

Northern New Mexico KIDS COUNT Conference

Post-Conference Report

On March 22, 2018, more than 250 residents of northern and central New Mexico converged at Northern New Mexico College (NNMC) in Española to learn about and discuss the state of child well-being in the area. Advocates, activists, service providers, agency directors, policymakers, and community members gathered to share data and information, build relationships, and discuss actions we can take collectively to improve the lives of our kids and families moving forward. What follows is a summary of the day's discussions, outcomes, images, and sentiments.

“ We may be poor in money but we are rich in culture, rich in family, rich in community. ”
 ~Susan Herrera, Board Member, NM Voices for Children



Española Mayor Javier Sanchez welcomes the crowd.



NNMC President Rick Bailey kicks off the conference.



“ One of our strengths is diversity – it takes all sectors to make this work happen. ”
 ~Dr. Dolores Roybal, Executive Director, Con Alma Health Foundation



March 22, 2018
 Española, New Mexico

Local Level Actions & Advocacy: What We Are Already Doing

Over the course of the conference, attendees were asked to share information about the many programs and approaches that are already at work in northern New Mexico to improve child well-being.



Early childhood education panel (l to r): Rex Davidson, Las Cumbres Community Services; Baji Rankin, NMAEYC; Anna Marie Garcia, LANL Foundation; and Megan Delano, Las Cumbres.

- There are many organizations, agencies, and coalitions working throughout northern New Mexico on child well-being with deep knowledge and large networks.
- LANL is looking at supporting an ECE plan in Rio Arriba County.
- The Native Youth Coalition is very active in community advocacy.
- New Mexico Collaborative Alliance created in 2005 with support from the state.

“I am here today because I believe that all children – regardless of where they live, how much money their parent’s make, or the color of their skin – deserve the best possible opportunities to reach their full potential.”

**~Amber Wallin, Deputy Director,
NM Voices for Children**

- Holistic models are being implemented for Native communities that include a multi-disciplinary team.
- Folks are working alongside other advocates in the education community.
- The Youth Resilient and Risk Survey was provided to the community and in 2016 data was presented to the community.
- Pueblos have developed youth coalitions.
 - Native American collaboratives receive state funding and are still active; Domestic Violence Prevention Initiative.
 - Circle of Life Organization provides funding for tribal communities.
 - Native American sub-committee works with the state to facilitate dialogue with tribal communities.
 - There are currently 70 School based health Centers in New Mexico.
 - The percentage of young children in school, the teen birth rate, and on-time graduation rates have all improved.
 - 5,000 more children have access to NM Pre-K than in 2010.
 - NNMC has a STEM mentor collective in the local high schools.
 - Services/resources for ECE are shared in a database online.
 - Collaborative Teachers’ Institute in Santa Fe.
 - The state’s Family Infant Toddler (FIT) program reaches rural areas.
 - Health Councils have been successful modes for developing ECE capacity and voice on the county level.
- J Paul Taylor Early Childhood Task Force.
- There has been improvement in health in New Mexico.
- Rio Arriba County is working on pulling all communities together through a care coordination model based on how outcomes are produced; measures what approaches are producing good outcomes and what are not producing good outcomes.
- In 2015 Rio Arriba County reduced the opioid death rate by 30 percent.



Looking Forward: What Is Needed NOW

Over the course of the conference, attendees also shared a number of rich suggestions for what is most needed now. These fell into four primary categories, outlined below:

We Need More Voices and Experiences in Advocacy

- There is a concern that the progress will stop or reverse; there is a need to address this through advocacy and policy efforts.
- The 2018 election is an opportunity to elevate what's working in New Mexico.
- We have to be able to change systems; one way we do that is by making sure elected officials understand our concerns and what works for child well-being.
- Our legislature functions best when they hear from us as a community – we need to tell them what the solutions are.
- We need a combined data system in New Mexico that will help guide practice- not just quantitative, but families' stories.
- Families and teachers need to bring stories to legislators.
- Decision makers do not have all the answers. The community needs to self-advocate and self-define what it is that they need.



Health and behavioral health panel: Lauren Reichelt, Rio Arriba county HHS; Governor Fredrick Vigil, Tesuque Pueblo; Patricia Gallegos, NM DOH.

- There is a problem with institutions in Rio Arriba County; People are not being elected who support policies that support children. The community needs to elect people to office that are informed and will provide leadership for our children.
- Rural counties have little access to city councils, policymakers, recreational programs, and transportation.
- Private sector needs to show up and demand more of public officials.
- We have the opportunity to take ownership of all the things we do in our community.
- Educate Congress regarding legislation for tribal communities.

We Need More Funding

- Good research is *critical* for convincing legislators to increase funding for ECE.

- If we want healthy communities and strong education systems, the state budget needs to reflect that.
- Drawing more funding from the land grant permanent fund: work is ongoing and there is a strong movement to get it on the ballot.
- Funding and policies need to be thinking ahead to future generations, rather than in 4 year terms.
- Reverse tax cuts.

ECE: We Must Continue to Build on Our Work to Collaborate, Fund and Professionalize Early Childhood Education in New Mexico

- Improving the ECE workforce is a major need. When the workforce get coaching, mentoring ... they start seeing themselves as professionals shaping children's brains.
- Need to recognize the importance of trauma-informed care.
- Need to recognize that the first 5 years are crucial for future success.
- The ECE workforce needs a comprehensive and coordinated approach – making an entry-level workforce successful in college-level courses and gaining skills; Need scholarships, increased pay.
- We need to be educated on what it means to educate and love a child from birth; what the resources in our communities are; understanding the role of toxic stress on a child's brain.
- Need to do a better job of addressing ECE continuum and identifying gaps at different points of transition; this is where we can lose families and lose momentum.
- We need to act in a coordinated fashion across ECE programs.
- Don't assume we have all the answers – trust parents.
- Many New Mexico kids are being raised by grandparents, and they need help and support.
- What do we do to get services to the rural areas that are underserved? What kinds of platforms already exist?
- We need to partner better with our higher education system.
- Teachers are overwhelmed.

