



Healthcare in La Plata County: A Survey of Opinion and Experiences of La Plata County Residents

Executive Summary November 2022

This Executive Summary provides a quick overview. A more complete summary of the full report is being shared with relevant healthcare institutions and providers, media sources, LWV members and supporters, and local, state, and national elected officials. It is also available to the public. Contact information is available at the conclusion of this Executive Summary.

Methods

From March to September 2022, The League of Women Voters of La Plata County (LWVLPC) Healthcare Advocacy and Action Committee conducted an anonymous, online survey of La Plata County residents to document opinions and experiences with the local healthcare system. The survey, available in both English and Spanish, focused on health insurance/cost of care, satisfaction with local healthcare services and healthcare reform.

The survey was voluntary; participants were solicited through a variety of methods including press releases in the local newspapers, social media posts, flyers distributed and posted throughout county businesses and neighborhoods, information tables, email campaigns and facilitated group discussions. A total of n=546 responses were received.

Respondents represented a cross-section of La Plata County residents and although it is a relatively small sample size for the county, LWVLPC believes this survey is still reflective of La Plata County's demographics in many aspects.

Key Findings

Health Insurance/Cost of Care

Respondents with private health insurance (employer- sponsored or individual plan) tended to be less satisfied (65%) overall with their coverage compared to 70% satisfaction for those with public insurance (Medicare, Medicaid, etc.) The high costs of insurance premiums, deductibles and co-payments were the most common complaint, particularly among those with private insurance. It is notable that among respondents with private insurance 58% delayed seeking

medical care because of concerns over cost. Conversely, 37% of those with public insurance reported avoiding care for cost reasons.

Satisfaction with Local Healthcare

Respondents generally expressed low to moderate levels of satisfaction with local hospitals and physicians. The quality of local physicians and hospitals received the most moderate to high ratings. Availability of hospitals and physicians and the length of time to get an appointment received the lowest ratings. Accessibility to a full array of health care services was also a concern.

Healthcare Reform

Respondents agreed that the current healthcare system is in need of reform and that government intervention was necessary. Seventy-seven percent (77%) agreed that a universal healthcare system should be established.

Next Steps

This survey identified significant concerns among La Plata County residents regarding healthcare affordability and accessibility. The LWVLPC hopes that this survey and the results will inform local and state legislative decisions toward the goals of:

- Improving healthcare access to the full range of healthcare services for all La Plata County residents.
- Reducing costs/prices of insurance, medical services, and prescription drugs.
- Recruiting and retaining physicians and nurses sufficient for our population resulting in improved quality and continuity of care.
- Enforcing hospital transparency laws and encouraging transparency in provider offices so the public can have advanced knowledge of costs and avoid surprise billing.
- Improving hospital-to-community communications including greater transparency of community benefits with our non-profit hospital.

The LWVLPC intends to engage local community leaders, businesses, and other healthcare-engaged groups to form a coalition to address these community healthcare issues and explore possible solutions to each of these current challenges.

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