



Native Health Initiative
www.loving-service.us

HEALERS OF TOMORROW PROGRAM REPORT



Written By

BARBARA GUTIERREZ
HOT PROGRAM MANAGER

FY2026

MEET THE TEAM



Barbara Gutierrez, Program Manager

Barbara first joined HOT as a volunteer coordinator in 2023. She has been with the program since then, becoming manager in 2025. Barbara is Diné, and works as a paramedic in addition to her work with NHI.



Yanibaa Johnson, Program Coordinator

Yanibaa joined HOT in January 2026, and previously served as both an NHI Intern and Breathe Tradition Not Addiction presenter. Yanibaa is Diné, and has aspirations to attend medical school in the future.

HEALERS OF TOMORROW

HOT is a 9 month mentorship program for high school students interested in healthcare, aimed at Indigenous and minority students. HOT's goal is not only to teach aspiring young health professionals about careers in health, but also about the intersection between health, culture, and community



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

HOT has three major components:

1. HEALTH EDUCATION

We hold monthly meetings at UNM's Domenici Center on the first Saturday of the month where we bring in guest speakers from different healthcare fields for students to learn from and connect with. Presenters speak on their career paths and plan an interactive activity related to their fields for students to do. We also provide students with CPR certification during these meetings.

2. ONE-TO-ONE MENTORSHIP

Students are paired with a mentor who is a health professional or someone who is pursuing a health related degree for the duration of the program based on the student's career goal (ie. student interested in being a doctor will be paired with a medical student).

3. LEADERSHIP AND CAREER SKILLS

Students create a community health project of their choice with the support from mentors, HOT leadership, and Native Health Initiative. Students receive a mini-grant for their projects from NHI. This is a great resume-builder and shows colleges/health programs that students are leaders in their community.

Upon completing the program, students receive a certificate and stipend to thank them for their time, effort, and investment in their futures.



At each of our meetings, students hear from guest presenters from health fields they identify as being interested in. Pictured to the right is a photo from our October meeting, where one of our guest presenters was a physical therapist.

One of our big goals is making sure we have a diverse group of presenters, as we aim to create a place where students feel that they can see themselves in any healthcare role. The majority of our presenters are from a minority or underserved group.



Additionally, we always include a traditional medicine focused month. This year, we had an herbalist present on traditional medicines she uses as a Navajo healer. The students were able to make their own healing teas using native herbs to New Mexico.

PROGRAM TIMELINE



2025-2026 COMMUNITY PROJECTS

The third key part of our program is the completion of community projects. As shown in the timeline above, our students are given time to complete these from October to April, in addition to a mini-grant to fund each student's project. This year, we had a wide variety of community projects completed by our mentees.

HOT's concluding event is graduation, where mentees showcase their projects on a project slide and present to their friends, family, and community. Below are some of the projects completed by our students this past year.



YOUNG WOMEN'S WELLNESS

By Layle M. Enciso
Objective: To empower and educate young women, especially from Native and rural communities on their periods, bodies, and sexual/reproductive health.

How did it go? 2 workshops in ABQ and Gallup.

It could have gone better in attendance. We were able to successfully deliver and provide answers to 16 individuals. While it was small, my support was big, many organizations supported my initiative, leading to many opportunities. Thank you to our 3 presenters, 4 donors, and 2 spaces, you made this all possible!

@young_womens_wellness

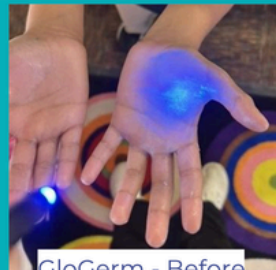


Defeating the Germ Invaders

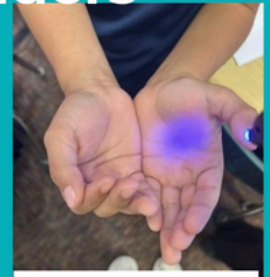
Myname is Kira Lopez and for my HOT project, I wanted to get involved with children in the community and teach about the importance of stopping the spread of germs.

