

The Voices of Children in New Mexico

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The impact of Maltreatment—Definitions,
Prevention and Intervention Strategies conference



The Voices of Children in New Mexico

About New Mexico Voices for Children

- Founded in 1987 by three pediatricians
- Non-partisan, statewide advocacy group working to improve child well-being
- Conduct research and analysis of the problems our children and families face
- Educate lawmakers about solutions



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New Mexico Voices for Children was founded in 1987 by pediatricians who wanted to improve the negative conditions harming their young patients that could not be treated with medicine.

While they could treat the symptoms of conditions like poverty, hunger, abuse and neglect—they could not treat the underlying causes. To do that, they needed to change the public policies that allowed those conditions to exist and grow.

We are a nonpartisan, statewide advocacy organization. Our mission is to champion public policies that improve the status and well-being of New Mexico's children, families, and communities in the areas of health, education, and economic security through credible research and effective advocacy.

Because we believe in evidence-based advocacy, we conduct rigorous research and data analysis. We use that information to educate policymakers and the public about the problems New Mexico's vulnerable children and families face and the possible solutions.

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About New Mexico Voices for Children

- New Mexico KIDS COUNT
- Working Poor Families Project
- Fiscal Policy Project/State Priorities Partnership



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Our data and policy analysis can be broadly grouped into three areas: child well-being, family economic well-being, and state fiscal well-being.

KIDS COUNT is a national program funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that highlights data on child well-being. We run their New Mexico program.

The Working Poor Families Project is a national network that works on improving family economic security via issues such as college affordability, raising the minimum wage, and other work supports.

Our state fiscal work is done under the banner of the Fiscal Policy Project. We are part of a national network—State Priorities Partnership—made up of similar groups doing this work in other states.

We know that child well-being is wholly dependent on family well-being, which is, to some extent, dependent on the state's fiscal well-being; principally how well it maintains the public structures that provide the education, public health, public safety, and infrastructure that undergird our state's economy and provide a good quality of life.

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New Mexico ranks 49th out of 50 states on child well-being

16 indicators of child well-being under four domains:



Economic Well-Being



Health



Education



Family and Community

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Kids Count ranks New Mexico at 49th in the nation for child well-being. We've been 49th for the last three consecutive years.

The KIDS COUNT ranking is based on 16 indicators of child well-being, which are organized under four domains: Economic well-being, Education, Health, and Family and community.

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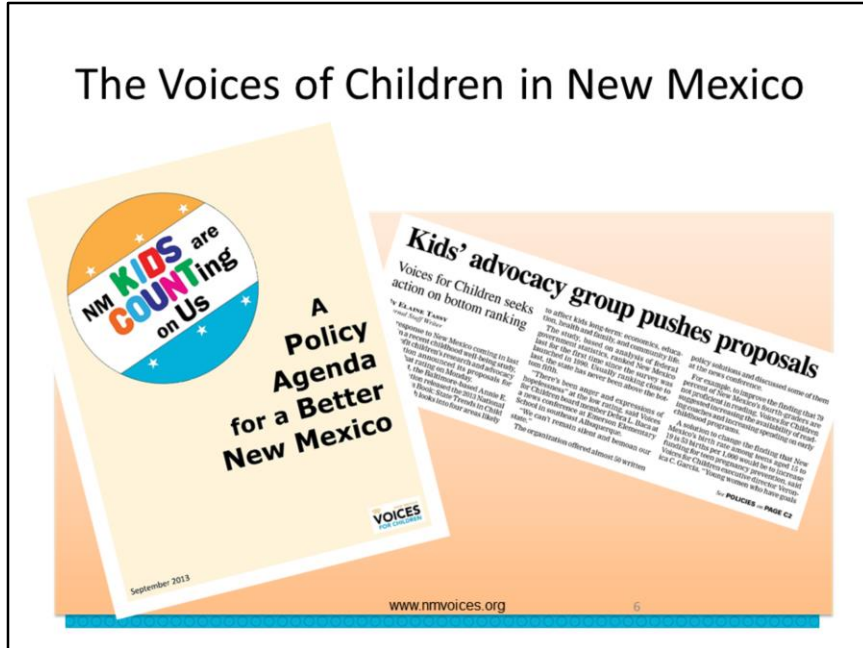
In 2013, New Mexico fell to 50th in the nation in child well-being



In 2013, New Mexico fell to 50th in the nation in the Kids Count ranking. New Mexico has never ranked above 40th, but this is the first year we ranked dead last.

Sadly, there was little response from the state's lawmakers. The governor's office did not even release a statement, let alone a plan to improve child well-being.

