



The Colorado Health Foundation™



# Day Two on the Ground in the San Luis Valley and Southwest Colorado

#HealthiestCO Statewide Listening Tour

Our tour today covered La Plata, Archuleta and Conejos counties.

The small size and remote location of **Ignacio**, presents transportation issues and problems accessing providers for its residents. In fact, the city recently opened its first pharmacy in over thirty years. We visited the **Southern Ute Community Action Programs (SUCAP)** team to learn more about the barriers to health and the variety of programs being offered to residents. SUCAP's services touch on a variety of programs for all life stages, encompassing child and family development programs; nutrition and wellness; alcohol and substance abuse treatment; job training; youth development and public transportation. The group emphasized the need for health literacy support through navigating health insurance benefits, providing "door-through-door" transportation services, being present during provider discussions and ensuring full understanding of follow-up care instructions.

With middle school electives for things like mountain biking and fly fishing, **Pagosa Springs** is proud of its access to outdoor recreation for all ages and its active senior center. But the town also has acute needs for community members across the age spectrum. They have long waiting lists for early child care providers, increasing behavioral health and substance abuse issues for youth and a large and growing senior population unable to afford medical care and housing. One resident emphasized the community's willingness to collaborate and think outside the box on tough issues. The group was eager to brainstorm potential ways to build their community health goals.

In **Antonito**, a town of almost 800 people, we visited K-12 **South Conejos School** serving 120 kids. Their new school building boasts both classrooms and flexible learning areas, and offers community recreation space. This largely Latino community has a child poverty rate of 30 percent with little access to fresh food, and a lack of resources for people struggling with alcohol, drug and behavioral health issues. The school has a potential to become a community hub, and recently planted a food garden, providing five weeks of fresh produce for the school salad bar.

Tour stops tomorrow include Alamosa, Monte Vista and Del Norte.

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