



**A  
Policy  
Agenda  
for a Better  
New Mexico  
2014**

Updated July 2014 to reflect 2014 KIDS COUNT report data



# 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/>

New Mexico KIDS COUNT, a program of New Mexico Voices for Children, is made possible by support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Our work on state fiscal policy is made possible by grants from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the McCune Charitable Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

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July 2014

Dear Friends and Fellow Advocates,

The much-anticipated 2014 national KIDS COUNT Data Book is out but it offers little positive news for New Mexico. Our overall rank rose from 50th in the nation to 49th and improvement was made in some child well-being indicators such as child poverty, high school graduation, and teen birth rates. New Mexico also declined in some indicators including children in single-parent families, children living in high-poverty areas, and eighth grade math proficiency.

But whether our state ranks 50th or 49th or 48th makes little difference—we simply cannot accept that New Mexico is among the last in the nation in terms of child well-being. The future of the state depends upon making smart investments today. New Mexico's future leaders, entrepreneurs, and inventors are today's babies, toddlers, and school kids. When we ensure today 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 tomorrow.

New Mexico has a long, proud history of innovation in many fields, and we offer NM KIDS are COUNTing on Us: A Policy Agenda 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 based on the input of many of our partners and our Board of Directors, and includes several new policy recommendations. This policy agenda is a call to action to bring the ingenuity that has long made New Mexico a leader in many fields to address the issues that keep our children and our communities from prospering.

We recognize that no individual or group—including New Mexico Voices for Children—can advocate for all of the policy recommendations, nor would it be practical to do so. What we do hope is that you, the advocates, will prioritize these policies and act on those that fit within the work you already do on behalf of children. We hope that every child advocate will review this agenda and let our policymakers know that there are solutions and actions they can take, and that being at the bottom of the pack is not OK for our kids. One easy way to advocate for the policies addressed in this agenda is to become a Citizen Co-Sponsor. See page 26 for how to 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

The **NM KIDS are COUNTing on Us**® Policy Agenda is based on the four domains and 16 indicators used in the KIDS COUNT Data Book, and the 2013 rankings. The four domains are:



**Economic Well-Being**



**Health**



**Education**



**Family and Community**



Overarching Policy Solutions: All Domains

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. Legislative action for 2014 has been added.

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.

2014 Legislative Action\*

- A handful of bills that would have raised new revenue were introduced, but none passed.
• Four new deductions from the gross receipts tax were passed and are expected to cost \$18 million over the next four years.

Policy Progress

- Worse.



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.

2014 Legislative Action

- HB-168 would have raised the personal income tax rate for those earning \$100,000 or more by 1%. It failed.
• HB-321 and SB-302 would have repealed the overly generous tax deduction for capital gains income that goes almost entirely to the highest earners. Both failed.

Policy Progress

- No change.



Enact policies to end food insecurity.

How This Can Help New Mexico

- NM has the highest rate of child hunger in the nation. 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 and 66% of the state’s K-12 students qualify for free or reduced-price meals at school.

2014 Appropriations\*\*

- \$1.9 million was appropriated for school breakfasts.

Policy Progress

- Slight improvement.



\*Because the 2014 session lasted 30 days, legislators were limited in what kinds of bills they could consider. 30-day sessions are focused almost entirely on crafting and passing the annual budget.

\*\*All appropriation amounts represent new state funding for fiscal year 2015 that was added onto the spending level of the previous budget year for that department or service.

## Overarching Policy Solutions: All Domains (continued)

### 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 passed 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 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.

#### 2014 Legislative Action

- This year a joint resolution (SJR-5), which would have sent the TEB issue to the voters, was attempted. It failed.
- As in years past, several deductions from the gross receipts tax were enacted (HB-24, sale of military aircraft; HB-32, dialysis services; HB-288, biodiesel fuel for blending or resale; and SB-88, certain medial services and supplies). Combined, these are expected to cost \$18 million over the next four years.

#### Policy Progress

- Worse.



