

CHAVES COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL PROFILE SUMMARY

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County Overview

Total population: 60,177

Total square miles: 6071

Chaves County is extremely rural, with only 10.1 persons per square mile.

Major population center(s):

Roswell (the county seat)

Dexter

Economic base:

The economy of Chaves County is based on agriculture, educational services, retail, and manufacturing.

Part I. Psychosocial Vulnerabilities

- The average income of individuals in the county is lower than the statewide average, but there are a number of very wealthy individuals.
- Overall unemployment is lower than the state rate.
- Teen pregnancy and births to mothers under age 20 are significant issues in the county. Child abuse is also a concern.
- The school drop-out rate is low, although the Hispanic high school drop-out rate is almost twice as high as other ethnic groups.
- Alcohol consumption, especially by youth, vehicle safety, DWI, violence, sexual activity, obesity, tobacco use, and other drug use have all been identified as community risk factors. The community is in denial about the incidence of domestic violence.
- Access to health care is a great concern.
- Access to child care has improved.
- Crime and suicide rates are difficult to determine.

Part II. Populations with Different Planning Needs

- There is a high percentage of elderly with mobility or self care limitations (14.7%), although only 1.1% of the elderly are institutionalized.
- There is little information available on populations with chronic mental illness.
- 8.7 % of the population has alcohol abuse problems, and 1.6% have drug dependency problems.

- There are no accurate numbers available regarding the number of persons in the county with visual or hearing impairments.
- There is a significant number of undocumented individuals. Non-English speaking individuals comprise 1/3 of the population.
- The estimated homeless population is 500, with no homeless shelters in the county.
- There are a number of incarcerated individuals in the Roswell Correctional Center, Chaves County Detention Center and Chaves County Juvenile Detention Center.

Part III. Psychosocial Response Capacity

- Churches, schools and volunteer organizations are involved in the community. There is good family and community cohesion and a good commitment to learning, family values.
- Economic losses (*e.g.*, the Nova Bus Plant closing) could affect response and recovery.
- The community has experience dealing with crises and is resilient.

Part IV. Emergency Response & Recovery Planning

- An Emergency Preparedness & Environmental Surveillance Team (EPEST) is in place.
- Written emergency plans exist for the county, the hospital, the schools, the police department, the fire department, and at agencies/facilities where individuals are housed such as corrections centers, nursing homes etc. Each school plan does appear to include a safety plan for a public health emergency. There is a need to keep each plan updated on a regular basis.
- The various plans are not exercised to determine their strengths.
- The County's Emergency Operations Plan does include plans for an Emergency Operations Center, although the site of the Center is not public information.
- Some type of an emergency center is planned for New Mexico Military Institute and that will be a permanent site. (This is part of a plan with Rep. Steve Pearce and his plan to use Chaves County as a site to demonstrate community readiness. The plans being developed in partnership with Representative Pearce are still being developed at this time and were not part of this review.)
- The plan for information and communication with the general public needs to be strengthened.
- Planning for the specifics of how to care for vulnerable people and populations may be a little weak.