I did this by teaching a class of first grade students about when, why, and how we should wash our hands. We used Glo Germ and then the students made posters and wrote the five steps of handwashing.

At the end of my lesson, each student demonstrated proficiency in the handwashing process!



GloGerm - Before washing hands

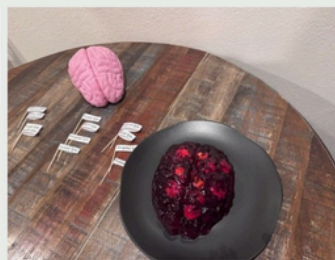


After washing hands



MindShield

By: Ela Muller



The goal of my project was to teach kids about the importance and functions of the brain. I explained the purpose of each part of the brain, then had them dissect their own Jell-O brain. I tried to create an entertaining and informative activity to keep the children engaged, but also to teach them how important the brain is. I also wanted to briefly explain the importance of keeping your own brain healthy and safe.

1



Reyton Henderson

Inspiring Movement In Local Youth

I organized a small yoga class for special needs kids and their families. Although turnout was modest, it was a peaceful and great experience that highlighted the importance of exercise for youth health. I also created an immersive website to educate the youth on the importance of health and physical exercise

<https://youthhealthabq26.my.canva.site/empwrhlth>



HIGHLIGHTS IN FY26



Our December 2025 meeting was held in collaboration with First Nations Community HealthSource. Our students were able to learn from FNCH's Traditional Medicine Coordinator about the importance of culture in healing.



Two HOT mentees from our FY25 cohort presented at the 2025 annual Association of American Indian Physicians Conference in Seattle, WA, along with Dr. Anthony Fleg in September.



Two HOT mentees from our FY26 cohort presented at the American Heart Association's Go Red for Native Women event at Iselta Resort and Casino. They educated the community on the important signs to look out for of strokes and heart attacks.



2023-2024 COHORT PROGRAM DEMOGRAPHICS

5

COUNTIES
REACHED

- Bernalillo County
- Santa Fe County
- Sandoval County
- Valencia County
- Cibola County

- Bosque School
- Cibola High School
- Albuquerque High School
- Early College Academy
- Albuquerque Academy
- Albuquerque Institute of Mathematics and Science
- Cleveland High School
- Academy for Technology and the Classics

- Bernalillo High School
- Mark Armijo Academy
- Sandia Preparatory
- NexGen+ Academy
- Sandia High School
- Volcano Vista
- Los Lunas High School
- Grants High School

16

HIGH SCHOOLS
REPRESENTED

11

MENTORS

25

MENTEES

(63% RETENTION RATE)



2024-2025 COHORT PROGRAM DEMOGRAPHICS

3

COUNTIES
REPRESENTED

- Bernalillo County
- Sandoval County
- Apache County - AZ

- Albuquerque Institute of Mathematics and Science
- Window Rock High School
- Albuquerque High School
- Early College Academy
- Cibola High School
- La Cueva High School
- Eldorado High School

- Bernalillo High School
- Volcano Vista High School
- Valley High School
- Del Norte High School
- Albuquerque Academy
- Cottonwood Classical
- NexGen+ Academy
- Rio Rancho High School

15

HIGH SCHOOLS
REPRESENTED

16

MENTORS

27

MENTEES
(100% RETENTION RATE)



2025-2026 (FY26) COHORT PROGRAM DEMOGRAPHICS

4

COUNTIES
REPRESENTED

- Bernalillo
- Sandoval County
- San Juan County
- McKinley County

- Albuquerque Academy
- Albuquerque High School
- Albuquerque Institute for Math and Science (AIMS)
- Bernalillo High School
- Cibola High School
- College and Career High School
- Cottonwood Classical Preparatory School
- Volcano Vista High School
- Del Norte High School
- Early College Academy
- Eldorado High School
- Freedom High School
- Kirtland Central High School
- La Cueva High School
- Manzano High School
- McKinley Academy
- Rio Grande High School
- Sandia High School
- Valley High School