### 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.

#### 2014 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- No economic development initiatives were considered.
- \$5.4 million was appropriated for ABE programs.
- \$1.5 million was appropriated for the job training program JTIP (Job Training Incentive Program).
- \$161,900 was appropriated for I-BEST, but was vetoed.

#### Policy Progress

- Slight improvement.



## KIDS COUNT Domain: Economic Well-Being

## Overarching Policy Solutions: Economic Well-Being

### 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 Health and Human

Services Committee needs full-time staff to undertake the arduous task of crafting such legislation.

- The Children's Cabinet, which already exists in law, needs to be re-vitalized and supported.

#### 2014 Legislative Action

- No action was taken on this issue.

#### Policy Progress

- No change.





## Overarching Policy Solutions: Economic Well-Being (continued)

### 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.

tion to cap the interest rate for all loans at 36%, pending approval by the voters. The joint resolution failed.

#### 2014 Legislative Action

- SJR-20/HJR-10 would have amended the state constitu-

#### Policy Progress

- No change.

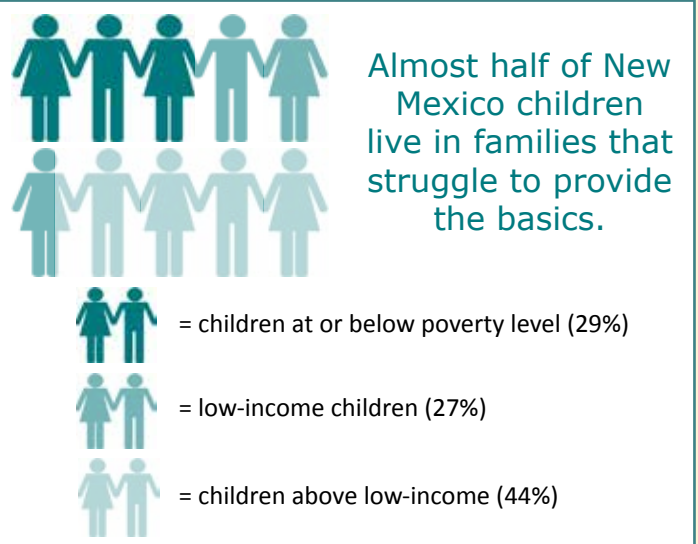


## Indicator: Children in Poverty

**Extent of the Problem** 29% of NM children (149,000 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. **Improved.**

#### 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. 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.



## 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>4</sup>
- New Mexico's minimum wage has lost 10% of its purchasing power since it was last raised in 2009.<sup>5</sup>

indexing, with voter approval. It passed the full Senate but failed in the House.

- HB-213 and SB-319 would have raised the wage to \$10.10 an hour with indexing. Both failed.
- Two bills would have raised the wage for state education employees, one (HB-275) to \$12 an hour and one (SB-322) to \$10 an hour. Both failed.

#### Policy Progress

- No change.



#### 2014 Legislative Action

- SB-13/HB-9 would have raised the wage to \$8.30 with



**Policy Solutions: Children in Poverty** (continued)

**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 2010, 26% of New Mexico tax returns claimed the WFTC.<sup>6</sup>
- The WFTC is currently worth 10% of the federal EITC.
- 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.

**2014 Legislative Action/Appropriations**

- Two bills would have raised the WFTC: HB-180 to 15% of the EITC and SB-51 to 17% of the EITC. Both failed.
- No action was taken on LICTR during the 2014 session.
- A request for \$1 million for LIHEAP failed.

**Policy Progress** ∅

- No change.

**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>7</sup> These caretakers often lack the legal status that would allow them to apply for the benefits that their grandchildren are eligible to receive.

**2014 Legislative Action**

- SJM-14 requests that a study be commissioned on the issues faced by low-income grandparents raising grandchildren and the availability of resources. The joint memorial passed but no funding was allocated.

**Policy Progress**

- Should lead to improvement. ↑

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

**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 in foster care. Unfortunately, such kinship caregivers may not have access to the benefits for which these children might otherwise qualify.
- Ensuring that kinship caregivers can receive benefits does not necessarily mean that they can navigate the many systems in which they are housed. Navigators give these families the personal support and guidance they need.

