New Mexico Diabetes Advisory Council Training
Momentum for Thriving: Energizing and Restoring the Body
Bios

Erik Kakuska, BA
Erik Kakuska works at the UNM HSC Center for Native American Health (CNAH) as a Research Scientist for the Wide Engagement for Assessing Vaccine Equity (WEAVE) NM - Heart Health & Nutrition for Life (HHNL) and American Indigenous Cognitive Assessment (AMICA) projects. Prior to joining CNAH in 2025, Erik worked for 17 years in the Pacific Northwest serving Tribal communities through the NW Portland Area Indian Health Board on various programs/projects. These projects included Access to American Indian Recovery (AAIR), a SAMHSA grant on substance use disorder, and the Western Tribal Diabetes Project (WTDP), where he was Project Manager for diabetes research and prevention.

Anthony Saavedra II, CHW
Anthony Saavedra II has worked at First Nations Community HealthSource (FNCH) as a community health worker (CHW) with the Wide Engagement for Assessing Vaccine Equity (WEAVE) NM - Heart Health & Nutrition for Life (HHNL) project since 2024. Prior to joining FNCH, Mr. Saavedra worked as a CHW at First Choice Community Healthcare and also became a Native Communities Certified Tobacco Interventionist in 2021. Mr. Saavedra has experience in a diverse range of workplaces within Pueblo communities and the Albuquerque Metro. Working in these unique fields has sharpened his awareness in cultural sensitivity and best practices to respectfully establish relationships with various communities and organizations. His continued efforts in community health align with his personal goals to give back to the communities he cherishes.

SanJuana Garcia, CHW
SanJuana Garcia has worked at First Nations Community HealthSource as a community health worker with the Wide Engagement for Assessing Vaccine Equity (WEAVE) NM - Heart Health & Nutrition for Life (HHNL) project since 2024. She is English/Spanish bilingual and graduated from Brookline College as a Medical Assistant (MA). As an MA, she, among other duties, provided diabetes and nutrition education as well as support for diabetes medication management to improve health outcomes with patients living with or at risk of diabetes. She is passionate about empowering individuals to live healthier lives!

Cassandra Vanderpool, MS, RDN, LD
Cassandra Vanderpool is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist with the NMSU Cooperative Extension Service, where she has worked for 15 years. In her current role with the Diabetes Management and Prevention Programs, she oversees Kitchen Creations, a statewide cooking and nutrition program for people with diabetes. She also serves as Treasurer of the New Mexico Diabetes Advisory Council and Secretary of the New Mexico Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Dedicated to helping people live healthier and happier lives, she enjoys connecting individuals and communities with the resources they need to thrive. Her work reflects her passion for empowering people to manage their health through food, education, and support.

Dianne Christensen, MS

Dianne Christensen is an Associate Professor at New Mexico State University and serves with Bernalillo County Cooperative Extension Service as the Family and Consumer Sciences Agent. She is passionate about wellness and assisting others to discover ways to craft healthy lifestyles that work in their unique lives. She offers a robust variety of educational opportunities around wellness, stress management, physical activity, and chronic disease prevention and management. She serves as the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences national President. Locally, she serves on the board for the New Mexico Diabetes Advisory Council and sits on the Health Advisory Council for Roadrunner Food Bank.

David Earl, MD, PharmD

David Earl, MD, PharmD is an assistant professor at UNM. His practice consists of psychiatry and sleep medicine. He completed his medical training, including residency and fellowship, at UNM in 2021 and has remained as UNM since. His interests include; inpatient psychiatry, teaching, sleep medicine, and maintaining sleep study software. Before pursuing medical training at UNM, he practiced as a clinical pharmacist for IHS in Shiprock, NM.