19

HIGH SCHOOLS
REPRESENTED

25

MENTORS

27

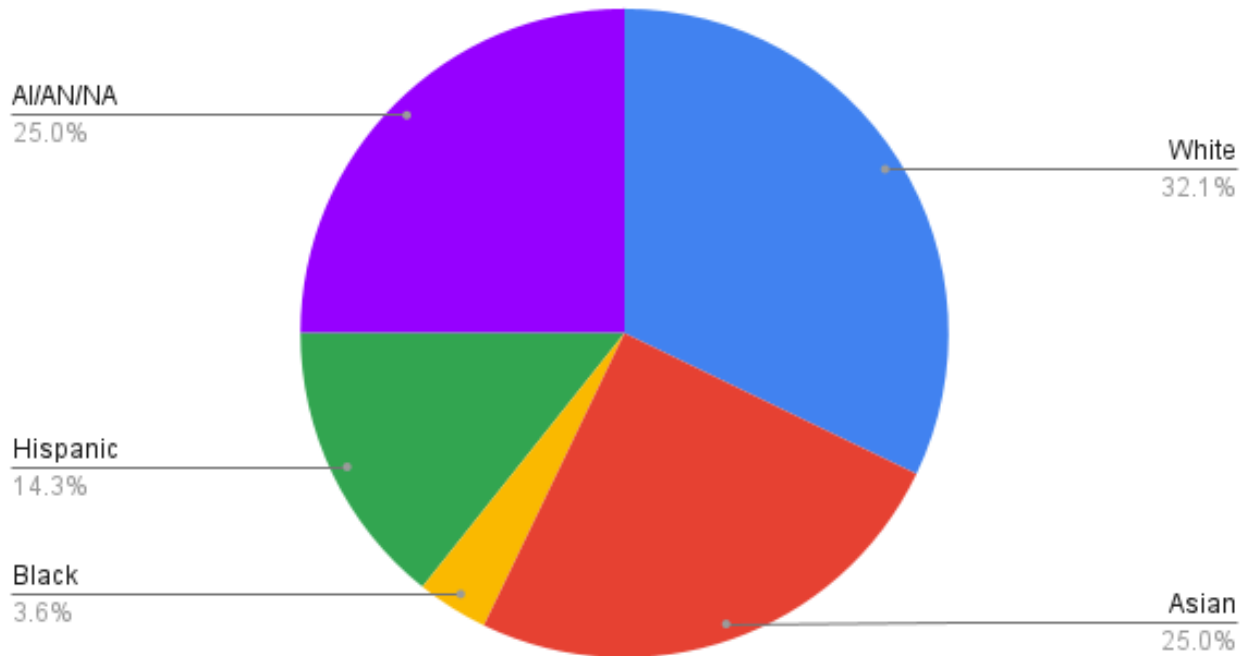
MENTEES
(66% RETENTION RATE)