**2014 Legislative Action**

- Although SJM-14 (see above) discusses the need for access to benefits and community-based support services, it is specific to grandparents and does not address the needs of other types of kinship caregivers.

**Policy Progress** ∅

- No change.



**Policy Solutions: Children in Poverty** (continued)

**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.

*2014 Legislative Action*

- HB-115, which would have address wage theft, failed.

*Policy Progress*

- No change.

**Indicator: Children Whose Parents Lack Secure Employment**

*Extent of the Problem* **36%** of New Mexico children (185,000) have parents who lack full-time, year-round employment. **Improved.**

*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 educa-

tion 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.

*2014 Legislative Action*

- Even though New Mexico’s job growth is sluggish at best, no action was taken to reinstate unemployment insurance benefits for recipients with dependent children.

*Policy Progress*

- No change.

**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 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. As a result, some 5,000 children are on a waiting list.<sup>8</sup>

*2014 Legislative Action/Appropriations*

- No action was taken on raising the eligibility level for child care assistance.
- Child care assistance received \$11 million in new funding, however, the program still falls far short of the need.

*Policy Progress*

- No significant change.





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

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

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

#### 2014 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- SB-44 will make it easier and less expensive for adults to earn their high school equivalency. It passed.
- \$5.4 million was appropriated for ABE programs.
- \$1.5 million was appropriated for the job training program JTIP (Job Training Incentive Program).
- \$161,900 was appropriated for I-BEST, but was vetoed.

#### Policy Progress

- Slight improvement. 

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

**Extent of the Problem** 33% of NM children (168,000) live in households that spend 30% or more of their income on housing. **Improved.**

#### 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 pose serious health hazards to 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 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.

#### 2014 Legislative Action

- No attempts were made to weaken or repeal the Home Loan Protection Act.
- HM-15/SM-11 calls for the creation of a Foreclosure Process Taskforce to study the problem and make recommendations. The memorial passed.

#### Policy Progress

- Should lead to improvement. 

**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.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- \$100,000 was appropriated for IDAs.

#### Policy Progress

- Slight improvement. 



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

#### 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 diapers, gasoline, and utilities.

##### 2014 Appropriations

- \$780,000 was appropriated for the Housing Trust Fund Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA).
- Federal housing funds have remained relatively flat.

##### Policy Progress

- Mixed.



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

**Extent of the Problem** 12% of New Mexico teens (15,000) are neither in school nor working. **Worsened.**

##### 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.

### 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

- 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 New Mexicans, including parents who wish to better themselves. 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.

##### 2014 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- HB-254 would have introduced ‘un-met need’ criteria to lottery scholarship awards. It failed.
- SB-347 provides a temporary fix to the lottery scholarship trust fund, which is at risk of being depleted. However, it may penalize students who must work in order to attend college because it raises the course load requirement from 12 hours a semester to 15 hours. It passed.
- Although legislation has been introduced, Congress has yet to act on student loan rates.
- No action was taken on ending the predatory practices of private, for-profit colleges at the state or federal levels.
- No new money was appropriated for the College Affordability Fund.

##### Policy Progress

- Mixed.



## Policy Solutions: Teens Not in School and Not Working (continued)

### 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 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.

#### 2014 Legislative Action

- SB-206, which waives tuition at New Mexico universities for youths aging out of the foster system, passed.

#### Policy Progress

- Improved.



## KIDS COUNT Domain: Education

### Overarching Policy Solutions: Education

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

#### 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.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- \$2.5 million was appropriated for home visiting services. Although this represents a 50% increase in state funding it still falls far short of the need.

#### Policy Progress

- Slight improvement.



#### Increase funding for early childhood care and education 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.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- \$2.2 million was appropriated to incentivize quality in child care.

#### Policy Progress

- Slight improvement.



#### 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. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) scholarships provide the professional development needed for high-quality programs.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- \$300,000 was appropriated for TTAP.
- \$300,000 was appropriated for early childhood teacher retention and compensation.

#### Policy Progress

- Slight improvement.





