



## **Community Health Briefs**

### **La Cosecha — Presbyterian Healthcare Services**

#### **Innovation Strategy**

In New Mexico's South Valley and International District, poverty, limited access to healthy, affordable food and severe health inequities are common. Residents suffer from the highest rates of mortality related to diabetes and the greatest rates of childhood obesity. Nearly 46 percent of South Valley residents and two-thirds of children in the International District live below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. New Mexico also leads the nation in childhood hunger.

Recognizing the urgent need for affordable, accessible, healthy food, Presbyterian Healthcare Services (PHS) subsidizes the La Cosecha Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, part of the Agri-Cultura Network. The partners identify low-income, food-insecure families in the South Valley and International District and connect them with weekly bags of fresh, locally grown produce during the 20-week growing season.



#### **Root Determinants of Health Addressed in This Initiative**

- Diet
- Health Literacy
- Green Building Initiatives
- Family Stability
- Employment
- Stable Income
- Preventive Services

#### **Program Description**

La Cosecha began serving 20 low-income, food-insecure families in New Mexico's South Valley in 2011, expanded to the International District in 2013 and now reaches 320 families. The increase is due in large part to the program's strong collaboration with PHS. Through the La Cosecha program, families receive a full or half bag of produce, depending on family size, that is subsidized by PHS and other organizations. In addition to the weekly produce, the bag consistently includes onion, garlic, spices and a newsletter detailing the content's nutritional value and culturally appropriate recipes for cooking the produce with additional, easily accessible ingredients. PHS also supports a mobile market twice a week at six different sites located in the priority communities of South Valley and International District.

PHS sponsors a series of monthly cooking classes, called Cooking for Health, implemented by Agri-Cultura Network, Korimi Cooperative, South Valley Early Childhood Alliance, First Choice Community Healthcare and AMB

Community Consulting. These focus on simple strategies for nutrition-related chronic disease prevention and highlight cooking with fresh, local produce. Dieticians review recipes and provide guidance on the selection and educational content. PHS, through funding in part by a Centers for Disease Control cooperative agreement, also organizes monthly Healthy Here meetings that bring together professionals working on health inequities in the community to talk about the issue and share available resources that provide families with a holistic approach to health.

## **Results**

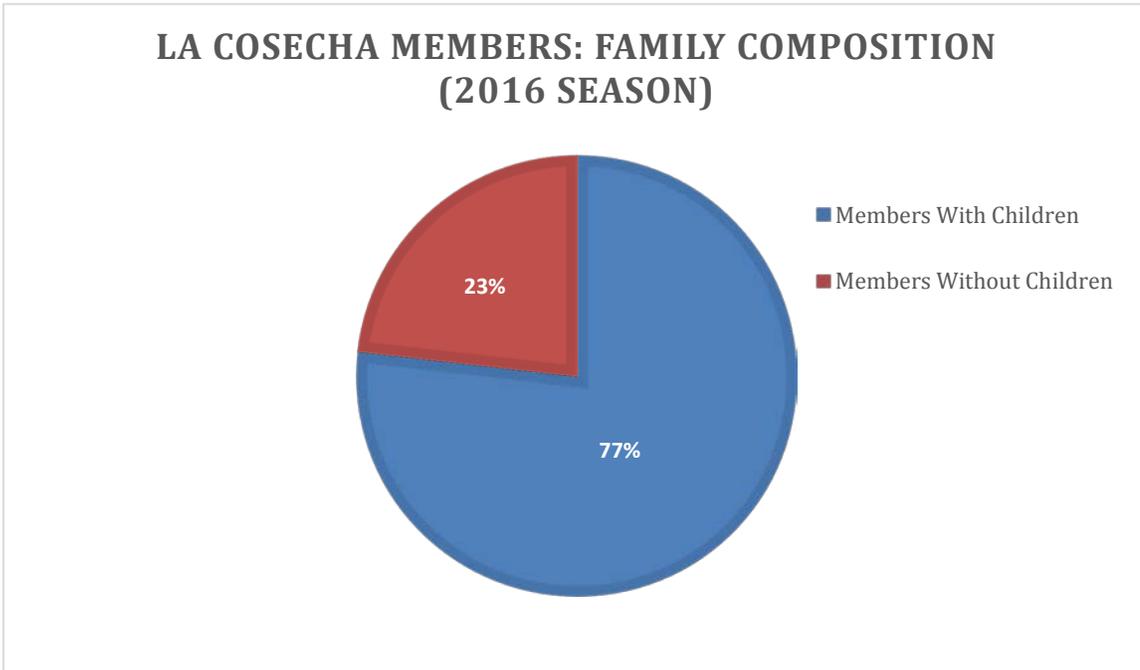
Between January 1 and July 14, 2016, La Cosecha has provided approximately 3,098 pounds of food to low-income families in the identified areas and just over 4,330 pounds of food in conjunction with other community avenues (for example, other CSAs and community events). To assess the program, La Cosecha has used pre- and post-participation surveys specifically measuring food consumption habits, perceptions of food insecurity and self-efficacy related to healthy food preparation. La Cosecha has found increased rates of local vegetable and fruit consumption and confidence to prepare meals with the healthy ingredients. Participation in the La Cosecha program provides the opportunity to make healthy life changes. Looking to the future, La Cosecha plans to expand the CSA to reach a greater number of families beyond the targeted communities. La Cosecha has a goal of being 70 percent self-sufficient in the next five years by partnering with additional organizations to subsidize bags of produce in their communities.

## **Contact Information**

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## Appendix A



Graph depicts the number of La Cosecha families with and without children during the 2016 season