



# A Policy Agenda for a Better New Mexico

September 2013



# New Mexico Voices for Children

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*While the national KIDS COUNT Data Book serves as the framework for this policy agenda, 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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September 2013

Dear Friends and Fellow Advocates,

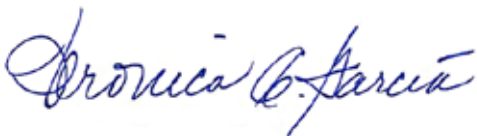
June 24<sup>th</sup> was a dark day for New Mexico. It was the day the Annie E. Casey Foundation released their 2013 national KIDS COUNT Data Book, which ranked New Mexico 50<sup>th</sup> in the nation for child well-being. As the KIDS COUNT grantee in the Land of Enchantment, New Mexico Voices for Children felt the need to address child well-being in a comprehensive way. This document—NM KIDS are COUNTing on Us: A Policy Agenda for a Better New Mexico—is also a call to action.

The KIDS COUNT Data Book measures child well-being by breaking it into four domains: economic well-being; education; health; and family and community. Each domain includes four indicators, for a total of 16. If we want New Mexico's national ranking to improve, we must address all 16 indicators. This policy agenda addresses every indicator and provides a framework from which a comprehensive set of solutions can be achieved. This set of policy solutions is not exhaustive. Rather, this is a starting point. We welcome your recommendations to this policy agenda, and your fresh and innovative approaches to our child well-being problem.

These measures are also inter-related and inter-dependent in terms of their effect on the well-being of children. We believe that, in order to build New Mexico's economy, decrease our poverty rates, and attract business to our state, we need a healthy and educated workforce. Greater financial investment by the state will be required to adequately fund the programs that can make that possible.

This agenda was built with input from more than forty of our allies and partner organizations, with whom we will undoubtedly work to bring about these solutions. We hope it will spark dialogue and action. We intend to reach out to legislators, the office of the Governor, state agencies, local officials, business and civic leaders, and community members. This will need to be an ongoing campaign and we must track improvement on each indicator over time. We hope you will join us in this call for action, and we urge you to make the children of New Mexico a priority. NM KIDS are COUNTing on Us!

Best regards,



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

The **NM KIDS are COUNTing on Us**<sup>®</sup> Policy Agenda is based on the four domains and 16 indicators used in the KIDS COUNT Data Book. The four domains are:



**Economic Well-Being**



**Health**



**Education**



**Family and Community**



## KIDS COUNT Domain: Economic Well-Being

### Indicator: Children in Poverty

**Extent of problem:** 31% of New Mexico children (157,000 children) live at the poverty level. That’s an annual income of less than \$23,550 for a family of four. Families earning up to twice the poverty level are considered low-income.

#### How this is bad for children

- Poverty impacts children in many ways, and the younger the child, the more detrimental the impact. The single best 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. 31% of NM children are food-insecure. This is the highest rate in the nation.<sup>1</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.



More than half of New Mexico children live in families that struggle to provide the basics.



= children at or below poverty level (31%)



= low-income children (25%)



= children above low-income (43%)

### Policy Solutions

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

#### How this helps children

- Nearly 20% of New Mexico children have at least one parent who would benefit from raising the state minimum wage to \$8.50.<sup>2</sup>
- While New Mexico has a higher minimum wage than the federal minimum, it has lost 10% of its purchasing power since it was last raised in 2009.<sup>3</sup>

**Increase in the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) and the Low Income Comprehensive Tax Rebate (LICTR), and enact a more progressive income tax so the rich pay their fair share.**

#### How this helps children

- Refundable tax credits lift families out of poverty and help make New Mexico’s tax system more fair. In 2010, 26% of New Mexico tax returns claimed the WFTC.<sup>4</sup>
- Even so, 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—even when they receive the WFTC—while someone with an income over \$323,000 pays less than 5% in those same taxes.<sup>5</sup>

**Protect funding for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; aka food stamps).**

#### How this helps children

- 42% of NM children rely on SNAP benefits.<sup>6</sup> Hunger impacts a child’s brain development, healthy growth, and ability to perform well in school.
- Like all income supports, SNAP benefits supplement a family’s budget, which may free up money for other necessities like diapers, gasoline, and utilities.

