

# A Progress Report on the 2002 New Mexico Children's Agenda

## A Project of the New Mexico Pediatric Society

The New Mexico Children's Agenda was created to assure that our elected officials make the well being of our children their highest priority, and to hold them accountable for specific actions that would improve the lives of our kids. These nine agenda items were identified by concerned citizens before the 2002 gubernatorial election. Its clear that **the New Mexico Children's Agenda has been very successful in getting the attention of this administration, but we still need to hold elected officials accountable to follow through on their commitments. New Mexico still has a long way to go to create a stronger future for our children.**

### CHILDREN'S AGENDA PRIORITY

### STATE GOVERNMENT ACTION

**Leadership:** Create a Children's Work Group within the Governor's Cabinet to establish specific objectives, coordinate services, create policies across departmental lines and maximize the use of available funds for children's services.

The Children's Cabinet was created by Executive Order of the Governor in the first month of the new Administration and has met regularly in the interim months. They have focused on cross agency cooperation to improve services for children. 

**Participation/Youth Development:** Establish a network of regional youth councils and an umbrella State Youth Council. The councils will advise the Governor, the Legislature and the Cabinet on issues that affect young people.

Legislation was passed and signed by the Governor creating the New Mexico Youth Advisory Council. The Youth Advisory Council members have not yet been appointed. 

**Education:** Establish an official state goal of literacy for all children by the end of the third grade, and finance expanded quality early childhood care and education strategies, enriched after school programming and family literacy efforts.

Governor Richardson has committed to literacy by the end of the third grade and has approved additional funding of over \$9 million for early childhood care and education. Additional funding is needed for child care, after school programs and family literacy. 

**Health Care:** Charge the new Children's Cabinet with developing a plan to provide healthcare coverage that guarantees access to appropriate services for all.

Governor Richardson appointed the Governor's Health Care Coverage and Access Task Force and says he is committed to expanding health care coverage to all New Mexicans within 4 years. But, the Task Force recommendation seems unlikely to guarantee universal health care access. 

**Medicaid/SCHIP:** Maintain income eligibility level for the State Children's Health Insurance Program at 235% of the poverty level, without reducing current benefits.

Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program have been fully funded for this current fiscal year, but the Human Services Department has proposed major cuts to Medicaid next year. 

**Poverty Reduction:** Link enrollment for Food Stamps and Medicaid to the State's income tax filing process and make enrollment automatic with client permission.

The Governor's Hunger Summit was held on October 16-17, 2003 and the Human Services Department proposes to simplify enrollment for food stamps, but progress has been slow. Simplifying enrollment through an automated system has gained little support. 

**Behavioral Health:** Provide adequate access to high-quality behavioral health services for New Mexico's children.

Behavioral Health programs are being removed from Salud Managed Care. However, there is no clear plan for how behavioral health will be managed or how it will be funded. A commitment of significant new funding will be needed to accomplish needed reforms. 

**Protection:** Assure that timely, adequate responses are being made to all reports of abuse or neglect of children.

The Children, Youth and Families Department is examining the system for receiving reports of abuse and neglect, and is working to make sure at-risk children get referrals to services. But, these reforms are still in the planning stage. 

**Juvenile Justice:** Declare a moratorium on expanding juvenile correctional institutional capacity & reduce the number of youths in correctional facilities by shifting money from institutions to youth development, prevention, and rehabilitation efforts.

The population in juvenile correctional facilities has been reduced by about 40% in the past ten months. 

 Very Poor

 Poor

 Fair

 Good

 Excellent

For more information, contact the New Mexico Pediatric Society at 272-6411 or visit [www.salu.net/aap\\_nm](http://www.salu.net/aap_nm)

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