

Eliminating Menstrual Inequity Among the Unhoused in Albuquerque

Health Equity Council

Executive statement

Unhoused people are disproportionately affected by menstruation inequities. Interventions providing access to menstrual products affects health and safety of the individuals, and has net positive economic benefits to local private businesses and health infrastructure.

Background

The Southwest Women's Law Center conducted a menstrual equity environmental scan. 50% of the providers responded that they receive requests for menstrual products more than once per week. Of the providers that distribute menstrual supplies, only 8% responded that they always have enough supplies to fill all client requests. More than 92% of providers responded that the unmet need for menstrual supplies among unhoused menstruating people is significant to very significant.

Unhoused women reported that their main needs are a place where they can consistently access menstrual pads and public restrooms that they can safely access. When they run out of supplies, they get supplies at street outreach, steal from businesses, go to emergency rooms, or use rags, toilet paper and other absorbent materials they find on the street. There are additional barriers for menstruating people who aren't ciswomen due to lack of inclusive services. They reported that there's also a lack of safe places to change products and lack of public restrooms, showers and running water to clean themselves. Products most needed are pads, menstrual discs, and feminine wipes.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Hygiene dispensers in libraries and community center

Ensure all communities centers, libraries, and bus stops are always fully equipped with supplies.

Recommendation 2: In-person outreach

Increase in-person outreach vans to reach unhouse persons who may not be available to access supplies at dispensers due to service hours or mobility.

Recommendation 3: Community Safety Department

Ensure that the Community Safety Department always carries supplies with them.

Recommendation 4: In-person outreach

Engage with local private businesses to for no cost hygiene distribution.

Recommendation 5: Access to restrooms and running water

Increase access to public restrooms and running water to help with the hygiene, safety, and public health concerns in the unhoused population.

Recommendation 6: Syphilis blood testing

Syphilis is a growing issue for the unhoused population, specifically working girls and pregnant people. There needs to be syphilis blood testing days at locations like the Gateway Center.

Recommendation 7: Sharing the program outside Albuquerque

This program should be shared with other parts of the Albuquerque Metro area (i.e. Rio Rancho).