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Our response to this lack of response, was the creation of a policy agenda. The agenda connects the dots—explaining not only how the indicators impact children, but how poor child well-being impacts the whole state. The agenda also lists policy solutions for each of the 16 indicators of child well-being.

The policy agenda is a 24-page document, and the whole thing is available on our website. I've provided just the executive summary for the purposes of this presentation.

The 16 Kids Count indicators do not include an indicator on child abuse or maltreatment (although we do include data on this issue in our New Mexico Kids Count data book, which was release this past January and is also available on our website.

However, there are several indicators—such as poverty--that present risk factors for maltreatment. In addition, the agenda includes some overarching recommendations that would help prevent child abuse and maltreatment.

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Overarching policy solutions

- Increasing funding for home visiting programs
- Restoring eligibility for child care assistance to 200% FPL – and providing funding
- Aligning more programs so they take a two-generational approach, starting with TANF



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Overarching policy solutions include:

--Increasing state funding for home visiting is a big one. Despite that fact that more than 75% of all births in New Mexico are covered by Medicaid, state-funded home visiting reaches less than 5% of all children ages birth to three. High-quality home visiting has been shown to decrease child abuse, as well as having other positive benefits for babies and their families.

--The lack of child care is a risk factor for child abuse. It costs more to send your kid to high-quality child care than to UNM—and there's no Pell Grants or lottery scholarships. During the recession eligibility was lowered from double the poverty level to 150% of the poverty level. That needs to be reinstated to 200%.

--Finally, we need to align more programs so that they take a two-generational approach. Because children's and family's needs are intertwined, it makes sense to ensure that our programs address the needs of the whole family. Home visiting and child care are examples of programs that are naturally two-generational, but other programs need a more intentional approach. For example, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program—or TANF—could support job training and education programs for parents as well as provide them with child care assistance. But very little—if any—funding goes to education or training. And while quite a bit of TANF money goes to child care assistance, very few TANF families are actually served and

there seems to be no mechanism in place to ensure that parents in TANF are even made aware of child care assistance.

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Paying for these programs

- Draw down federal dollars to fund home visiting under Medicaid
- Increase the amount of money drawn down from the state's Land Grant Permanent Fund and direct it to home visiting and child care



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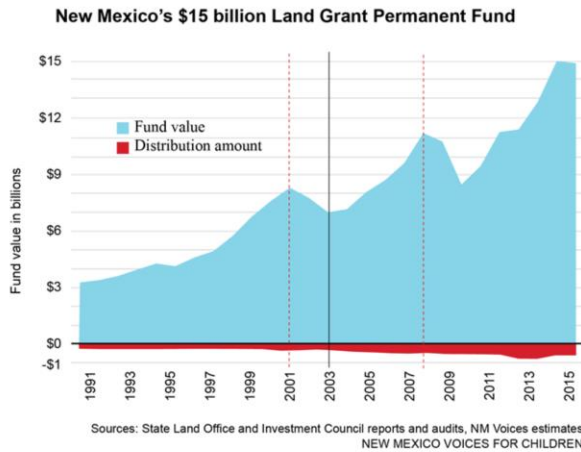
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Of course the catch is always, how do we pay for these programs?

One way we could vastly increase our home visiting dollars is to fund it under Medicaid where we get about a 3-to-1 match in federal dollars. The legislature has passed budgets with home visiting funded in this way, but the governor has line-item vetoed the money out because she “doesn’t want to create a new entitlement program.” We need to convince the governor that protecting children from abuse is not an “entitlement.” Because Medicaid may soon be turned into a block grant (which will seriously limit the amount of federal funding we get), now is that time to maximize our Medicaid dollars.

The other option is to use state revenue. One very big pot of state revenue is the 15 billion dollar land grant permanent fund. For the past six years lawmakers have been trying to pass a joint resolution that would send the issue to the voters, but they have met with resistance.

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The idea of taking a tiny percentage of the permanent fund for early childhood care and education programs—which includes home visiting and child care assistance—is very popular with voters. But there are a few powerful legislators who insist that if we increase the distribution from the fund, we will “deplete” it.

This is a graph of the fund from 1991 to 2015 (the most recent year for audited data from the SIC). The vertical black line shows the last time the voters decided to increase the distribution. In 2003, it was increased from 4.9% to 5%. In 2005 it increased again to 5.8%. The increased distribution did not drain the fund. It still grew, albeit at a slightly slower rate. What has impacted the fund the most are the two stock market crashes—shown by the red dotted lines—in 2001 and late 2007. But the fund recovered fairly rapidly from those crashes.