**Increase funding for LIHEAP (Low Income Energy Assistance Program).**

#### How this helps children

- Children become stressed when families lose electricity or gas service because they can’t pay their bills. This stress can impact everything from a child’s health to their ability to do homework.

**Enact tougher restrictions on predatory lenders: payday, car title, rent-to-own, and tax refund lenders.**

#### How this helps children

- Predatory lenders target the low-income and can quickly trap them in an endless cycle of increasing debt.



## KIDS COUNT Domain: Economic Well-Being

### Indicator: Children Whose Parents Lack Secure Employment

**Extent of problem:** 37% of New Mexico children (192,000) have parents who lack full-time, year-round employment.

#### **How this is bad for children**

- Children whose parents lack full-time, year-round work are more likely to live in poverty than children whose parents have secure employment. 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.
- Parents must have safe, reliable child care in order to work and look for work. High-quality child care costs more than tuition at New Mexico's universities, so too many parents must settle for low-quality care where their children are less likely to get the preparation they need for success in school.

### Policy Solutions

#### **Protect unemployment insurance (UI) and reinstate benefits for child dependents.**

##### **How this helps children**

- UI benefits help tide victims of a downturn over until they can find work. These payments also boost the local economy.
- 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 New Mexico was lagging the nation in recovery.

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

##### **How this helps children**

- Fewer families these days have the luxury of a stay-at-home parent. But high-quality child care is more expensive than tuition at New Mexico's universities, and few working families can afford such care without assistance
- Because of budget cuts, eligibility for child care assistance is down to 125% of the poverty level. As a result, some 5,000 children are on the waiting list.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Enact real economic development initiatives; require accountability measures for tax breaks that are intended to create jobs.**

##### **How this helps children**

- Over the last dozen years, billions of dollars have been handed out—in the form of tax breaks—in an attempt to draw jobs to the state. Not only have these tax cuts failed to create jobs, they required few, if any, accountability measures. Without benchmarks or accountability measures, these tax cuts are simply a gift to business interests at the expense of working families because they reduce the amount of revenue that the state has to invest in our children.
- Our children's well-being is dependent on their parent's well-being, which is dependent on the state's economic situation. New Mexico has an over-abundance of low-paying jobs. Greater investments in worker training and adult education would help lure more high-paying jobs here.



## KIDS COUNT Domain: Economic Well-Being

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

**Extent of problem:** 36% of New Mexico children live in households that spend 30% or more of their income on housing.

#### **How this is bad for children**

- 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 pose serious health hazards to children.

### Policy Solutions

#### **Save the Home Loan Protection Act from repeal or weakening.**

##### **How this helps children**

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

#### **Increase federal HUD funding.**

##### **How this helps children**

- Like all income supports, housing assistance supplements a family's budget, which may free up money for other necessities like diapers, gasoline, and utilities.

#### **Increase funding for the Housing Trust Fund.**

##### **How this helps children**

- The state's Housing Trust Fund provides low-interest loans for organizations building housing for low- and moderate-income families and individuals.
- Children do better, and families are more stable and move less frequently when they own their home.

#### **Increase funding for IDAs (Individual Development Accounts) for parents and children.**

##### **How this helps children**

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

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

**Extent of problem:** 11% of New Mexico teens (13,000) are neither in school nor working.

#### **How this is bad for children**

- 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.

### Policy Solutions

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

##### **How this helps children**

- Unfortunately, New Mexico enacted the deepest cuts in the nation to higher education on a per-student basis during the recession. This led to significant tuition increases at the state's colleges and universities—making school out-of-reach for many young New Mexicans, as well as for parents who wish to better themselves. Making the lottery scholarship need-based would preserve this financial aid for those who would otherwise be un-

able 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.

