



A  
Campaign  
for a Better  
New Mexico  
2015

Updated June 2015



## New Mexico Voices for Children

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*While the national KIDS COUNT Data Book serves as the framework for this campaign, the policies and conclusions presented are those of the author(s) alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.*

KIDS COUNT is a program of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Annual Data Books and other resources are available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

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## Key to the symbols used in this campaign

### KIDS COUNT Domains:

-  Economic Well-Being
-  Education
-  Health
-  Family and Community

### Legislative Actions or Appropriations:

-  This should lead to improvement in child well-being or, at the very least, will not make things worse
-  This will not lead to improvement in child well-being or may even make things worse
-  It is uncertain how this will impact child well-being

## Letter from the Executive Director

June 2015

Dear Friends and Fellow Advocates,

The future of our state depends upon making smart investments today. New Mexico's leaders, inventors, small business owners, and teachers of tomorrow are today's babies, toddlers, and school kids. When we ensure that all children can access the opportunities that will put them on a path to academic and life success, we ensure that New Mexico will prosper. When we make child well-being a low priority, we do so at our own peril.

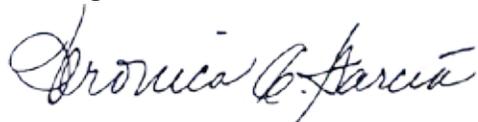
The 2015 legislative session led to only a few small victories for New Mexico's children and their families as you will see in the following pages. Given the continued sluggish economy, the recent drop in oil and gas prices, and cumulative effect of the many income tax cuts that have been enacted over the years, the state had very little new money to invest in the services that help our children thrive. Our K-12 education system received the largest share of the new revenue, but with fixed costs for things like utilities and insurance rising, even that funding increase amounts to a cut in spending. Our children deserve to be a higher priority.

New Mexico has a long, proud history of innovation in many fields, and we offer *NM KIDS are COUNTing on Us: A Campaign for a Better New Mexico* in the same spirit of ingenuity. This agenda was created with the input of a broad group of partners and fellow child advocates when New Mexico fell to dead last in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2013 national KIDS COUNT rankings. It has since been revised and includes outcomes from the 2015 legislative session. This policy agenda is a call to action to bring the ingenuity that has long made New Mexico a leader in many fields to bear in addressing the issues that keep our children and our communities from prospering.

This campaign was created to show that New Mexico can improve the well-being of its children, but that it will take a concerted, strategic and multi-pronged approach. We offer this campaign as a menu of choices and ask that advocates and policy makers prioritize these policy recommendations and act on those that fit within the work you already do on behalf of children. At New Mexico Voices for Children our focus is on improving the economic security of our families, expanding the early childhood services that are known to produce the best outcomes, and ensuring that the state raises enough revenue—and in a way that is fair to all—to fund these programs. If you would like to help us in these efforts, please make a donation to NM Voices and/or become a Citizen Co-Sponsor. See page 24 for how to donate and sign up for email action alerts.

We welcome your recommendations to this policy agenda and your fresh and innovative approaches to our child well-being problem. Please feel free to send your input on how we can improve this agenda by emailing me at [vgarcia@nmvoices.org](mailto:vgarcia@nmvoices.org).

Best regards,



Veronica C. García, Ed.D.  
Executive Director, New Mexico Voices for Children

# New Mexico KIDS COUNT Profile

This campaign is based on the four domains and 16 indicators used in the national *KIDS COUNT Data Book*

National Rank (2014): 49th

## Domains

## Indicators of child well-being



### Economic Well-Being

Children at or below the poverty level  
2012



149,000 children Improved since 2011

Children whose parents lack secure employment  
2012



185,000 children Improved since 2011

Children living in households with a high housing cost burden  
2012



168,000 children Improved since 2011

Teens (16-19) not in school and not working  
2012



13,000 teens Worsened since 2011



### Education

Children (3-4) not attending preschool  
2010-2012



36,000 children Unchanged since 09-11

Fourth graders not proficient in reading  
2013



Unchanged since 2011

Eighth graders not proficient in math  
2013



Worsened since 2011

High school students not graduating on time  
2011-2012



Improved since 09-10



### Health

Low birth-weight babies  
2013



2,381 babies Worsened since 2010

Children without health insurance  
2012



41,000 children Improved since 2011

Child (1-14) and teen (15-19) death rates (per 100,000)  
2010



200 deaths Worsened since 2009

Teens who abuse alcohol or drugs  
2011-12



15,000 teens Unchanged since 10-11



### Family and Community

Children in single-parent families  
2012



213,000 children Worsened since 2011

Children in families where household head lacks high school diploma  
2012



90,000 children Improved since 2011

Children living in high-poverty areas  
2008-2012



112,000 children Worsened since 07-11

Teen (15-19) birth rate (per 1,000)  
2012



3,275 births Improved since 2010

Source: *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014  
NEW MEXICO VOICES FOR CHILDREN



## All Domains

### Overarching Policy Solutions

Because the 16 indicators of child well-being are inter-related—as are the policies that would improve them—many of the recommendations address multiple indicators. We have placed these overarching policies separate from the policies that address the indicators more specifically.

► **Ensure that enough tax revenue is collected so that the state budget can fund programs that improve and support the well-being of New Mexico’s children, families, and communities.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Our system of governance is the way we accomplish things collectively that we could not accomplish as individuals, such as providing an education to everyone.
- The investments we make in ourselves and each other do more than improve the quality of our lives—they also help drive our economy.
- Children benefit from these investments as much as adults do, since their well-being depends on the well-being of their families.
- New Mexico’s state budget took a huge hit during the recession as tax revenue fell off dramatically. Instead of raising new revenue, policy-makers dealt with the short-falls by cutting spending. Although revenue began to recover in 2013, not all of the new funding was reinvested in the services—like education and health care—that had been so drastically cut.

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- As in 2013, several tax cuts for businesses were combined into an omnibus tax bill (SB 386). It failed in the regular session, but a modified version was passed during the special session in June.
- Unfortunately, attempts to increase taxes on corporations, as well as to delay the corporate tax cuts of 2013, also failed.

► **Enact a more progressive income tax so those with the highest incomes pay their fair share.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- New Mexico’s state and local tax systems hit those with the lowest incomes the hardest. A New Mexican with an income less than \$17,000 pays more than 10% of their

income in state and local taxes while someone with an income over \$323,000 pays less than 5% in those same taxes.<sup>1</sup>

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- Several bills that would have raised the income tax rate for the highest earners, as well as bills to repeal the overly generous capital gains deduction, all failed.