## Overarching Policy Solutions: Education (continued)

### Pass a constitutional amendment to support early care and education with a small percentage of the income generated from the Land Grant Permanent Fund.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Sustainable funding for early childhood services could come from the state’s Land Grant Permanent Fund—worth more than \$13 billion—making these services available to the many children not receiving them. New Mexicans, who support this initiative in large numbers, deserve the chance to vote on this issue.

#### 2014 Legislative Action

- SJR-12/HJR-9, which would have sent the issue to the voters, failed.

#### Policy Progress

- No change.

### Increase funding for Family Infant Toddler (FIT).

#### 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 later success in school and reduce the need for special education.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- \$5.6 million was appropriated for FIT, including \$500,000 for provider rate increases.

#### Policy Progress

- Improved.

### Restore K-12 funding on an inflation-adjusted per-pupil basis to pre-recession levels and sufficiently fund the K-12 education system.

#### 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, when adjusted for inflation.<sup>9</sup> 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 funded because they make a difference in learning outcomes.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- K-12 spending was increased overall by \$148 million, or 5.8%. Still, that does not get us back to the per-student spending level before the recession when adjusted for inflation.

#### Policy Progress

- Slight improvement.

### Ensure support for community schools that offer school-based health care, after-school and mentor services, English as a second language (ESL) 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.

#### 2014 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- No new funding was specified for community schools in the budget.

#### Policy Progress

- No change.



## Overarching Policy Solutions: Education (continued)

### 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>10</sup> If we want quality professionals in our schools—including librarians, nurses, counselors, and others—we need to pay them well.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- Funding was appropriated to give a 3% raise to all public school employees and a 6% raise to educational assistants. As educators have gone without cost-of-living increases for several years, this is only a small improvement.

#### Policy Progress

- Slight improvement. 

### 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.

#### 2014 Legislative Action

- SM-69, which condemns zero-tolerance policies, requests that PED create strategies for educating students who have been suspended, expelled or detained in the juvenile or criminal justice systems for misconduct. While it does not directly address zero-tolerance policies, it did pass.

#### Policy Progress

- May lead to improvement. 

### 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 15% of students are habitually truant.
- Non-attendance increases the likelihood of poor achievement and students dropping out.

#### 2014 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- HB-47/SB-25 proposed an early identification and intervention system to prevent unexcused absences and habitual truancy; HM-64 called for reconvening a steering committee to accomplish the goals of the Children's Code (including truancy issues). None passed.

#### Policy Progress

- No change. 

### Reduce class sizes for children in high-poverty areas.

#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- Children in high-poverty areas are more likely to start school behind and, therefore, will need more one-on-one instruction time.

load to the statutory limits set in 1978 over the next three years, passed with a \$6 million appropriation. While this doesn't specifically address the issue of class size in high-poverty areas, it is a start.

#### 2014 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- HB-280, which requires that the state reduce classroom

#### Policy Progress

- Improved. 



## Indicator: Children Not Attending Preschool

**Extent of the Problem** 62% of New Mexico children (36,000), ages 3 and 4, are not attending preschool. **Unchanged.**

### 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 Pre-K has been studied and found to be effective at improving student success in school.<sup>11</sup> Funding needs to be expanded and other infrastructure put in place so pre-K is available to all 4-year-olds.

### 2014 Appropriations

- \$6.2 million was appropriated for NM Pre-K. While this is the single largest increase so far, the program will still fall far short of meeting the need.
- \$3.5 million was appropriated for a pilot project for full-day NM Pre-K.

### Policy Progress

- Slight improvement.



**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.

### 2014 Legislative Action

- Congress has not acted on this issue.

### Policy Progress

- No change.



## Indicator: 4th Graders Not Proficient in Reading

**Extent of the Problem** 79% of New Mexico 4<sup>th</sup> graders are not proficient in reading. **Unchanged.**

### 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 to learn* new subjects—so children not reading at grade level will have trouble mastering other subjects.



### Policy Solutions: 4th 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. 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.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- \$5.2 million was appropriated for K-3 Plus.
- \$1.1 million was appropriated for summer-school and after-school programs.
- Expanding K-3 Plus to 8<sup>th</sup> grade was not addressed.