#### **Waive tuition for foster children at New Mexico universities.**

##### **How this helps children**

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



## KIDS COUNT Domain: Education

### Indicator: Children Not Attending Preschool

**Extent of problem:** 62% of New Mexico children (35,000), ages 3 and 4, are not attending preschool.

#### **How this is bad for children**

- Too many New Mexico children are missing out on the advantages of high-quality preschool programs. More than 80% of brain development occurs within the first five years of life, and is dependent upon nurturing and stimulating experiences. High-quality preschool programs foster robust brain 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. In fact, the returns on investments in young children are high because they lower the need for spending on special education and remediation.
- These programs also increase high school graduation rates, lower the rates for juvenile crime and teen pregnancy, and increase a child's earning potential.

More than half of New Mexico's 3- and 4-year-olds are not enrolled in a program that will prepare them for school.



= children not attending preschool (62%)

### Policy Solutions

#### **Increase general fund spending on early childhood programs: home visiting, child care assistance, pre-K, and training and technical assistance for early learning providers.**

##### **How this helps children**

- Parent coaching programs such as home visiting reduce the incidence of child abuse, increase the interval between subsequent children, and improve school performance.
- New Mexico's Pre-K program has been studied<sup>8</sup> and found to be effective at improving student success in school. Funding needs to be expanded and other infrastructure put in place so the program is available to all 4-year-olds.
- Although children from low-income families would benefit tremendously from these programs, only a tiny fraction can receive them.

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

##### **How this helps children**

- State child care assistance helps children receive higher quality care than their parents would otherwise be able to afford. When it comes to early childhood programs, quality is essential to a child's success.

- Unfortunately, some 5,000 children are on a waiting list for assistance because eligibility was cut to 125% of the poverty level.

#### **Pass a constitutional amendment to support early learning programs with a small percentage of the income generated from the Land Grant Permanent Fund.**

##### **How this helps children**

- Sustainable funding for early childhood programs could come from the state's more than \$11 billion Land Grant Permanent Fund, making these programs available to many more children. New Mexicans, who support this initiative in large numbers, deserve the chance to vote on this issue.

#### **Pass President Obama's Preschool for All proposal.**

##### **How this helps children**

- 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.



## KIDS COUNT Domain: Education

### Indicator: 4th Graders Not Proficient in Reading

**Extent of problem:** 79% of New Mexico fourth graders are not proficient in reading.

**How this is bad for children**

- Children who are not reading at grade level by the fourth grade are far more likely to drop out. Up through third grade, children are learning to read. In fourth grade and beyond, children are *reading to learn*—so children not reading at grade level will have trouble mastering other subjects.

### Policy Solutions

#### Increase general fund spending on early childhood programs.

**How this helps children**

- Children who receive high-quality early childhood care and education programs start school ready to learn, which helps them stay on track, particularly in reading. Children who start school behind find education a frustrating experience. That frustration grows as they fail to catch up to their peers or fall even further behind.

#### Restore K-12 per-pupil funding to pre-recession levels.

**How this helps children**

- During the recession, New Mexico made some of the deepest cuts in the nation in K-12 per-pupil spending, when adjusted for inflation.<sup>9</sup> As a result, students are in over-crowded classrooms and there are fewer resources for needs such as support for principals so that they can function as instructional leaders.
- Programs that mitigate the impacts of poverty—such as breakfast in the schools and smaller class sizes—must be funded because they make a difference in learning outcomes.

#### Ensure support for community schools.

**How this helps children**

- Community schools can be more flexible in adjusting practices to meet the unique needs of their communities.
- Before- and after-school programming—including tutoring, English classes for parents, and school based health services—make a positive impact on student performance.

#### Increase the availability of reading coaches.

**How this helps children**

- Students from impoverished backgrounds need specialized attention to improve literacy skills.

#### Expand funding for K-3 Plus.

**How this helps children**

- K-3 Plus expands the school year for low-income students in some schools. Students who are behind need additional quality instructional time.