► **Mandate a tax expenditure budget (TEB) and require accountability measures for tax breaks that are intended to create jobs.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- A TEB is an annual accounting of all tax credits, exemptions, and deductions that have been enacted over the years. Legislators have passed bills mandating a TEB on three separate occasions—only to have them vetoed by two different governors.
- Over the last dozen years, billions of dollars in personal and corporate income tax breaks have been handed out in an attempt to draw jobs to the state. These tax cuts required few, if any, accountability measures, meaning businesses got the benefit whether they created new jobs or not.

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- The Legislature did not act on this issue in 2015.
- However the tax department, under executive order, does now produce a limited TEB and more of the recently enacted tax cuts contain sunset provisions.

► **Enact economic development initiatives that create high-wage jobs, increase revenue, and invest in our workforce.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Our use of tax cuts to create jobs is not only ineffective but it drains the state coffers of the money needed to fund our schools, public safety, and other vital services.
- Investments to improve the educational levels and skills of our workforce will help attract good jobs to the state.

#### 2015 Legislative Action/Appropriations\*

- \$7.5 million was appropriated for JTIP (Job Training Incentive Program).

\*All appropriation amounts represent new state funding for fiscal year 2016 that was added to the spending level of the previous budget year for that department, program or service.

## Economic Well-Being

### Overarching Policy Solutions



#### ▶ Enact policies to end food insecurity.

##### *How This Can Help New Mexico*

- NM has the third highest rate of child hunger in the nation.<sup>2</sup> Hunger impacts a child's brain development, growth, and ability to perform well in school.
- 42% of NM children rely on SNAP (food stamp) benefits<sup>3</sup> and 66% of the state's K-12 students qualify for free or reduced-price meals at school.

##### *2015 Appropriations*

- \$400,000 in new funding was appropriated for "Double Up Food Bucks," so families using SNAP at farmer's markets can receive double value for their purchases of fresh, local produce.

#### ▶ Enact a rate cap of 36% APR (including fees) on all predatory lending products.

##### *How This Can Help New Mexico*

- Predatory lenders target the low-income and can quickly trap them in an endless cycle of increasing debt, with interest often topping 1,000%.

##### *2015 Legislative Action*

- Several bills were introduced that would have capped interest rates at 36%, but failed. One of those bills was substituted in the House with legislation approved and backed by the small loan industry, which would have made the matter worse. Fortunately, this bill also failed.

#### ▶ Enact policies to end wage theft.

##### *How This Can Help New Mexico*

- When parents are cheated out of their rightful wages they have less money to provide for their families.
- The victims of wage theft are usually the most vulnerable workers: immigrants and those who work for low wages.

##### *2015 Legislative Action*

- The Legislature did not act on this issue in 2015.

#### ▶ Support programs that take a two-generation approach to improving family economic security.

##### *How This Can Help New Mexico*

- A two-generation approach is one that addresses the critical needs of children (food, housing, health care, education) while helping parents improve their economic situation.
- While there are many state services that address the needs of the whole family, there is little coordination between them to ensure that all needs are being met.
- To adequately integrate services offered in numerous departments and avoid duplication, policy-makers need to work on a focused approach.
- The Children's Cabinet, which already exists in law, needs to be re-vitalized and supported.

##### *2015 Legislative Action*

- No legislation specific to the two-generation approach was considered.



## Indicator: Children in Poverty

### *Extent of the Problem*

- **29%** of New Mexico children live at or below the poverty level. Native-American and Hispanic children, however, suffer from disproportionately high poverty rates of 44% and 34%, respectively. The poverty level is an annual income of less than \$23,850 for a family of four. Families earning up to twice the poverty level are still considered low-income.

### *How This Can Hurt New Mexico*

- Poverty impacts children in many ways, and the younger the child, the more detrimental the impact. A major predictor of a child's success rate at school is their family's economic level.
- Children in poverty are more likely to suffer from adverse childhood experiences—food insecurity, homelessness, parents with untreated addictions and mental illnesses, etc. These kinds of trauma produce toxic levels of stress and inhibit brain development.
- Poverty can lead to food insecurity. 28% of NM children are food-insecure. This is the third highest rate in the nation.<sup>4</sup>
- Since children are dependent on their parents for their economic security, child poverty cannot be wiped out without addressing the economic security of working families.



## Economic Well-Being

### Policy Solutions: Children in Poverty

▶ **Raise the statewide minimum wage, index it to rise with inflation, and raise the tipped wage to 60% of the minimum.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Raising the minimum wage creates jobs and economic activity.
- Nearly 20% of New Mexico children have at least one parent who would benefit from raising the state minimum wage to \$8.50.<sup>5</sup>
- New Mexico’s minimum wage has lost 10% of its purchasing power since it was last raised in 2009.<sup>6</sup>

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- ▶  • Several bills were introduced (some better than others) that would have raised the minimum wage, but all failed.

▶ **Increase the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC), Low Income Comprehensive Tax Rebate (LICTR), and Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Refundable tax credits lift families out of poverty and help make New Mexico’s tax system more fair. In 2012, 300,000 New Mexico children benefitted from the WFTC.<sup>7</sup>
- Children become stressed when families lose electricity or gas service because they can’t pay their heating bills. This stress can impact everything from a child’s health to their ability to do homework.

#### 2015 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- ▶  • Two bills (SB-261 and HB-293) would have raised the value of the state’s WFTC from 10% of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to 15%. Both failed.

- ▶  • No new state funding for LICTR or LIHEAP was appropriated.

▶ **Support and promote the availability of resources and assistance for grandparents helping to raise their grandchildren, including access to financial resources, legal services, food and housing assistance, medical care, and transportation.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- More than 33,000 New Mexico children are living with a grandparent who is responsible for their well-being.<sup>8</sup>
- Because most of these children are not under the protection of the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD), they cannot receive the services that foster children receive.
- Grandparents often lack the legal status that would allow them to apply for the benefits that their grandchildren would be eligible for if they were in foster care.

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- ▶  • SJM-14 was passed in 2014, requesting a study on the issues faced by low-income grandparents. The resulting study listed available resources—which were few—but failed to make recommendations. HM-8 was introduced this year to correct that and was passed by the House. A Senate version, SM-104, died in committee.