#### Policy Progress



- Mixed.

**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

#### 2014 Legislative Action

- \$3 million was appropriated for the early reading initiative, which includes reading coaches.

#### Policy Progress



- Slight improvement.

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

**Extent of the Problem** 77% of New Mexico 8<sup>th</sup> graders are not proficient in math. **Worsened.**

#### 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.

### Policy Solutions: 8th 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.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- \$1.1 million was appropriated for summer-school and after-school programs.

#### Policy Progress



- Improved.



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

### 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.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- \$500,000 was appropriated for professional development for math and science teachers.

#### Policy Progress

- Improved.



## Indicator: High School Students Not Graduating on Time

**Extent of the Problem** 26% of New Mexico high school students do not graduate on time. **Improved.**

#### 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

### 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.

#### 2014 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- Although \$1.1 million was appropriated for after- and summer-school programs, the issues of targeting 9<sup>th</sup> graders or providing free services were not addressed.

#### Policy Progress

- No change.



### 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.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- No new funding was appropriated.

#### Policy Progress

- No change.



### 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.

#### 2014 Legislative Action

- No new funding was specified for service learning.
- SB-158, which provides for dual credit parity, passed.

#### Policy Progress

- Mixed.





**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.

*2014 Appropriations*

- \$2.5 million was appropriated for professional development for teachers on the use of technology.

*Policy Progress*

- Improved.



**Provide support for vulnerable populations (students who are experiencing homelessness, are incarcerated, need special education, are English language learners [ELL], are pregnant/parenting, etc.) that 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.

*2014 Legislative Action/Appropriations*

- \$15.2 million was appropriated for programs targeting ELL students and at-risk populations not listed above.

*Policy Progress*

- Slight improvement.



**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.

*2014 Appropriations*

- This issue was not addressed in the 2014 session.

*Policy Progress*

- No change.



**KIDS COUNT Domain: Health**

**Overarching Policy Solutions: Health**

**Support the creation of and funding for 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 needed 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.

*2014 Legislative Action/Appropriations*

- SM-5/HM-13, which created the J. Paul Taylor Early Childhood Task Force, passed.

*Policy Progress*

- Should lead to improvement.





## Overarching Policy Solutions: Health (continued)

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


#### How This Can Help New Mexico

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

#### 2014 Legislative Action

- SB-13 would have required ACEs screening for children receiving certain state services. It failed.

#### Policy Progress

- No change. 

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


#### How This Can Help New Mexico

- SBHCs can offer a wide variety of services, including mental and oral health, 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.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- \$500,000 was appropriated for SBHCs, but funding is still well below pre-recession levels.

#### Policy Progress

- Very slight improvement. 

## Indicator: Low Birth-Weight Babies

**Extent of the Problem** 8.8% of New Mexico babies are born weighing less than 5.5 pounds. **Worsened.**

#### 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. Mothers who get late-term or no prenatal care and teens are at the highest risk of having low birth-weight babies.

## 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 women 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.

#### 2014 Appropriations

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

#### Policy Progress

- No change. 

### Increase funding for high-quality home visiting/parent coaching services.

- Information on this policy solution can be found in the Education domain on page 11.



## Policy Solutions: Low Birth-Weight Babies (continued)

### 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.

#### 2014 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- No legislation supporting teen pregnancy prevention was introduced.

#### Policy Progress

- No change.

## Indicator: Children without Health Insurance

**Extent of the Problem** 8% of New Mexico children (41,000) lack health insurance. **Improved.**

#### 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.

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

## 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. Unfortunately, until recently thousands fewer children were covered under Medicaid than when Governor Martinez took office in 2011.<sup>12</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.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- No state funding was appropriated for outreach.

#### Policy Progress

- No change.

### 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.

#### 2014 Legislative Action

- This issue was not addressed in the 2014 session but it was addressed later in the year via a court case brought by the NM Center on Law & Poverty. The judge ordered HSD to improve its application and recertification procedures.

#### Policy Progress

- Should lead to improvement.



