

“CHRISTUS St. Vincent Regional Medical Center:  
Moving Beyond Random Kindness, Acting for the Common Good”

Kathy Armijo Etre, Dean Maines, and Paul J. Wojda

Abstract

The Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA) requires all not-for-profit hospitals in the United States to triennially assess the health needs of the communities they serve, and annually report progress on initiatives addressing those needs. This case study examines the efforts of one such hospital, CHRISTUS St. Vincent Regional Medical Center (CSV), in Santa Fe, New Mexico, to enhance the health of its community. CSV’s assessment of the health needs of the Santa Fe community, and the initiatives it has developed to meet those needs, go well beyond mere compliance with federal law. In fact, they offer a model for understanding how institutions can wisely and effectively serve the common good. The paper highlights three features of CSV’s efforts. First, they *continue the hospital’s historical dedication* to the health of Santa Fe, a commitment that originated with the Sisters of Charity (Cincinnati), who founded the hospital in 1865 as the first organized healthcare facility in the New Mexico territory. Second, CSV has established innovative *internal* and *external* structures to better promote the health of the local population. *Internally*, a special committee of the Board of Directors ensures community health strategies are robust and impactful, while a dedicated community health department implements these strategies. *Externally*, CSV has created collaborative partnerships to ensure that funds available in the community are used effectively to address clinical service gaps and socio-economic factors that influence health outcomes. Such collaborations are vital: Because the health of a population is a function of multiple determinants – for example, medical care, health behaviors, the physical environment, and socio-economic influences – cooperation between multiple institutions is required to make progress against goals for improved community health. Third, CSV’s programs are notable for their *effectiveness*, particularly with specific at-risk populations, e.g., people diagnosed with both a mental illness and a substance abuse disorder.