and programs that support families in developing healthy eating and physical activity habits to address the rising rates of obesity. State-sponsored programs include cooking classes for low-income families and people with diabetes, activities for people with arthritis, nutrition education

through Women, Infants and Children Program, and the *Healthy Kids New Mexico* project.