### Indicator: 8th Graders Not Proficient in Math

**Extent of problem:** 76% of New Mexico eighth graders are not proficient in math.

**How this is bad for children**

- 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.

### Policy Solutions

#### Expand after-school, mentor, and tutoring programs.

**How this helps children**

- Children from low-income families are less likely to have highly educated parents than their middle- and high-income peers. Since their parents may be unable to provide homework assistance, mentors are needed.

#### Provide math coaches and professional development for math teachers.

**How this helps children**

- 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.





## KIDS COUNT Domain: Education

### Expand K-3 Plus to K-8 Plus.

#### *How this helps children*

- The need for additional days of instruction for low performing students does not end at fourth grade.

### Restore K-12 per-pupil funding to pre-recession levels.

#### *How this helps children*

- Higher funding levels are needed to mitigate problems associated with child poverty. This policy applies to all education indicators for K-12.

## Indicator: High School Students Not Graduating on Time

**Extent of problem:** 33% of New Mexico high school students do not graduate on time.

#### *How this is bad for children*

- 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

### Identify students in 9th grade who require additional learning time and provide free summer school, after-school, and online learning opportunities.

#### *How this helps children*

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

### Provide more school counselors.

#### *How this helps children*

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

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

#### *How this helps children*

- Students who are not likely to attend college still need work skills. Service learning programs give students the opportunity to prepare themselves for a trade.

### Provide professional development for teachers on the use of technology.

#### *How this helps children*

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



## KIDS COUNT Domain: Health

## Indicator: Low Birth-Weight Babies

**Extent of problem:** 8.7% of New Mexico babies are born weighing less than 5.5 pounds.

#### *How this is bad for children*

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

## Policy Solutions

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

#### *How this helps children*

- 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.



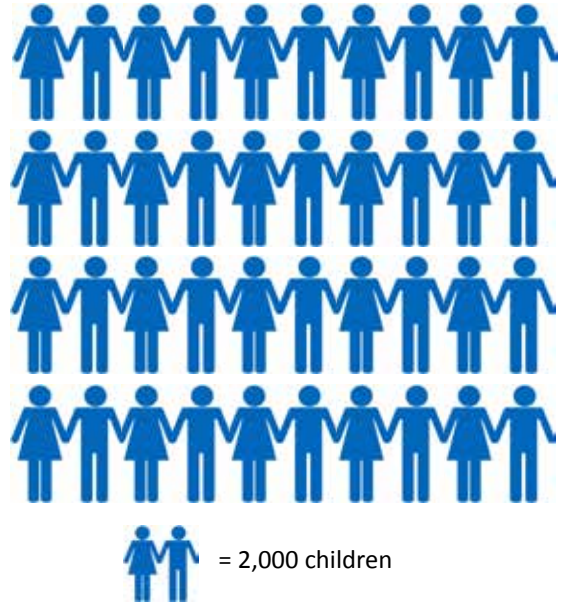
## Indicator: Children without Health Insurance

**Extent of problem:** 9% of New Mexico children (47,000) lack health insurance.

### How this is bad for children

- 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.

An estimated 40,000 children are not enrolled in Medicaid despite being eligible.



## Policy Solutions

### Restore outreach and enrollment programs for Medicaid for kids.

#### How this helps children

- Medicaid is the single largest provider of health coverage for children in New Mexico. Unfortunately, there are thousands fewer children covered under Medicaid than when Governor Martinez took office in 2011.<sup>10</sup>
- Over the last several years, the state has not funded outreach to parents whose children are eligible but not enrolled. It’s estimated that some 40,000 children are eligible for Medicaid coverage but are not enrolled.

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

#### How this helps children

- 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 identify eligible children using eligibility information from other programs such as Head Start and SNAP.

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

#### How this helps children

- Parents are more likely to take their child to the doctor when they have insurance themselves. Fortunately, New Mexico will soon be expanding Medicaid to low-income adults.
- It is expected that many eligible but uncovered children will be enrolled in Medicaid when their parents seek coverage. The state’s health insurance exchange—where most individuals will go for insurance—should assist those who qualify for Medicaid with that application process.