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

**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 has expanded 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.

*2014 Legislative Action*

- This issue was not addressed in the 2014 session.

*Policy Progress*

- No change.



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

*How This Can Help New Mexico*

- 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.

*2014 Legislative Action*

- This issue was not addressed in the 2014 session.

*Policy Progress*

- No change.



**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 home visiting programs under a Medicaid waiver, many more children and families could be served.

*2014 Appropriations*

- As in years past, funding was appropriated for this purpose, but it was vetoed.

*Policy Progress*

- No change.



**Indicator: Child and Teen Death Rate**

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

*How This Hurts New Mexico*

- The vast majority of child and youth deaths are preventable, as most are caused by accidents, homicide 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>13</sup>

- 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>14</sup>
- New Mexico has the second highest rate of deaths from child abuse or neglect in the nation.<sup>15</sup>

## Policy Solutions: Child and Teen Death Rate

### 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.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- HB-61 requested \$300,000 for suicide prevention programs for Native Americans. It failed.

#### Policy Progress

- No change. 

### 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.

#### 2014 Legislative Action

- This issue was not addressed during the 2014 session.

#### Policy Progress

- No change. 

### 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 event (ACE) that impacts a child's overall (intellectual, physical, and emotional) development, and can lead to mental illness and premature death.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- \$3.7 million was appropriated for additional staff and for the care of foster children.

#### Policy Progress

- Slight improvement. 

### 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.
- CYFD is currently underfunded, understaffed, and does not put enough focus on abuse prevention strategies.

#### 2014 Legislative Action

- HB-92, also known as Erin's Law, passed. It requires all school employees to undergo training to detect and report child sexual assault and abuse.

#### Policy Progress

- Improved. 

### 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.

#### 2014 Legislative Action

- This issue was not addressed during the 2014 session.

#### Policy Progress

- No change. 



## KIDS COUNT Domain: Health (continued)

### Indicator: Teens Who Abuse Alcohol or Drugs

**Extent of the Problem** 9% of New Mexico teens (16,000) abuse alcohol or drugs. **Unchanged.**

#### 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.

##### 2014 Appropriations

• No new funding was appropriated.

##### Policy Progress



• No change.

#### 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.

##### 2014 Legislative Action

• This issue was not addressed during the 2014 session.

##### Policy Progress



• No change.



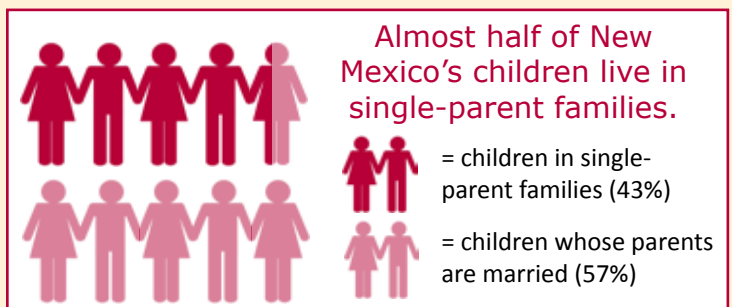
## KIDS COUNT Domain: Family and Community

### Indicator: Children in Single-Parent Families

**Extent of the Problem** 44% of New Mexico children (213,000) live in single-parent families. **Worsened.**

#### 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 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.





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

#### 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 8.

#### 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.

##### 2014 Appropriations

- \$2.2 million was appropriated for youth mentorship programs.

##### Policy Progress

- Slight improvement. 

#### 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.

##### 2014 Legislative Action

- No attempts to defund Medicaid coverage for family planning were made, but eligibility may be reduced by administrative action.

##### Policy Progress

- No change. 

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

**Extent of the Problem** 17% of NM children (90,000) live in families where the head lacks a high school diploma. Improved.

##### How This Can Hurt New Mexico

- 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: Children in Families/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 need. This is much lower than the national average of 74%. Financial aid is vital for returning students because they do not qualify for the lottery scholarship.

##### 2014 Legislative Action/Appropriations

- This issue was not addressed during the 2014 session.