▶ **Fund navigators to ensure that kinship foster care families have access to benefits for which they are eligible (including TANF, SNAP, Social Security, Medicaid, CHIP, child care and housing assistance, and foster care subsidies).**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- When the state must remove a child from their home, it’s preferable to place the child with a relative, if a suitable one is available, than to place them in foster care. Unlike seasoned foster parents, many kinship caregivers have never had to apply for the benefits that foster children can receive, and navigating the many systems in which the programs are housed is daunting.
- Navigators give these families the personal support and guidance they need.

#### 2015 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- ▶  • No legislation was passed or appropriations made for navigators for kinship foster care families.



## Economic Well-Being

### Indicator: Children Whose Parents Lack Secure Employment

#### Extent of the Problem

- **36%** of New Mexico children have parents who lack full-time, year-round employment. The rate is 52% for Native-American children.

#### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- Children whose parents lack full-time, year-round work are more likely to live in poverty. Parents lack secure employment for a number of reasons, but most often it is because they lack the education or work skills needed to get stable jobs in growing industries. Without education and skills, they may also get stuck in part-time or seasonal jobs.
- Parents who lack secure employment are also unlikely to receive benefits such as employer-sponsored health insurance and paid sick leave. This places additional stresses on parents and children.



### Policy Solutions: Children Whose Parents Lack Secure Employment

- ▶ **Protect the unemployment insurance (UI) trust fund and reinstate benefits for child dependents.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- UI benefits boost the local economy while helping tide victims of a downturn over until they can find work.
- Prior to the recession, New Mexico UI recipients received a small additional benefit for each dependent child. That child benefit was cut in 2011, even though the state was (and still is) lagging the nation in economic recovery.

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- One attempt to cut UI benefits (HB-482) was voted down in the House.
- No legislation to restore dependent benefits to their original levels was considered.

- ▶ **Restore eligibility for child care assistance to twice the poverty level.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- High-quality child care is more expensive than tuition at NM universities, and few low-income working families can afford such care without assistance.
- Because of budget cuts, eligibility for child care assistance is down to 150% of the poverty level.

#### 2014 Executive Action

- In order to reduce costs, CFYD implemented a new rule requiring single parents to register with the Child Support Enforcement Division if they could not prove they were receiving support from non-custodial parents. Advocates feared this would lead many parents who had been victims of domestic violence to either put themselves in danger or lose their assistance. That is apparently what happened, as CYFD reports that enrollment had dropped by as many as 8,000 children as a result.<sup>9</sup>

#### 2015 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- Despite having children on a waiting list, the state had failed to spend more than \$20 million in federal money for child care assistance in 2014. When we discovered the unspent funding and brought it to the Legislature's attention, CYFD used a fraction of it to serve about 1,000 kids on the waiting list. It was a small victory, though, as the agency will continue to wait-list new applicants who are at 150% to 200% of poverty.
- State funding for child care assistance was actually cut by \$1 million.
- SB-379, the Child Care Assistance Accountability Act that would have required CYFD to better align and report on the assistance program, was passed by the Legislature but pocket vetoed by the Governor.

- ▶ **Expand access to high school equivalency, adult basic education (ABE), job training, and career pathways programs.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- The more education a parent has, the more money they earn and the lower their rates of unemployment.
- Children's success rates in school are closely tied to their parents' educational levels. Increasing parental education has the added benefit of improving school outcomes for their children.
- NM's ABE system is fragmented, underfunded, and provides too few classes and isolated workforce-training

## Economic Well-Being



### Policy Solutions: Children Whose Parents Lack Secure Employment (continued)

opportunities. Career pathways programs like I-BEST (Integrated Basic Education Skills Training), which combines ABE and skills training, have gotten good results and should be expanded.

#### 2015 Legislative Action/Appropriations



- \$200,000 in new money was appropriated for adult basic education.



- A memorial (HM-14) was passed that requests the Higher Education and Public Education Departments, and Workforce Solutions to collaborate on the establishment of a high-quality career pathways program. However, memorials do not have the force of law and this one did not include funding for the work.



### Indicator: Children Living in Households with a High Housing Cost Burden

#### Extent of the Problem

- **33%** of New Mexico children live in households that spend 30% or more of their income on housing. The rate is 37% for Hispanic children.

#### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- When families spend 30% or more just on housing, they have less money to spend on other necessities like food, medication, and utilities.
- High housing costs can force families into substandard housing, which can have serious health hazards for children.



### Policy Solutions: Children in Households with a High Housing Cost Burden

▶ **Safeguard the Home Loan Protection Act from repeal or weakening.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- The Home Loan Protection Act helped protect many families from the predatory lending practices that con-

tributed to the national foreclosure crisis that began in 2007. Attempts have been made to repeal or weaken the law, and they must not be allowed to succeed.

#### 2015 Legislative Action



- No legislation that weakens the Act was passed.

▶ **Increase funding for individual development accounts (IDAs) for parents and children.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- IDAs are a public-private initiative that offer financial incentives for low-income New Mexicans to save money in order to purchase a home or pay for college.

#### 2015 Appropriations



- No new funding was appropriated for IDAs.

▶ **Increase funding for the state's Housing Trust Fund and increase federal HUD funding.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Children do better, and families are more stable and move less frequently, when they own their home.
- The state's Housing Trust Fund provides low-interest loans for organizations building housing for low- and moderate-income families and individuals.
- Among other services, HUD offers rental assistance for low-income families. Like all income supports, housing assistance supplements a family's budget, which frees up money for other necessities like groceries, gasoline, and utilities.

#### 2015 Appropriations



- A request for \$5 million in new money for the state Housing Trust Fund was rejected.



- Federal housing funds have remained relatively flat.



### Indicator: Teens Not in School and Not Working

#### Extent of the Problem

- **12%** of New Mexico teens ages 16 to 19 are neither enrolled in school nor working.

#### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- Teens who are not in school but do not become part of the workforce are at risk for poor outcomes as adults—even if they graduated.