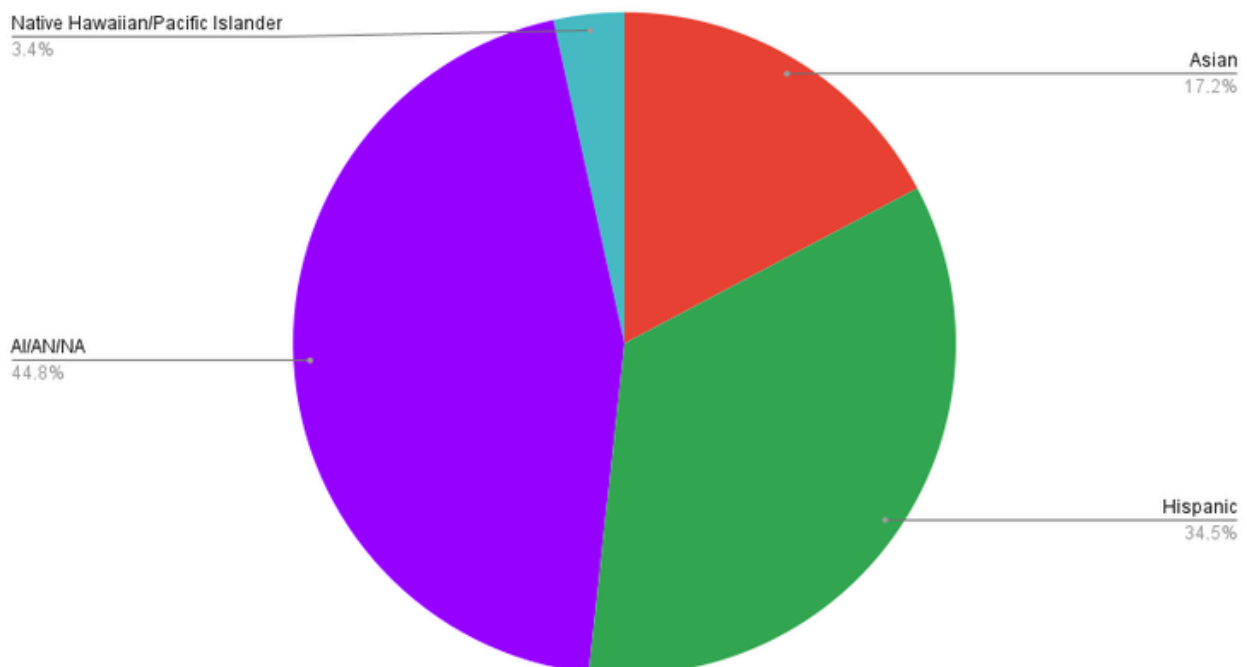
PROGRAM DEMOGRAPHICS



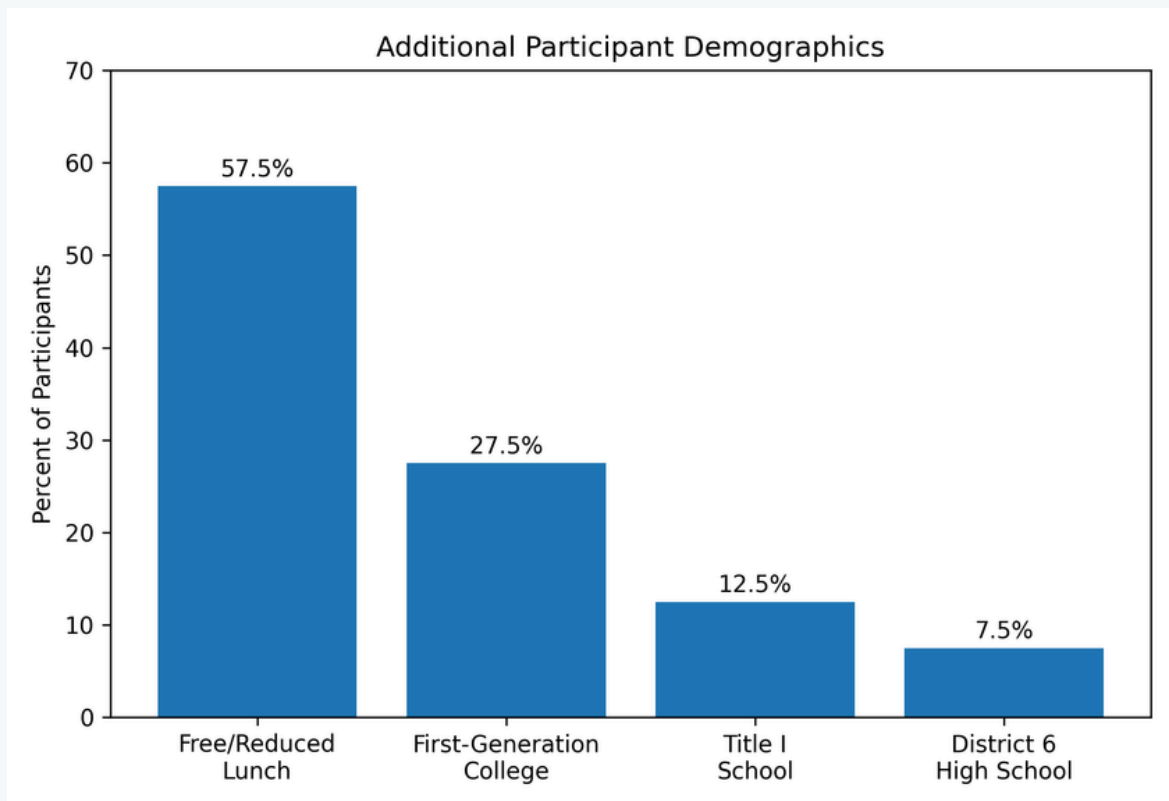