##### Policy Progress

- No change. 



## KIDS COUNT Domain: Family and Community (continued)

### Policy Solutions: Children in Families/Household Head Lacks Diploma (continued)

**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 page 9.

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

**Extent of the Problem** 22% of New Mexico children (112,000) live in areas where the overall poverty rate is 30% or higher. **Worsened.**

#### 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

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

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

**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.

#### 2014 Appropriations

- \$780,000 was appropriated for the Housing Trust Fund Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA).

#### Policy Progress

- Slight improvement. 

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

- Information on this policy solution can be found in the Education domain on page 13.

### 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. **Improved.**

#### 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.
- Teens are more likely to have low birth-weight and pre-term babies, putting the child at higher risk for develop-

mental and health problems.

- It's well understood that teen pregnancy usually results in 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: Teen Birth Rate**

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

- Information on this policy solution can be found in the Health domain on page 18.

**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 connect parents to important resources. In turn, these programs help their children succeed in school, which lowers the chances that they will become teen parents themselves.
- High-quality home visiting programs have been shown to increase the intervals between subsequent births allowing new parents to spend more time with their first child.

**2014 Appropriations**

- \$2.5 million was appropriated for home visiting programs. Although this represents a 50% increase in state funding, it still falls far short of the need.

**Policy Progress**

- Slight improvement. 

**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.

**2014 Appropriations**

- No new money was appropriated for these programs.

**Policy Progress**

- No change. 

**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.

**2014 Legislative Action/Appropriations**

- No new money was appropriated for these programs and no legislation supporting teen pregnancy prevention was introduced.

**Policy Progress**

- No change. 

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

- Information on this policy solution can be found in the Education domain on page 16.

# How You Can Help Make This Policy Agenda a Reality

If you want to help make New Mexico a better place for children and families, please consider becoming a **Citizen Co-Sponsor** of the *NM KIDS are COUNTing on Us: A Policy Agenda for a Better New Mexico*.

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 Policy Agenda 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 in question, contact information for your elected officials, and even a script for what you might say or write.



You can sign up to be a **Citizen Co-Sponsor** by filling out a simple form on our website ([www.nmvoices.org](http://www.nmvoices.org)).

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

**It's Time to Put New Mexico Kids First!**

**Thank you!**

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## ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

DOMAIN RANK

49

Children in poverty

2012

29%

149,000 CHILDREN

WORSENERD

2005 26%

Children whose parents lack secure employment

2012

36%

185,000 CHILDREN

WORSENERD

2008 30%

Children living in households with a high housing cost burden

2012

33%

168,000 CHILDREN

WORSENERD

2005 31%

Teens not in school and not working

2012

12%

15,000 TEENS

WORSENERD

2008 10%

## EDUCATION

DOMAIN RANK

49

Children not attending preschool

2010-12

62%

36,000 CHILDREN

IMPROVED

2005-07 63%

Fourth graders not proficient in reading

2013

79%

N.A.

IMPROVED

2005 80%

Eighth graders not proficient in math

2013

77%

N.A.

IMPROVED

2005 86%

High school students not graduating on time

2011/12

26%

N.A.

IMPROVED

2005/06 33%

NA, NOT AVAILABLE

## HEALTH

DOMAIN RANK

49

Low-birthweight babies

2012

8.8%

2,381 BABIES

WORSENERD

2005 8.5%

Children without health insurance

2012

8%

41,000 CHILDREN

IMPROVED

2008 14%

Child and teen deaths per 100,000

2010

36

200 DEATHS

IMPROVED

2005 47

Teens who abuse alcohol or drugs

2011-12

9%

16,000 TEENS

UNCHANGED

2005-06 9%

## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

DOMAIN RANK

49

Children in single-parent families

2012

44%

213,000 CHILDREN

WORSENERD

2005 38%

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

2012

17%

90,000 CHILDREN

IMPROVED

2005 21%

Children living in high-poverty areas

2008-12

22%

112,000 CHILDREN

WORSENERD

2000 20%

Teen births per 1,000

2012

47

3,275 BIRTHS

IMPROVED

2005 62



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