## Economic Well-Being



### Policy Solutions: Teens Not in School and Not Working

▶ Enact initiatives to lower the cost of college such as: making lottery scholarships need-based; restoring the College Affordability Fund; lowering interest rates for student loans; and ending the predatory practices of private, for-profit colleges.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Despite our high poverty rate, New Mexico only awards 25% of its financial aid on the basis of student need, while the national average is 74%.<sup>10</sup>
- With lottery tickets sales having peaked, and both demand for the lottery scholarship and tuition costs increasing, the scholarship trust fund is in real danger of being depleted. Making the lottery scholarship need-based would preserve this financial aid for those who would otherwise be unable to attend college.
- Crushing student debt is becoming a national crisis and will impact future generations of children when graduates begin their families.
- For-profit colleges often push debt on their students but then don't deliver on job placement promises.

#### 2015 Legislative Action/Appropriations

-  • Attempts to make the lottery scholarship need-based failed.
-  • \$1 million in new funding was requested for the College Affordability Fund, but was denied.

## Permanent Policy Victory

▶ Waive tuition at New Mexico universities for youth who have aged out of foster care.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Youth who age out of foster care have few, if any, support systems. Waiving their tuition enables those that do not qualify for the lottery scholarship to attend college and it costs the state relatively little.

#### 2014 Legislative Action

-  • Legislation to do this was enacted in 2014, and the take-up rate among former foster youth has been higher than expected.

## Education



### Overarching Policy Solutions

▶ Increase spending on high-quality home visiting/parent coaching.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Home visiting services can reduce the incidence of child abuse, improve child and maternal health, and improve school performance.
- Although children from low-income families would benefit tremendously from these services, only a tiny fraction receive them.

#### 2015 Appropriations

-  • While no new state money was appropriated for home visiting, \$2.3 million in federal funding was reallocated for these programs. This should serve an estimated 900 new families.
-  • The state could draw down millions in federal funds through Medicaid for home visiting, but the administration has resisted.

▶ Increase funding for child care to incentivize and adequately compensate for quality.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- The state's child care assistance program was created as a work support for parents—not as an educational support for children. In order for child care to improve school outcomes, higher levels of quality are required.
- Providers who offer higher-quality care receive higher reimbursements from the state, but the increases are not enough to cover the costs of the quality improvements.

#### 2015 Appropriations

-  • State funding for child care assistance was actually cut by \$1 million.



## Education

### Overarching Policy Solutions (continued)

- ▶ Increase training, technical assistance, compensation, and retention incentives for pre-K and other early learning providers.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- We want high quality from our early childhood providers, but many earn very low wages and cannot afford additional training expenses. Technical assistance programs and T.E.A.C.H. scholarships provide the professional development needed for high-quality programs.

#### 2015 Legislative Action/Appropriations

-  • \$300,000 in new funding was appropriated for professional development.
-  • SB-379, which would have codified quality improvement initiatives in child care, was passed but pocket vetoed.

- ▶ Pass a constitutional amendment to support early care and education with a small percentage of the Land Grant Permanent Fund.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Sustainable funding for early childhood services could come from the state's \$14 billion permanent fund making these services available to many children not receiving them. New Mexicans, who support this initiative, deserve the chance to vote on this issue.

#### 2015 Legislative Action

-  • SJR-5, which would have sent the issue to the voters, failed.

- ▶ Increase funding for the Family Infant Toddler (FIT) program.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- FIT provides early intervention and positive child developmental services for families with infants or toddlers who have or are at risk for developmental delays.
- These services are essential for success in school and save money by reducing the need for special education.

#### 2015 Appropriations

-  • \$450,000 in new funding was appropriated for a rate increase to FIT providers.

- ▶ Sufficiently fund K-12 education, starting with restoring per-pupil, inflation-adjusted funding to pre-recession levels.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- During the recession, New Mexico made some of the deepest cuts in the nation in K-12 per-pupil spending.<sup>11</sup> Even recent increases have not brought us back up to pre-recession levels when adjusted for inflation. As a result, students are in over-crowded classrooms and there are fewer resources.
- Services that mitigate the impacts of poverty—such as breakfast in the schools and smaller class sizes—must be fully funded because they make a difference in learning outcomes.

#### 2015 Appropriations

-  • K-12 spending was increased overall by \$36.6 million. As this is an increase of less than 1%, and fixed costs such as utilities and insurance continue to go up, this actually represents a spending cut.
-  • Of the \$36.6 million increase, \$12.5 million was included for “at risk” students. However, since this funding flows through the state equalization guarantee (SEG) formula, districts have complete discretion over how to spend it.

- ▶ Ensure support for community schools that offer school-based health care, after-school and mentor services, English as a second language classes, etc.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Community schools can be more flexible in adjusting practices to meet the unique needs of their students.
- Community schools are welcoming places that encourage more parental interaction.
- Before- and after-school programming have a positive impact on student performance.

#### 2015 Legislative Action/Appropriations

-  • No legislation was considered and no new funding was appropriated for community schools.

- ▶ Raise compensation for teachers, principals, and other student support staff.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- New Mexico ranks 45<sup>th</sup> in the nation in teacher pay.<sup>12</sup> If we want quality professionals in our schools—including librarians, nurses, counselors, and others—we need to pay them well.



## Education

### Overarching Policy Solutions (continued)

#### 2015 Appropriations

- \$6.7 million in new money was appropriated for small salary increases for entry-level K-12 teachers.
- Unfortunately, current teachers went another year without a cost-of-living increase.
- \$1.5 million in new money was appropriated for stipends to teachers in hard-to-staff areas.

▶ **Revisit zero-tolerance policies and penalties in order to keep more students in school.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Many schools across the nation are revisiting their zero-tolerance policies because they tend to criminalize students who may simply have made an error in judgement.
- While suspensions and expulsions have decreased in New Mexico, rates remain disproportionately high among Native-American and African-American students, in conflict with PED anti-discrimination rules.

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- No legislation was passed that would have addressed this issue.

▶ **Expand programs that increase school attendance.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Children aren't learning when they're not in school, but absenteeism and truancy are problems in New Mexico, as 14% of students are habitually truant.<sup>13</sup>
- Non-attendance increases the likelihood of poor achievement and students dropping out.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- \$529,000 in new funding was appropriated to combat truancy in schools with the highest rates.

▶ **Reduce class sizes for children in high-poverty areas.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Studies show that class size matters. Children in high-poverty areas are more likely to start school behind and,

therefore, will need more individual attention.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- No new funding was appropriated to reduce class sizes in high-poverty areas.



### Indicator: Children Not Attending Preschool

#### Extent of the Problem

- **62%** of New Mexico children ages 3 and 4 are not attending a preschool program such as pre-kindergarten or Head Start.

#### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- More than 80% of brain development occurs within the first five years of life, and is dependent upon nurturing and stimulating experiences. High-quality preschools foster robust cognitive, social, and behavioral skills development, and help prepare children for success at school.
- Numerous studies have shown that high-quality early childhood care and education services help children succeed in school and in life. These programs lower the need for spending on special education and remediation, increase high school graduation rates, lower the rates for juvenile crime and teen pregnancy, and increase a child's earning potential.



### Policy Solutions: Children Not Attending Preschool

▶ **Increase spending on high-quality pre-K so it is available to all 4-year-olds.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- New Mexico's state-funded pre-K has been studied and found to be effective at improving student success in school.<sup>14</sup> Funding needs to be expanded and other infrastructure put in place so pre-K is available to all 4-year-olds.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- \$11.5 million in new money was appropriated for NM Pre-K. This includes \$3.3 million for a pilot program to extend NM Pre-K to 3-year-olds. The new funding should serve an estimated 4,000 children.



## Education

### Policy Solutions: Children Not Attending Preschool (continued)

► Pass President Obama’s Preschool for All proposal.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- America is one of the few wealthy nations to lack a comprehensive plan for early learning. We don’t even have national safety standards for child care. The President’s proposal would be a big step forward for our youngest children and would give states the financial support they need to expand their most effective programs.

#### 2015 Congressional Action

- Congress still has not acted on this issue.



### Indicator: 4<sup>th</sup> Graders Not Proficient in Reading

#### Extent of the Problem

- **79%** of New Mexico 4<sup>th</sup> graders are not proficient in reading. The rates are a staggering 93% for Native-American 4<sup>th</sup> graders and 83% for Hispanic 4<sup>th</sup> graders.

#### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- Children who are not reading at grade level by the 4<sup>th</sup> grade are far more likely to drop out. Up through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, children are learning to read. In 4<sup>th</sup> grade and beyond, children are *reading in order to learn* new subjects—so children not reading at grade level will have trouble mastering other subjects.



### Policy Solutions: 4<sup>th</sup> Graders Not Proficient in Reading

► Increase learning opportunities by expanding the school day and year, and expand K-3 Plus to 8<sup>th</sup> grade for low-income students.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- K-3 Plus increases the number of days in the school year for low-income students in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Students who are behind need additional quality instructional time.

- The need for additional days of instruction for low-performing and low-income students does not end at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and neither should this valuable program.
- Children in low-income families are more likely to fall behind over the summer break than children from middle- and upper-income families because they lack access to enriching summer activities.

#### 2015 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- \$2.5 million in new funding was appropriated for K-3 Plus with \$1.5 million of the total going to expand the program to more schools. This will serve an estimated 1,000 more children.
- Funding for after-school and summer enrichment programs was essentially flat.
- No legislation to expand K-3 Plus to 8<sup>th</sup> grade was considered.

► Increase the availability of reading coaches and support evidence-based reading initiatives.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Students with poor reading skills (which often includes children from low-income families) need specialized attention to improve their literacy skills. The earlier the better.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- \$540,000 in new funding was appropriated for the early reading initiative.



### Indicator: 8<sup>th</sup> Graders Not Proficient in Math

#### Extent of the Problem

- **77%** of New Mexico 8<sup>th</sup> graders are not proficient in math. The rates are 89% for Native-American 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 88% for Blacks, and 83% for Hispanics.

#### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- Middle-school students who are behind in math are not prepared for the much higher level of mathematics required in high school and college.
- Math skills have become more and more important in today’s high-tech work environment.



## Education

### Policy Solutions: 8<sup>th</sup> Graders Not Proficient in Math

- ▶ Expand after-school, mentorship, and tutoring programs.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Children from low-income families are less likely to have highly educated parents to provide homework assistance, so mentors and tutors are needed.
- After-school programs can lead to academic and behavioral gains while providing safe learning environments.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- ▶ Funding for after-school and summer enrichment programs was essentially flat.
- Also see the \$12.5 million appropriation under ‘Sufficiently fund K-12 education’ on page 12.

- ▶ Provide math coaches and professional development for math teachers.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Teachers who are certified in math can provide focused instruction and better prepare students for high school.
- Teachers require additional on-the-job training to improve their skills and boost student outcomes.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- See the \$12.5 million appropriation under ‘Sufficiently fund K-12 education’ on page 12.



### Indicator: High School Students Not Graduating on Time

#### Extent of the Problem

- **26%** of New Mexico high school students do not graduate on time. Rates are highest among Blacks (32%) and Native Americans (29%).

#### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- Students who do not graduate from high school on time are less likely to continue on to college, are less employable, and more likely to earn low incomes.



### Policy Solutions: High School Students Not Graduating on Time

- ▶ Provide more school counselors.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Teenagers require counseling support, but counseling loads are so high that students are not given the help they need.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- See the \$12.5 million appropriation under ‘Sufficiently fund K-12 education’ on page 12.

- ▶ Identify students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade who require additional learning time and provide free summer school, after-school, and online learning opportunities.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Students who come to high school behind require additional time and support to meet learning standards.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- ▶ Funding for after-school and summer enrichment programs was essentially flat.

- ▶ Provide relevant learning opportunities through service learning and dual credit parity to better prepare students for career or college.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Students who are not likely to attend college still need work skills. Service learning programs help reduce teen pregnancy, and provide students with civic engagement and work-related experience.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- ▶ The state’s career readiness program received no new funding over the previous year. Given cost increases, this flat funding represents a cut.
- Also see the \$12.5 million appropriation under ‘Sufficiently fund K-12 education’ on page 12.



## Education

### Policy Solutions: High School Students Not Graduating on Time (continued)

- ▶ Provide professional development for teachers on the use of technology.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Special training is needed to engage students who utilize technology as a means of learning.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- See the \$12.5 million appropriation under ‘Sufficiently fund K-12 education’ on page 12.

- ▶ Support dropout recovery programs.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Online learning and special summer schools or after-hours programs with flexible learning environments help students who have dropped out return to school and graduate.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- Dropout prevention programs received no new funding over the previous year. Given cost increases, this flat funding represents a cut.

- Also see the \$12.5 million appropriation under ‘Sufficiently fund K-12 education’ on page 12.

- ▶ Provide support for vulnerable students (those experiencing homelessness, who are incarcerated, need special education, are English language learners, etc.) who are at risk for dropping out.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Students who are at risk for dropping out need extra support through specialized curriculum and programs and/or additional time so they can graduate.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- \$529,000 in new funding was appropriated for interventions and support for students, struggling schools and parents.