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Raising new state revenue

- State has been operating in the red for over a year
- Revenue shortfall caused by:
 - Drop in oil and gas prices
 - Years worth of ineffective tax cuts
 - Slow economy (exacerbated by fiscal austerity)



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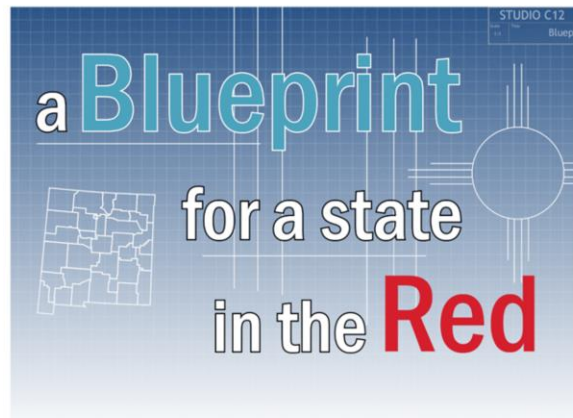
The other option is to fund these programs using state general fund revenue.

Right now we have two main obstacles to that: 1. the state is broke; and 2. the governor is ideologically against raising taxes.

A little background on why the state is broke: For the past year, the state has not been bringing in enough revenue to provide the services and programs that were already budgeted. In short, we've been in the red.

This revenue shortfall was not just the result of lower oil and gas prices, as you've heard in the news media. The shortfall is also the result of tax cuts that have been implemented over the years that have failed to produce any jobs, let alone enough jobs to generate the levels of tax revenue that were lost from the cuts. In addition, the state's economy is slow. It hasn't really recovered from the recession. This slow recovery has been exacerbated by fiscal austerity, which slows the amount of funds flowing from the state to the private sector via employee paychecks, contractors, etc.

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We advocate for both the permanent fund option and for raising new revenue by increasing taxes. But there are many different ways to raise taxes, and not all of them are good for hard-working families and their children.

So we put together a Blueprint for a State in the Red. It includes the revenue options that are least likely to hurt hard-working families.

Raphael, who is participating in the poster session, has more information on this document. It is also available on our website.

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Collective action for change

- Clearly deep change is needed across a wide range of policies and programs.
- We fell to the bottom in child well-being over several years.
- Improving child well-being will require coordinated, collective action.
- Coalition efforts are underway in the areas of revenue, Medicaid, and public safety.

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Collective action for change

- Aligning values and money
- Change requires accountability
 - Legislative action
 - Electoral advocacy
 - New Mexico SAFE model



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NM SAFE is a good model for how communities and coalitions can determine if legislation meets the criteria necessary for it to have the correct outcomes.

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NM S.A.F.E.

- Does it make New Mexico SAFER for children and families?

Legislation must prevent tragedies before they happen to make New Mexico safer for children and families.

- Is it APOLITICAL?

Legislation must address the problem of crime and public safety, not advance a political agenda.



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NM SAFE is an acronym, with each letter standing for an aspect of the legislation that comprises a litmus test for legislation that can protect future victims from violent crime. New Mexico SAFE asks whether a bill meets four simple standards:

1. Does it make New Mexico SAFER for children and families?

Tougher penalties do not correlate with a decrease in crime. Serious legislation must prevent tragedies before they happen to make New Mexico safer for children and families.

2. Is it APOLITICAL?

Too many politicians in New Mexico use tough-on-crime proposals to prop up their political campaigns. Serious legislation must address the problem of crime and public safety, not advance a political agenda.

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NM S.A.F.E.

- Is it **FISCALLY-RESPONSIBLE**?

Legislation must be fiscally responsible. If it doesn't actually make communities safer, it's not worth the money.

- Is it **EVIDENCE-BASED**?

Legislation must be supported by evidence that it actually works.



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3. Is it FISCALLY-RESPONSIBLE?

New Mexico has one of the nation's most devastating budget crises. Any serious legislation must be fiscally responsible. If it doesn't actually make communities safer, it's not worth the money.

and

4. Is it EVIDENCE-BASED?

Finally, serious legislation must be supported by evidence that it actually works. We cannot afford to waste time on bills that have no proven track record of reducing crime or increasing public safety, nor bills whose implementation has shown bias or inequitable treatment.

The first set of policies we are proposing that fit the NM SAFE framework:

1. Require that all bills that increase criminal sentences have an appropriation attached to them. We need to analyze each bill on its impact and cost relative to other approaches, and see which serves victims and taxpayers better. For example, the death penalty carries an enormous cost and has no correlation to reductions in violent crime. What if those funds were applied to treatment or behavioral health services? Which approach would better prevent future victims from enduring

suffering and abuse? We need alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenders that keep families intact, and provide treatment and rehabilitation to help people become productive members of society.