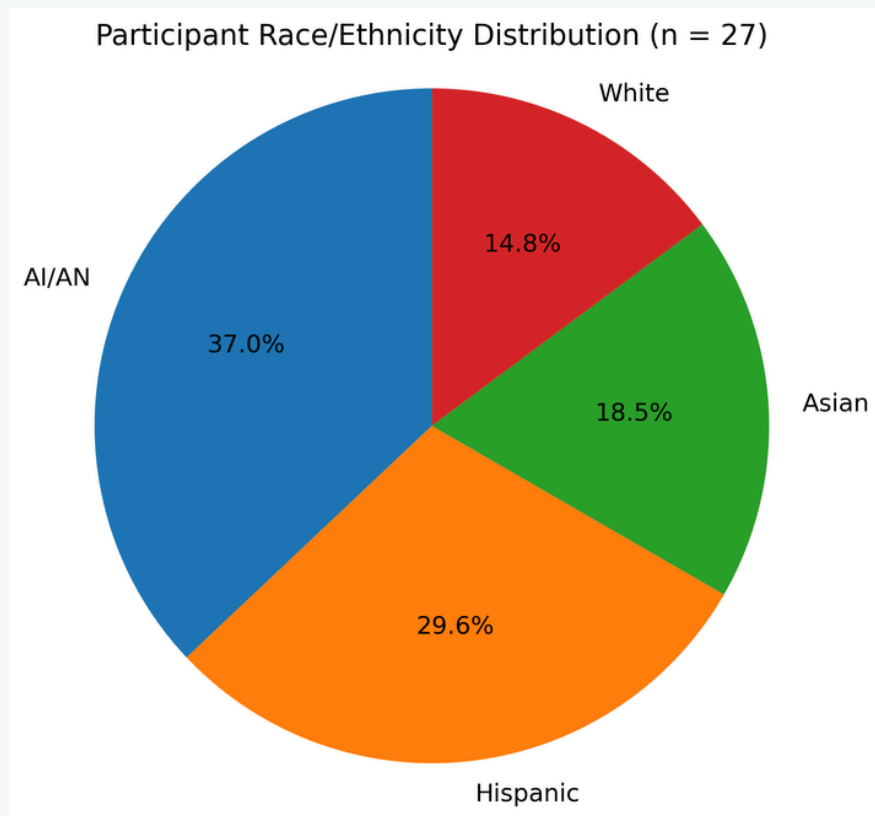
2023-2024 Cohort by Ethnicity