- ▶ Increase funding for evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- High school students who become pregnant are at increased risk for dropping out.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- GRAD, the state’s teen pregnancy program received no new funding over the previous year. Given inflation, this flat funding represents a cut.



## Health

### Overarching Policy Solutions

- ▶ Support early childhood services committees within county and tribal health councils in order to integrate health care with social, emotional/behavioral, and cognitive development for young children.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Local communities are the experts on the types of programs and service models required to address their unique needs.
- Health councils help establish community and state networks for planning, collaboration, needs assessments, training, data collection, resource sharing, implementation of promising and evidence-based practices, and public health campaigns.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- \$200,000 in new funding was appropriated for county and tribal health councils.

- ▶ Require and fund child screening for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Adverse childhood experiences—such as child abuse and homelessness—can impair healthy brain development and have life-long negative consequences.
- The earlier such experiences can be treated, the better the child’s outcomes.

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- Legislation to require screenings for ACEs failed.



## Health

### Overarching Policy Solutions (continued)

► Expand and adequately fund school-based health centers (SBHCs).

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- SBHCs can offer a wide range of services that students without a medical home might not otherwise receive.
- SBHCs save students from missing classes and their parents from leaving work in order to get to an off-campus doctor's office.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- \$50,000 in new funding was appropriated for school-based health services.

► Pass and fund legislation to license dental therapists to provide limited dental care under the supervision of a dentist, especially in rural, tribal, and other under-served communities.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- New Mexico needs more dentists. More than 40 percent of New Mexicans live in federally designated Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas.<sup>15</sup>
- Dental therapists provide quality, cost-effective dental services; training these professionals in the state also leads to more economic and career opportunities for our citizens.

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- Legislation to license dental therapists failed.



### Indicator: Low Birth-Weight Babies

#### Extent of the Problem

- **8.8%** of New Mexico babies are born weighing less than 5.5 pounds. Rates are highest among Blacks (13%) and Asians and Pacific Islanders (12.8%).

#### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- Low birth-weight babies are at greater risk for developmental delays and chronic health problems, which can impact their ability to succeed in school.
- Teens and mothers who get late-term or no prenatal care are at the highest risk.



### Policy Solutions: Low Birth-Weight Babies

► Expand outreach to pregnant women to enroll them in Medicaid early in their pregnancies.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- The earlier in her pregnancy a woman can begin to receive prenatal care, the better the outcomes for her and her baby. This not only improves child outcomes, it also saves the state money in the long term.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- No new funding was appropriated for outreach to enroll pregnant women in Medicaid.

► Expand and fully fund health and nutrition programs for pregnant teens.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Teens are the demographic most likely to have low birth-weight babies as they are more likely to be low income, have less access to resources and supports like prenatal care, and have less education, so it makes sense to target this group for prevention programs.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- No new funding was appropriated to expand these programs.

► Fund home visiting under a Medicaid waiver to draw down federal funding.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- For every dollar New Mexico spends on health care through Medicaid, the federal government chips in almost three more. If the state offered evidence-based home visiting programs under a Medicaid waiver, many more children and families could be served.
- Because home visiting starts prenatally, it leads to healthier births.

#### 2015 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- In years past, funding has been appropriated for this purpose, but vetoed. This year, bills were introduced in both chambers to mandate this funding strategy, but both failed.



## Health

### Indicator: Children without Health Insurance

#### Extent of the Problem

- 8% of New Mexico children lack health insurance. Rates of uninsurance for Native-American children are more than double that at 17%.

#### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- Children need regular well-baby and well-child checkups in order for developmental delays to be diagnosed and treated. Without treatment, developmental problems can greatly impact a child’s ability to succeed at school.
- Children do better at school when they are healthy and any vision or hearing issues have been addressed.
- Children need immunizations to protect them from childhood diseases.

- ▶ Simplify the enrollment and recertification process for Medicaid and enact express-lane enrollment.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Enrolling children in Medicaid is one hurdle, but keeping them enrolled is quite another. Since parents must recertify their child’s eligibility for Medicaid every year, that process needs to be less onerous.
- Express-lane eligibility would allow the state to more quickly enroll children using eligibility information from other services such as Head Start and SNAP.

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- 🗨️ • No legislation to address these issues was passed.
- 👍 • Though it was not on this agenda, it’s worth mentioning that SB-42 passed and was signed. It stops the state’s practice of automatically cancelling a person’s Medicaid coverage upon entering prison. This is a huge win for a population that has high mental health and substance abuse recovery needs. It’s a big win for their families and children too.



### Policy Solutions: Children without Health Insurance

- ▶ Restore outreach and enrollment assistance for Medicaid for kids.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Medicaid is the single largest provider of health coverage for children in New Mexico.
- Over the last several years, the state has not funded outreach to parents whose children are eligible but not enrolled. It’s estimated that thousands of children are eligible for Medicaid coverage but are not enrolled.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- 🗨️ • No new state funding was appropriated for outreach.

#### Previous Executive Action

- 👍 • There was a big jump in enrollment numbers beginning in 2014. Some 30,000 children were enrolled in 18 months, mostly due to the “welcome mat” effect—meaning they were enrolled when their parents received Medicaid coverage under Obamacare. That jump followed several years of flat or declining enrollment.

### Permanent Policy Victory

- ▶ Expand Medicaid to age 26 for youth who have aged out of foster care no matter where they live.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- The Affordable Care Act ensures that youth who have aged out of foster care can stay on Medicaid until they are 26. Until now, though, NM has covered those youth who aged out of care here, but not those from other states.
- These young people typically have high health care needs and deserve our full support during these transitional years into adulthood.

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- 👍 • Legislation to cover former foster youth up to age 26 no matter where they aged out of foster care was enacted.

- ▶ Integrate the health insurance marketplace with Medicaid so that there is “no wrong door” for enrollment.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Parents are more likely to take their child to the doctor when they have insurance themselves. Fortunately, NM expanded Medicaid to low-income adults under the Af-



## Health

### Policy Solutions: Children without Health Insurance (continued)

- Affordable Care Act.
- The state’s health insurance exchange—where most individuals will go for insurance—should assist those who qualify for Medicaid with that application process.

