

Monroe County Jail Employees and University of New Mexico Nursing Students Build Empathy for Individuals Living in Poverty



CCSI recently facilitated poverty simulations at the Monroe County Sheriff's Department's *Confronting Poverty with Compassion Summit* and at the University of New Mexico's (UNM) College of Nursing. Sheriff Department employees and partners and UNM students took part in the highly interactive experience designed to help participants begin to understand what a typical low-income family experiences trying to survive from month to month. In the simulation, participants assume the roles of family members in poverty. Volunteers play the roles of service providers and other community resources (e.g., bank, employer, grocery, Department of Social Services, landlord, school, childcare, and law enforcement, etc.).

Monroe County Sheriff Todd Baxter says the goal of this exercise is to build awareness and compassion, especially in officers working in the county jail which has the highest concentration of impoverished people. One officer reflected on the experience saying, "I have a greater understanding of the stress created by having so much to do with limited resources and time. I will do my best to better understand and have patience with those in positions of poverty."

Carolyn Montoya, PhD, RN, Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs at UNM stated, "I love that it was a way for students to understand poverty without just sitting and listening to a lecture. I know first-hand what it's like to be poor. Given that New Mexico has one of the highest rates of poverty in the country, it is important for all of our health care providers to understand the effects of poverty on their patients."



Click [here](#) to watch the Rochester First news story and hear more from Todd Baxter. Check out CCSI's [Facebook page](#) to see photos from the event.

Click [here](#) for a great video developed by UNM which includes more from Dr. Montoya and the students about their experiences with the poverty simulation.

To learn more about poverty simulations, visit our [website](#) and email [Nancy Sung Shelton](#) to talk more about how your organization can host a poverty simulation.