2024-2025 Cohort by Ethnicity



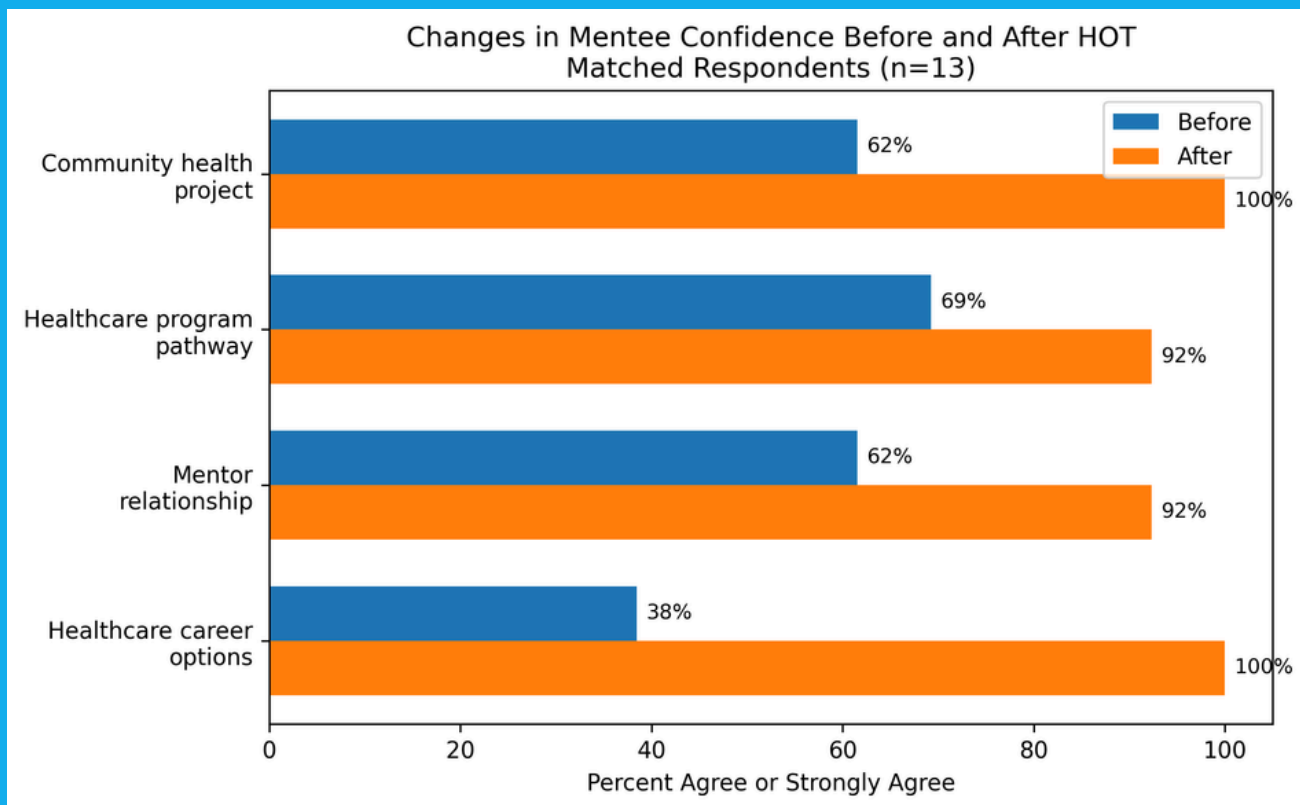
2025-2026 COHORT BY ETHNICITY



IMPACT

At the beginning of the Program, our students completed a pre-survey, which was presented as a knowledge scale, 1 being they do not know much about the topic to 5, which is they know a lot. The following questions were asked in the pre-survey:

1. I am comfortable designing, implementing, and summarizing a community health project in my community.
2. I know a lot about the path to apply to medical school, nursing school, or my desired career prep school.
3. I have a relationship with a mentor who will help prepare me for my chosen career path.
4. I know a lot about different healthcare career options.



HOT FOR THE FUTURE



This year was a resounding success according to feedback from our students, whose primary critiques were regarding our subpar advertising (working on that). However, we are continually striving to improve the benefits our students receive from their time in the program, as well as improving our accessibility for minority and underserved students. To that end, we have the following planned changes for our upcoming 2026-2027 cohort:

1. Expand Basic Life Support (BLS) training by making CPR and BLS certification a recurring component of the program, providing students with nationally recognized credentials and valuable clinical skills.
2. Strengthen the mentorship model through enhanced mentor orientation, structured monthly discussion guides, increased mentor-mentee engagement between meetings, and continued transportation assistance, student stipends, and attendance incentives to reduce barriers to participation.
3. Increase community engagement by partnering with local healthcare and community organizations to incorporate volunteer service into the HOT program, giving students meaningful opportunities to serve their communities while exploring healthcare careers.
4. Refine the program's research and evaluation efforts by improving pre- and post-program surveys to better measure changes in healthcare knowledge, leadership development, confidence in pursuing healthcare careers, and the impact of mentor relationships.

Thank you to our funders for their support of our program. It is with your support that we are able to offer our services and help address the healthcare and education needs of our population in NM.

Ahéhee'!