#### 2015 Executive Action

- New Mexico is still not following the federal requirement for ‘no wrong door’ policies. Fortunately, enrollment of adults in Medicaid has far exceeded expectations anyway.



### Indicator: Child and Teen Death Rate

#### Extent of the Problem

- New Mexico’s child and teen death rate is **36 deaths per 100,000** children aged 1 to 19. The rate is a distressingly high 58 per 100,000 Native-American children and teens.

#### How This Hurts New Mexico

- The vast majority of child and youth deaths are preventable, as most are caused by accidents, homicide—including child abuse—or suicide.
- As motor vehicle safety standards have increased—along with access to guns—it’s projected that deaths by guns will surpass deaths by automobile accidents among children and youth in just a few years.<sup>16</sup>
- New Mexico’s suicide rate is one-and-a-half to two times higher than the national average. The suicide rate for Native American youth is three times the national average.<sup>17</sup>



### Policy Solutions: Child and Teen Death Rate

- ▶ Enact gun safety laws to limit unauthorized child access to guns.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- The use of child safety seats has led to a big decrease in child deaths due to car accidents. Sadly, similar commonsense safety measures for guns—such as child safety locks—have been blocked by gun manufacturers.

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- Two bills were introduced that would have helped keep children safe: SB-546 would have required gun dealers to post a notice about safety locks; HB-544 would have created criminal penalties for negligent storage of a firearm when its use by a minor results in injury or death. Neither bill received even one committee hearing.

- ▶ Adequately fund evidence-based child abuse prevention programs and strengthen CYFD’s role in child abuse prevention.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- The best way to stop the often-generational cycle of child abuse is to prevent it from happening in the first place. Prevention is also much less costly on both human and financial terms.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- Home visiting programs are shown to reduce the incidence of child abuse. Legislative action on this policy solution can be found in the Education domain on page 11.
- The lack of affordable child care is a risk factor for child abuse. State funding for child care assistance was actually *cut* by \$1 million.

- ▶ Increase funding for child protective services to expand staff levels and reduce case loads.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- New Mexico’s child protective service workers have large case loads. When this happens, not all children get the protection they need, which can result in serious injury or death.
- Abuse is an adverse childhood experience (ACE) that impacts a child’s overall (intellectual, physical, and emotional) development, and can lead to mental illness and premature death.

#### 2015 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- Due to public outcry over a high-profile death and revelations that CYFD had not spent all of the funding appropriated for it in 2014, \$8 million in new funding was appropriated to hire more child protective caseworkers and increase support services.
- The Children, Youth and Families Worker Loan Repayment Act (HB-341) repays student loans for some social workers employed at CYFD. This should help with recruitment and retention. It was passed and signed.



## Health

### Policy Solutions: Child and Teen Death Rate (continued)

▶ Create a citizen oversight or review board for all CYFD child abuse cases that result in death.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- When a child dies as a result of abuse or neglect, independent oversight is needed to determine how such tragedies can be prevented. This means investigating all state and local agencies involved and protocols followed.

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- ▶  No legislation to create a citizen review process for deaths from child abuse of children in the CYFD system was passed.

▶ Increase funding for suicide prevention programs.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- More and more youth are ending their lives when they are unable to cope. They need strategies to help them handle difficult situations and give them a sense of hope that life is worth living.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- ▶  No new funding was appropriated for suicide prevention programs.



### Indicator: Teens Who Abuse Alcohol or Drugs

#### Extent of the Problem

- **9%** of New Mexico teens ages 12 to 17 had abused or were dependent on alcohol or drugs during the past year.

#### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- Teens who abuse alcohol or drugs are much more likely to become involved with the criminal justice system, engage in other high-risk activities, and do poorly in school and drop out.
- Drug and alcohol use can lead to physical and mental health problems, and is often also a factor in youth suicide.



### Policy Solutions: Teens Who Abuse Alcohol or Drugs

▶ Expand mental health programs for children, youth and families.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Many people who turn to illicit drug use or alcohol abuse are attempting to self-medicate their untreated mental illness. Increased access to mental health treatment has numerous advantages.

#### 2015 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- ▶  No new funding was appropriated to expand mental health programs for children, youth and families.
- ▶  Legislation was passed to reconvene the J. Paul Taylor Task Force, which focuses on coordinating behavioral health services for children.

▶ Allow treatment instead of incarceration for drug and alcohol offenses.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Incarceration without treatment leads to high rates of recidivism—particularly when the illegal behavior stems from drug or alcohol abuse.

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- ▶  Legislation to allow treatment instead of incarceration failed again this year.



## Family and Community

### Indicator: Children in Single-Parent Families

#### Extent of the Problem

- **44%** of New Mexico children live with an unmarried parent. Rates are highest among Native-American children, 67% of whom live in single-parent families.

#### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- Children living in single-parent families are more likely to live in poverty—especially those living with single mothers, who still earn less than men.
- Children in families headed by a single mother are more



## Family and Community

### Indicator: Children in Single-Parent Families (continued)

likely to drop out of school, become teen parents, and experience divorce as an adult than children in two-parent families.



### Policy Solutions: Children in Single-Parent Families

- ▶ Expand funding for mentorship services.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Programs that decrease teen births would help reduce the rate of single-parent families. Programs can foster self confidence, give young women direction for their future, and educate them about the benefits to the child of being raised in a two-parent family.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- No new funding was appropriated to expand mentorship programs.

- ▶ Maintain current Medicaid eligibility for family planning services.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Unintended pregnancies put additional emotional and financial stress on families.
- Currently, family planning services are covered under New Mexico's Medicaid plan. However, there have been attempts to defund them.

#### 2015 Legislative Action

- No attempts were made to change eligibility levels for or defund Medicaid coverage for family planning.

- ▶ Restore eligibility for child care assistance to twice the poverty level so single parents can work.

- Information on this policy solution can be found in the Economic Well-Being domain on page 9.



### Indicator: Children in Families where Household Head Lacks High School Diploma

#### Extent of the Problem

- **17%** of NM children live in families where the head of household lacks a high school diploma. The rate is highest for Hispanic children at 24%.

#### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- A child's success in school is closely tied to parental levels of education. Parents without a high school education are less likely to be able to assist their children with homework and may be less inclined to impress upon them the value of education.
- Parents without a high school diploma tend to end up in low-wage jobs that do not offer benefits such as health insurance. They also have higher rates of unemployment so their families are less economically secure than families where the household head has more education.



