

2340 Alamo Road SE Albuquerque, New Mexico 87106  
**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL: Thursday, Jan 12, 2006 11:00am**

## **Press Release**

**PRESS CONFERENCE CALL TO RELEASE NEW KIDS COUNT REPORT**  
For information about how to join the call, contact Cheryl Gooding, Communiions Director  
at (505) 244-9595 EXT. 33 or 401-8709

**Link to embargoed report: [nmvoices.org/embargoed.htm](http://nmvoices.org/embargoed.htm)**  
**Conference Call: Thursday, January 12, 10:00 a.m. MST**

### **NEW MEXICO KIDS COUNT 2005 ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING; A PREDICTOR OF OUR FUTURE**

Featuring New Mexico Kids Count Project Director Sara Beth Koplik, Ph. D. Executive Director of New Mexico teen Pregnancy Coalition, Sylvia Ruiz; Director of Public Health Division , NM Department of Health, Kristine Suozzi; and DOH Chief Medical Officer, Ron Voorhees

**New report Highlights Need To Reduce Teen Pregnancy & Increase  
Educational Achievement To Improve Physical and economic Health Of  
Teen Parents and Their Children**

### **Progress in Bernalillo County shows hope for New Mexico**

Albuquerque- The 2005 New Mexico KIDS COUNT report release this week highlights adolescent health and well- being. The reason for this emphasis on adolescent health is that, according to the report's author Sara Beth Koplik ( Kids count Project Director, New Mexico Voices for Children), " The condition of today's teenagers predicts the future strength of our society: if teens are healthy and well- educated, we can expect productive citizens able to access economic opportunity\ . If our young people are neglected, under educated and un-healthy, we face a far bleaker future."

New Mexico's teen pregnancy rate continues to be above the U.S. average. Adolescent pregnancy and poverty are linked. Low income adolescents are more likely to give birth, and teen mothers are more likely to be poor. In 2000, for explain, more than half (52%) of young women in New Mexico who gave birth between the ages of 16 and 19 live in poverty. The poverty rate drops significantly, to 21%, among women who delayed childbearing until at least age 20.

Teen parents also have lower educational achievement, leading to later employment in low-wage jobs, thus continuing the cycle of poverty.

"New Mexico can take several steps toward breaking the cycle of poverty among teen parents, including adequate funding for comprehensive, community-based programs-

such as the South valley's *Plain Talk* program that teach young people the necessary skills and give them the encouragement they need to make better choices," Continued Dr. Koplik. She added: "And we need to provide all the necessary support so that our kids can succeed in school. Finally, increasing New Mexico's minimum wage to \$7.50 will enable even lower wage working adolescents and adults to work towards economic stability."

Senator Linda Lopez will introduce legislation in the 2006 legislative session to increase funding for teen pregnancy reduction.

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