### Expand Chafee Medicaid to age 26 for youth who have aged out of foster care.

#### How this helps children

- The Affordable Care Act ensures that young adults can stay on their parents’ insurance plans until they are 26. Chafee Medicaid covers those who have aged out of the foster care system up to age 21. Expanding it would bring it in line with the ACA.



### Indicator: Child and Teen Death Rate

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**Extent of problem:** New Mexico’s child and teen death rate is 36 per 100,000 children aged 1 to 19.

**How this is bad for children**

- The death of a young person is always a tragedy. Factors contributing to youth death rates include lack of physical and mental health, violence, accidents, homicide, and suicide.
- New Mexico’s suicide rate is one-and-a-half to two times higher the national average. The suicide rate for Native American youth is three times the national average.<sup>11</sup>

### Policy Solutions

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**Expand funding for suicide prevention programs.**

**How this helps children**

- More and more youth are ending their lives when they are unable to cope with bullying. They need strategies to help them cope with difficult situations and a sense of hope that life is worth living.
- The trauma for the sibling survivors of youth suicide can have negative repercussions that follow them their whole lives.

**Enact gun safety laws to limit unauthorized child access to guns.**

**How this helps children**

- The widespread 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 successfully blocked by gun manufacturers.

### Indicator: Teens Who Abuse Alcohol or Drugs

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**Extent of problem:** 9% of New Mexico teens abuse alcohol or drugs.

**How this is bad for children**

- 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

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**Expand behavioral health programs for youth.**

**How this helps children**

- 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.

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

**How this helps children**

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

**Expand school-based health centers (SBHCs).**

**How this helps children**

- School-based health centers treat a great deal of mental illness. They provide a safe, accessible place for youth to receive services they might otherwise not seek.



## KIDS COUNT Domain: Family and Community

### Indicator: Children in Single-Parent Families

**Extent of problem:** 43% of New Mexico children (208,000) live in single-parent families.

#### How this is bad for children

- 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 for doing the same work.
- Children in families headed by a single mother are more likely to drop out of school, become teen parents, and experience divorce as an adult than children in two-parent families.

Almost half of New Mexico's children live in single-parent families.



= children in single-parent families (43%)

### Policy Solutions

#### Restore eligibility for child care assistance to twice the poverty level.

##### How this helps children

- Most single parents are working parents, so child care is an unavoidable, but expensive, necessity.
- Due to recession-era budget cuts, some 5,000 children are still on a waiting list for assistance.

#### Expand funding for mentor programs.

##### How this helps children

- Since teen mothers also tend to be unmarried mothers, 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.

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

**Extent of problem:** 22% of New Mexico children (115,000) live in families where the head lacks a high school diploma.

#### How this is bad for children

- Children'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 than workers with more education.

### Policy Solutions

#### Expand funding for Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language classes.

##### How this helps children

- When parents increase their own levels of education their children do better in school.
- Children whose parents do not speak English well are at a disadvantage when it comes to seeking assistance with homework. Their parents will also have trouble discussing their progress at school with teachers.

#### Expand access to GED programs.

##### How this helps children

- When parents increase their own levels of education, their children do better in school.
- The state's GED program can now only be taken on a computer, and the cost to take it has gone up—making it less accessible to those who need it most.



## KIDS COUNT Domain: Family and Community

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

**Extent of problem:** 21% of New Mexico children live in areas where the overall poverty rate is 30% or higher.

#### **How this is bad for children**

- 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

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

##### **How this helps children**

- 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.

#### **Increase funding for IDAs (Individual Development Accounts) for parents and children.**

##### **How this helps children**

- Children and families do better when they own a home. Kids' grades improve, parents feel more invested in their neighborhoods, and families move less frequently. IDAs can help families save to purchase a home.