2. Put resources into preventing violent crime, not nonviolent infractions. Police often talk about how they have to spend countless hours on nonviolent infractions like loitering and urinating in public, leaving little time to address violent crime. And when nonviolent individuals are pulled into the criminal justice system, there is an enormous cost to local governments and to their families. Our current system is upside down and doesn't work to protect New Mexicans from future violent crime.

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Progress /spossible and we're making some important gains

- 74,000 more NMs have health insurance this year as compared to last.
- Since 2010, nearly 5,000 more NM kids gained access to pre-K.
- 2,000 more NM families receive home visiting.
- Big improvements in teen drug use and birth rates.



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Finally, we have seen how policy changes can make a positive difference for NM kids first hand in recent years

- Thanks to health care reform and to tireless efforts on the part of lawmakers and advocates, 74,000 more New Mexicans had access to health insurance in 2015 than in 2014.
- Thanks again to ongoing efforts of advocates and to commitment on the part of legislators, this year nearly 5,000 more NM kids will have access to pre-k than they did 5 years ago, and 2,000 more families have access to state-funded home visiting.
- We've also seen major improvements in teen drug use and teen birth rates.

There is a loooong way to go, but there are many areas where we're making progress, and these areas show that

- **We have the power to make positive changes for our kids.**
- It is not simple, and it is not quick, and it is not easy, but we can and we must do it.

New Mexico has a long, proud history of community and of innovation in many fields, and child wellbeing is one more area where we need to apply those strengths.

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Early care and education

- Current funding is serving only a fraction of our eligible children.
- Eligibility for child care assistance is below 2001 levels (child care costs more than tuition at UNM).
- Enrollment in child care assistance is 30% **lower** than it was in 2010... 500 more families have **lost** child care since the Governor announced in April that she was **expanding** eligibility.
- NM needs a strong commitment to ECE and a stable and robust source of funding.



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1. The kids who are trotting off to school this year for the very first time were born in 2010. We started this campaign in 2010 and first introduced it in the 2011 session. Instead of passing this constitutional amendment, the LFC said they would make a commitment to increase ECE funding incrementally every year. Well, here we are 5 years later and FEWER children are enrolled in early childhood programs now than in 2010.
2. Child care is the largest expense for a family after housing costs. There are no pell grants, no lottery scholarships, no work study, and yet.....
3. Child care costs more than tuition at UNM.
4. If we want our children to get to school ready to learn and if we want to give our families the opportunity to get out of poverty, then we need a greater focus on funding for early childhood programs.

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Fully fund child abuse prevention

- Prioritize early childhood care and education.
- Add ACEs screening to EPSDT.
- Reduce child protective services vacancy rate.
- Ensure adequate compensation and ongoing, extensive training for caseworkers.
- Restore and increase behavioral health services for families.



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Maltreatment has been rising consistently over the years in all three types of abuse that CYFD tracks: physical abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect.

However, it is noteworthy that FY16 saw a decrease in each of the three types of abuse that CYFD tracks. It is also noteworthy that additional appropriations for the same time period led to a significant improvement in vacancy rates for protective services, and this may have been or likely was an influencing factor. The rate is now down to 10%

Neglect includes: The abandonment of a child by a parent, guardian or custodian. The failure of a parent, guardian or custodian to provide a child with proper parental care and control or subsistence, education, medical or other care or control necessary for the child's well-being.

When a child is physically or sexually abused and the child's parent, guardian or custodian knew or should have known of the abuse and failed to take reasonable steps to protect the child from further harm.

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What you can do

- Make your voice heard
 - Call or email your legislators
 - Call or email the Governor
- Support our work (www.nmvoices.org)
- Support those organizations working in the field



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What you can do to help.

Your legislators really do need to hear from you, so contact them and urge them to raise new revenue in a fair way so that more money can be invested in programs that protect children from abuse and maltreatment. (Use GOP attempt to repeal Obamacare without a replacement as an example of how constituents changed their minds)

Also contact the governor. As a former prosecutor, she's big into punishment. Unfortunately, harsher sentences for child abuses do not deter this kind of crime. Let her know that the only way to prevent child abuse is to fund proven programs and strategies such as home visiting and child care.

Finally, please consider supporting our work. Legislators rely upon the kind of analysis I've just shared with you. In fact, a legislator recently told us that he changed his mind about pushing for reinstatement of the food tax based on our information and the fact that we could not support it. We are also asked to present expert testimony in Santa Fe when these bills are being heard in committee. Most importantly, we have a full-time lobbyist working in Santa Fe to advocate on behalf of children and we can

only pay for lobbying out of the donations we receive from people like you. Almost 90% of our funding comes from private foundations like the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Kellogg Foundation, but we cannot use those funds for any lobbying activities, so we rely on people like you.

You can donate on our website.

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Questions?

Thank You!

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Any questions?

Thank you!