### Policy Solutions: Children in Families where Household Head Lacks High School Diploma

- ▶ Provide additional need-based financial assistance for low-income and low-skilled adults seeking access to post-secondary education, job training, and career pathway programs.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- NM distributes just 25% of its college financial aid on the basis of student need. This is much lower than the national average of 74%.
- Need-based financial aid is vital for returning students because they do not qualify for the lottery scholarship and may have a family to support while they advance their education.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- No new funding was appropriated for these purposes.

- ▶ Expand access to high school equivalency, adult basic education (ABE), job training, and the career pathways pilot program I-BEST.

- Information on this policy solution can be found in the Economic Well-Being domain on pages 9 and 10.



## Family and Community

### Indicator: Children Living in High-Poverty Areas

#### Extent of the Problem

- **22%** of New Mexico children live in areas where the overall poverty rate is 30% or higher. Rates are more than double that for Native-American children, 54% of whom live in high-poverty areas.

#### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- High-poverty areas are plagued by a whole host of social problems—crime, street violence, drug use, substandard housing, etc.—that put children at risk.
- Residents in high-poverty areas are also more likely to feel disenfranchised and powerless, and are, therefore, less likely to demand public services—like parks and recreational facilities—that residents in higher-income neighborhoods take for granted.



### Policy Solutions: Children Living in High-Poverty Areas

- ▶ **Create or expand incentives for developers to build mixed-income housing developments.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Mixed-income neighborhoods are more stable than low-income areas and residents tend to be more invested in keeping their neighborhood infrastructure from falling into disrepair.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- No new funding was appropriated for incentives to build mixed-income housing developments.

- ▶ **Increase funding for individual development accounts (IDAs) for parents and children.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- IDAs are a public-private initiative that offer financial incentives for low-income New Mexicans to save money in order to purchase a home or pay for college.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- No new funding was appropriated for IDAs.

- ▶ **Reduce class sizes for children in high-poverty areas.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Studies show that class size matters. Children in high-poverty areas are more likely to start school behind and, therefore, will need more individual attention.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- No new funding was appropriated to reduce class sizes in high-poverty areas.



### Indicator: Teen Birth Rate

#### Extent of the Problem

- New Mexico's teen birth rate is **47 births per 1,000** female teens ages 15 to 19. Rates are 56 per 1,000 for both Hispanic and Native-American teens.

#### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- Few teens are equipped for the emotional and financial rigors of raising a child.
- The children of teen parents are more likely to become teen parents themselves.
- Young women in poverty who see no future for themselves are less likely to delay childbearing than young women who believe they can attend college and attain a satisfying career.



### Policy Solutions: Teen Birth Rate

- ▶ **Provide relevant learning opportunities through service learning.**

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Service learning programs help reduce teen pregnancy, and provide students with civic engagement and work-related experience.

#### 2015 Appropriations

- The state's career readiness program received no new funding over the previous year. Given cost increases, this flat funding represents a cut.
- Also see the \$12.5 million appropriation under 'Sufficiently fund K-12 education' on page 12.

► Increase funding for evidence-based programs (such as home visiting) that prevent or delay second births by teen mothers.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Parenting a child is hard work—and it's made more difficult if the parent is also still a child. Home visiting offers positive parenting role models and connects parents to important resources. In turn, these programs help children succeed in school, which lowers the chances that they will become teen parents themselves.

#### 2015 Appropriations



- Legislative action on home visiting can be found in the Education domain on page 11.



- No new funding was appropriated for any other programs that prevent or delay second births by teen mothers.

► Expand school-based health centers (SBHCs).

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- SBHCs can supply teens with information about sex and reproduction they might not feel comfortable asking about in other settings.

#### 2015 Appropriations



- \$50,000 in new funding was appropriated for school-based health services.

► Increase funding for evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Young women at risk for teenage pregnancy can benefit from programs that foster self confidence, give them direction for their future, and educate them about the benefits to the child of being raised in a two-parent family.

#### 2015 Appropriations



- GRAD, the state's teen pregnancy program received no new funding over the previous year. Given inflation, this flat funding represents a cut.

► Expand evidence-based and age-appropriate sex education; defund abstinence-only programs.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Whether teens are sexually active or not, they need basic information about sex and procreation.
- Abstinence-only programs are ineffective at reducing teen birth rates.

#### 2015 Appropriations



- No new funding was appropriated for evidence-based sex education.

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## Endnotes

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# Take Action!

## How You Can Help Make This Campaign a Reality

If you want to help make New Mexico a better place for children and families, there are two simple but impactful things you can do:

### 1. Make a **donation** to NM Voices

Our supporters have helped us achieve many **policy wins**. Here are a few:

-  Working with allies, we helped make the case for funding a program that will help low-income New Mexico families purchase more fresh fruits and vegetables (see page 7 for details).
-  While analyzing this year's budget recommendations, our researchers noticed that the state had more than \$20 million in federal funding for child care assistance that it was failing to spend—despite having a waiting list for services (see page 9 for details).
-  Working with many of our partners and allies, we changed the public conversation around Medicaid from talk that it was “unsustainable” to the understanding that it is an economic engine. This has led to health care coverage for tens of thousands of New Mexico children and their families (see pages 18 and 19 for details).

As a donor you are helping sustain our work on behalf of New Mexico's children. Your support helps us:

- Research and analyze public policies that can both help and hurt children and their families.
- Influence the public dialog about child well-being and the need for greater investments.
- Educate lawmakers and voters about these policies and how they would impact our state.

In fact, one of our most powerful tools—working directly with legislators on specific policies—can **only** be paid for with donations from individuals like you.

Make a **donation** on our website ([www.nmvoices.org](http://www.nmvoices.org)).

### 2. Become a **citizen co-sponsor** of *NM KIDS are COUNTing on Us*

As a citizen co-sponsor you are pledging that:

- You believe New Mexico can—and should—do better by its children.
- You support the policies and principles laid out in this campaign as a framework for improving child outcomes.
- You will contact your state and national elected officials when key legislation is being considered that will impact child and family well-being. We'll make it easy for you with our email Action Alerts. Each Action Alert will contain background information on the legislation, contact information for your elected officials, and even a script for what you might say or write.

Sign up to be a **citizen co-sponsor** on our website ([www.nmvoices.org](http://www.nmvoices.org)).



Please help us make New Mexico's kids the state's top priority!

**Thank you!**



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