### Indicator: Teen Birth Rate

**Extent of problem:** New Mexico's teen birth rate is 53 births per 1,000 female teens ages 15 to 19.

#### **How this is bad for children**

- 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.
- Teens are more likely to have low birth-weight and pre-term babies, putting the child at higher risk for developmental and health problems.
- It's well understood that teen pregnancy causes poverty, but the reverse is also true—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

#### **Increase funding for early childhood programs.**

##### **How this helps children**

- Teen parents often have few resources, so their children stand to benefit a great deal from high-quality early childhood programs. In turn, these programs will help their children succeed in school and lower the chances that they will become teen parents themselves.

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

##### **How this helps children**

- 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.

#### **Expand school-based health centers (SBHCs).**

##### **How this helps children**

- As they reach sexual maturity, teens need access to health care professionals who can help them make informed decisions. SBHCs provide a safe, accessible place for youth to receive services they might otherwise not seek.


#### **Increase funding for teen pregnancy prevention.**

##### **How this helps children**

- 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.

## Endnotes

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2. *New Mexico's Wage Race to the Bottom: Raising and Indexing the State Minimum Wage to Break the Free Fall*, Gerry Bradley, MA, New Mexico Voices for Children, January 2013
3. Ibid
4. 2010 federal income tax returns
5. *Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All 50 States*, Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy, January 2013
6. "SNAP Benefits Will Be Cut for All Participants in November 2013," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, August 2013: <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3899>
7. New Mexico Human Services Department monthly reports: <http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/isd/files/MSR%2012-2011%20data.pdf>
8. National Institute for Early Education Research: 2005-2008 NM Pre K Evaluation Final Report; <http://nieer.org/pdf/new-mexico-initial-4-years.pdf>
9. "Most States Funding Schools Less Than Before the Recession," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, September 2013: <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=4011>
10. NM HSD Monthly All Children Eligibility Reports 2010-2013
11. New Mexico Suicide Prevention Coalition: <http://www.nmsuicideprevention.org/>



## ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

DOMAIN RANK **49**

### Children in poverty

2011

**31%**

157,000 CHILDREN

**WORSENERD**

2005 **26%**

### Children whose parents lack secure employment

2011

**37%**

192,000 CHILDREN

**WORSENERD**

2008 **30%**

### Children living in households with a high housing cost burden

2011

**36%**

188,000 CHILDREN

**WORSENERD**

2005 **31%**

### Teens not in school and not working

2011

**11%**

13,000 TEENS

**WORSENERD**

2008 **10%**



## EDUCATION

DOMAIN RANK **49**

### Children not attending preschool

2009-11

**62%**

35,000 CHILDREN

**IMPROVED**

2005-07 **63%**

### Fourth graders not proficient in reading

2011

**79%**

N.A.

**IMPROVED**

2005 **80%**

### Eighth graders not proficient in math

2011

**76%**

N.A.

**IMPROVED**

2005 **86%**

### High school students not graduating on time

2009/10

**33%**

9,019 STUDENTS

**UNCHANGED**

2005/06 **33%**

N.A. Not Available.



## HEALTH

DOMAIN RANK **49**

### Low-birthweight babies

2010

**8.7%**

2,427 BABIES

**WORSENERD**

2005 **8.5%**

### Children without health insurance

2011

**9%**

47,000 CHILDREN

**IMPROVED**

2008 **14%**

### Child and teen deaths per 100,000

2010

**36**

200 DEATHS

**IMPROVED**

2005 **47**

### Teens who abuse alcohol or drugs

2010-11

**9%**

15,000 TEENS

**UNCHANGED**

2005-06 **9%**



## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

DOMAIN RANK **49**

### Children in single-parent families

2011

**43%**

208,000 CHILDREN

**WORSENERD**

2005 **38%**

### Children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma

2011

**22%**

115,000 CHILDREN

**WORSENERD**

2005 **21%**

### Children living in high-poverty areas

2007-11

**21%**

108,000 CHILDREN

**WORSENERD**

2000 **20%**

### Teen births per 1,000

2010

**53**

3,872 BIRTHS

**IMPROVED**

2005 **62**



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