Health & Behavioral Health

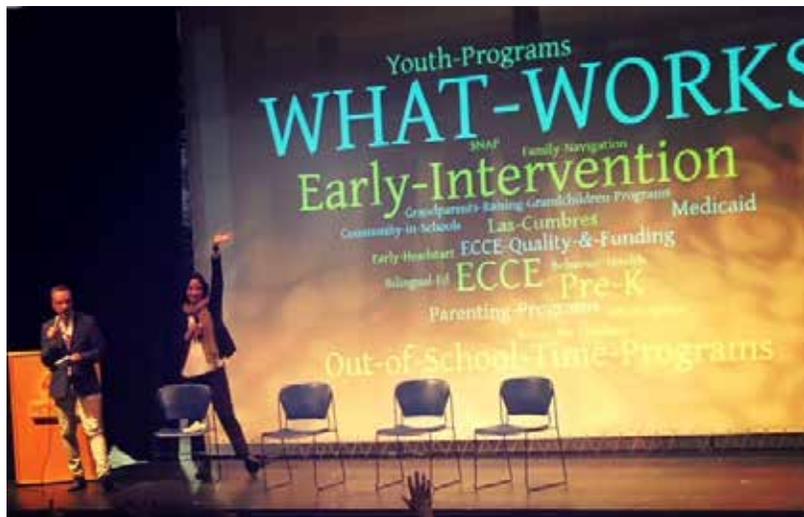
- Addiction is a huge issue – we need to understand what is at the root of the addictions.
- We must shift our focus on health from illness to wellness.
- Need to recognize that traditional and non-traditional 'medicine' means different things to different cultures.
- People define health differently and that needs to be recognized.
- Requirements and rules from state for local collaboratives can hinder success.
- Only 7 local collaboratives are still active due to lack of funding.
- Local collaboratives, government and community need to work

Continued on back page

“Every [child] in the community is 'your child.'”

~Alvin Warren, Program Officer,
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

- together. Why separate health care and behavioral health?
- Need to recognize that preventative health care needs to include behavioral health.
 - Education and accessibility to health care for rural communities.
 - Federal and state funding appropriation for health care is discretionary for tribal communities.
 - Not all Native communities fit into one mold.
 - If a child has the support of one parent the child can be resilient. How do we support the parent(s) in regard to mental health and behavioral health?
 - Stability is needed in community institutions.
 - Health care workforce requires education.
 - How do we mentor our youth to look at health careers?
 - How do we create partnerships to use resources?
 - Ask community what they need?
 - Communities need support to lowering recidivism.
 - School based health centers need to be supported in policy and to be expanded into community centers.



Bill Jordan, NM Voices for Children, and Marcela Diaz, Somos un Pueblo Unido, facilitate the call to action session.

Audience Input in Call-to-Action Session: Efforts Underway & How to Get Involved

During the Call-to-Action session, conference attendees spoke about the work they were doing, how people could get involved, or brought up salient issues that had not yet been addressed.

Graciela – Somos un Pueblo Unido

- State police are present and helping ICE detain and deport parents.
- We need to stop breaking up families, because if a child doesn't have the emotional support of their parent, they can't learn.
- What can be done to preserve families and prevent state and local police from cooperating with ICE?

Mike Barrio – Prosperity Works

- Predatory lending: there are still loopholes in the FID's regulations. Submit comments on the regulations by the April 2 deadline.

NMSU Social Work faculty

- What research or data is available and how are systems linking to make sure that fewer children are going into CYFD as a

result of immigration issues?

- Recent CLASP report on the intersection of immigration and child welfare.

Ruth Hoffman – Lutheran Advocacy Ministry

- Raising the state minimum wage: It has been raised in Santa Fe, Las Cruces, and Albuquerque, but we need it statewide. Join the coalition.

Elliot Stearn – Match NM

- Match NM links college and high school students with 3rd grade students who have problems reading. This will improve the community.

Bernice Garcia Baca – former counselor and teacher

- We have a lack of implementation infrastructure. The traditional public schools are our infrastructure. It is also a built-in sanctuary system.
- Funding is also an issue: we need to use the permanent fund, push our legislators to open it up to a vote.

- Public schools are the common factor of participation where our children are.
- Bring community service providers into schools for true collaboration and wrap-around support.

Jessa Cowdrey – CHI St. Joseph's Children

- Invest in Kids NOW! coalition works to increase distribution from the permanent fund into ECE. Need to update distribution formula to include the early years. www.investinkidsnow.org

Nelsy Dominguez – Con Alma Health Foundation

- Grant cycle is April 9- May 30.
- Is hosting April 19 gathering on ACA health equity provisions.

Luz Gonzales – Cooperativa Korimi

- Parent education and services for parents of young children.
- Child development services.

NM Out of School Time Network staff

- All NM children and youth need access to quality after-school programs.
- Need help to make sure that after-school and summer learning are not an afterthought, especially in rural areas.

Roger Montoya

- Invest permanent fund monies into renewable energy.

A huge, heartfelt THANK YOU to every individual, organization, and group that supported and attended this event, including but not limited to:

