



Early

Childhood

Supports

**in
New
Mexico**

CHALLENGES

AND

OPPORTUNITIES

New Mexico is called the Land of Enchantment because of its stunning natural beauty, and diverse and colorful cultural heritage. But, for many kids, New Mexico can be a difficult place in which to grow up. Here are some of the challenges faced by children in New Mexico.

POVERTY

About one-quarter of New Mexico's children live in poverty. New Mexico's poverty is different from national poverty in several important ways. First, the depth of poverty in New Mexico is far more pronounced. Nearly half of the poor in New Mexico are severely poor – that is, they have incomes that are less than half of the poverty threshold (47 percent in New Mexico as compared to 41 percent nationally).ⁱ Income disparity (rich versus poor) is more pronounced in New Mexico than in most states.ⁱⁱ

GEOGRAPHY

In much of the U.S., poverty is often an urban issue. In New Mexico, more than half of the low-income population lives outside of a metropolitan area,ⁱⁱⁱ with a large percentage living in remote and rural areas. While New Mexico is the fifth largest state in square mileage, it ranks 36th in population, so the state's rural communities are more geographically isolated than in most states. This makes accessing health care, education, and other family supports more difficult. Only Alaska and Montana have a lower population-to-size ratio.

RACIAL DISPARITIES

New Mexico is a minority-majority state, meaning that racial minorities (Hispanics and Native Americans are the two largest groups) make up the majority of the population.^{iv} While 60 percent of all New Mexicans are minorities, nearly 70 percent of children ages zero to four are minorities. The disparities that exist for minorities nationally also exist for minorities in New Mexico.

One of the more pronounced disparities is health outcomes for Native Americans.

NATIONAL RANKINGS

When comparing states on typical indicators of child well-being, New Mexico fares poorly, ranking in the bottom ten states in the national KIDS COUNT data book every year since the Annie E. Casey Foundation began publishing the report in 1990. In "Geography Matters," a report by Every Child Matters Education Fund, New Mexico ranked in the bottom ten states in seven of the ten indicators. The only bright spot in these reports has been New Mexico's better-than-average infant mortality rate.



PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

Several agencies—from state-level departments to nonprofit advocacy groups—are working toward better outcomes for New Mexico's youngest residents through improvements in direct services and public policies. These agencies, services and policies include:

CHILDREN'S CABINET

The Children's Cabinet (www.ltgovernor.state.nm.us/childrenscabinet.php) was created by Executive Order in 2003. It is chaired by Lieutenant Governor Diane Denish and includes secretaries from 14 state departments. The Children's Cabinet is responsible for intra-agency efforts to improve child well-being, primarily focusing on simplifying access to programs and services. The Cabinet is guided by the principle that all children and young people in our state will be healthy, educated, safe, supported and involved. On an annual basis, the Children's Cabinet publishes the children's report card and budget report.

ECAN

Supported by the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant, the Early Childhood Action Network (ECAN; www.earlychildhoodnm.com) works to develop comprehensive, coordinated action plans related to the five outcome areas of the Children's Cabinet. ECAN's steering committee is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. This statewide policy forum makes policy recommendations on how to improve the well-being of young children, birth to five, and their families.

FIRST BORN®/ HOME VISITING PROGRAMS

New Mexico has several voluntary newborn home visitation programs administered by the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) and the Department of Health (DOH). First Born (www.firstbornprogram.org), one of the best known, was established in 1997 with funding from the Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation. First Born staff (registered nurses and other professionals) work with parents to increase their knowledge, skills, and insights into the parenting process, while guiding families through the child's first three years.

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Each month, CYFD provides child care assistance to approximately 22,000 children throughout New Mexico. The child care assistance program helps families pay for child care

while parents are working or in school. In 2001, the eligibility level for child care assistance was decreased from 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 100 percent of FPL. Over the next six years, eligibility was raised as state funding increased. Finally, in August 2008, eligibility was restored for those earning up to 200 percent of FPL. Child care provider rates have also been increased, as has funding for WAGE\$, which pays staff bonuses based on education level and longevity. CYFD encourages child care programs to focus on the quality of the services they provide and has instituted "Stars" (www.cyfd.org/childcare.htm), a quality rating system that contains five levels; the higher the Star level, the higher the level of quality. Between 2004 to 2008, the number of child care providers with a 2 to 5 Star rating increased from 150 to 678 or from 14.7 percent of providers to 67.5 percent.

T.E.A.C.H.

T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps; www.nmaeyc.org/teach), a program of the New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children (www.nmaeyc.org), was originally funded in 2004. It provides scholarships for child care professionals who want to work on Associate, Bachelor or Graduate Degrees in early childhood education. By 2008, 404 early care educators were receiving scholarships, more than 20 times the original number. It is funded by both private and public sources, receiving \$150,000 in state money in 2008.

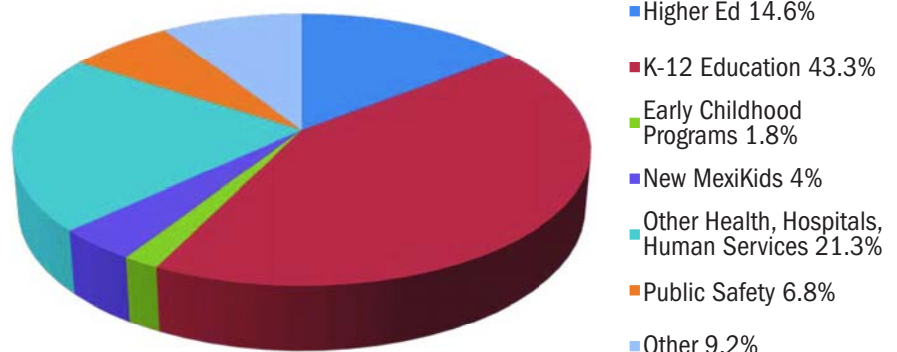
PRE-K PROGRAM

New Mexico's Pre-K Program (www.newmexicoprek.org) for 4-year-olds was launched in 2005 at the urging of Lieutenant Governor Diane Denish. Priority for funding of New Mexico Pre-K sites are given to communities with high percentages of public elementary schools not meeting proficiency requirements for calculating adequate yearly progress (AYP) in either math or reading, and schools that are eligible for federal Title I funding. The state appropriated \$4.95 million to the Pre-K initiative during the 2005-06 school year, its first year of state funding. During that school year, New Mexico Pre-K served 1,538 4-year-olds. Funds for the initiative were distributed nearly equally among the Public Education Department (PED) and CYFD. As a result, participating providers include public schools as well as private centers such as Head Start, child care facilities, faith-based centers, and tribal programs. Expansion of New Mexico Pre-K has been a priority, and enrollment increased to approximately 2,200 children in the 2006-07 school year. Of New Mexico's 33 counties, 11 counties—most of them rural—have no Pre-K sites.

KINDERGARTEN PLUS/ K-THREE PLUS

Kindergarten Plus and K-Three Plus both extend the school year to at-risk students. This increased time in kindergarten and the early grades narrows the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and other students, increases cognitive skills, and leads to higher test scores. PED was allocated \$132 million for K-Three Plus and Full-Day Kindergarten in FY07.

NEW MEXICO'S \$6 BILLION GENERAL FUND BUDGET (FY09)



Public K-12 education is more centrally funded in New Mexico than in most other states. It is primarily funded through state gross receipts taxes (sales taxes on most goods and services), rather than by local property taxes.

FAMILY, INFANT AND TODDLER PROGRAM

Run by the New Mexico DOH, the FIT Program (www.health.state.nm.us/ddsd//fit/index.html) is the lead agency for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part 'C,' which requires a statewide system of early intervention services to be available to eligible children from birth to age three. In New Mexico, 35 FIT providers offer early intervention to children with, or at risk for, developmental delays. Total funding in FY07 was \$31.6 million.

MEDICAID AND SCHIP

Medicaid and SCHIP are fairly seamless to the participating families and together are simply known as New MexiKids (www.hsd.state.nm.us/mad/newmexikids). Medicaid provides comprehensive health care coverage to children living at up to 135 percent of FPL, while SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program) provides coverage to children from 136 to 235 percent of FPL. Due to fairly generous income disregards, SCHIP is now accessible to more children above the strict 235 percent of FPL. Eligibility for prenatal care is currently at 235 percent of FPL.

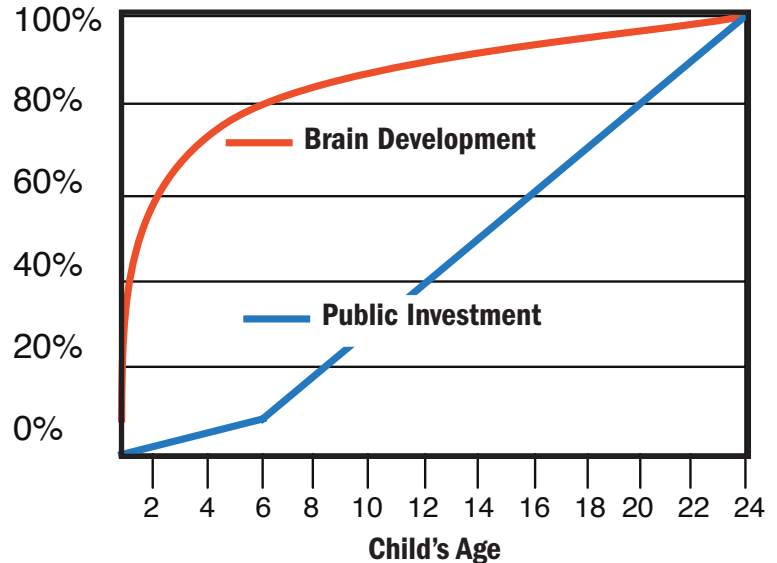
Prior to 2003, children's enrollment in Medicaid grew at a steady pace, but from 2003 to 2008, children's enrollment stagnated as a result of measures undertaken to curtail costs by limiting enrollment. Annual increases in funding were enough to cover inflationary costs, but not enough to fund outreach and enrollment of more eligible children. New Mexico's rate of uninsured children remains 49th in the nation.^v A brief surge in enrollment during 2008 is now reversing as funding has tightened.

PREMIUM ASSISTANCE FOR KIDS

Premium Assistance for Kids (PAK; www.insurenwemexico.state.nm.us/PAKFAQs.htm) provides state funding to cover one-half the cost of health insurance premiums to insure children (ages 0-12) whose families do not meet the income criteria for Medicaid or SCHIP. Currently only a few hundred children are enrolled.^{vi}



New Mexico's investment in education should target the important early years. Even though 80 percent of brain development occurs before the age of four, the vast majority of the state's public investment in education—98 percent—does not begin until age five.



2008 National KIDS COUNT Data Book, NEW MEXICO RANKINGS

Ranking includes all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Low-birthweight babies | 33 |
| Infant mortality rate | 16 |
| (deaths per 1,000 live births) | |
| Child death rate | 48 |
| (deaths per 100,000 children ages 1-14) | |
| Teen death rate | 40 |
| (deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15-19) | |
| Teen birth rate | 49 |
| (births per 100,000 females ages 15-19) | |
| Teens who are high school dropouts | 47 |
| (ages 16-19) | |
| Teens not attending school and not working | 48 |
| (ages 16-19) | |
| Children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment | 46 |
| Children in poverty | 48 |
| (income below \$20,444 for a family of 2 adults, 2 children in 2006) | |
| Children in single-parent families | 46 |
| OVERALL RANK | 48 |

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation

NEW MEXICO IN NUMBERS

POPULATION

Total population – 1,942,847^{vii}

Child population (ages 0-19) – 564,494 (29 percent of total population)^{viii}

Child population (ages 0-4) – 139,300^{ix}

Children living in immigrant households (all ages) – 18 percent (verses 21 percent nationally)^{xi}

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Children, all ages, living in low-income families (below 200% of FPL) – 52 percent (verses 40 percent nationally)^{xii}

Children living in extreme poverty (below 50% FPL) (ages 0-4) – 11 percent (verses 8 percent nationally)^{xiii}

Children living in households with Supplemental Security Income (SSI), cash public assistance income, or Food Stamp benefits (ages 0-17) – 23.6 percent^{xiv}

Percentage of households with low food security – 10.3 percent^{xv}

Percentage of households with very low food security – 5.8 percent^{xvi}

Children receiving free lunches at public schools – 52 percent

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Children in family-based care (ages 0-5) – 49,000; 31 percent (verses 27 percent nationally)^{xvii}

Children enrolled in nursery, preschool – 28,537^{xviii}

Children enrolled in kindergarten – 27,729^{xix}

Children enrolled in grades 1 to 4 – 102,151^{xx}

Percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in school – 39.3 percent^{xxi}

Percentage of children ages 0-5 who are read to daily – 43 percent^{xxii}

HEALTH

Children enrolled in Medicaid (ages 0-18) – 68.1 percent (verses 59.7 percent nationally)^{xxiii}

Children without health insurance (ages 0-18) – 20.5 percent^{xxiv} (national rank: 49)

Mothers receiving prenatal care in the first trimester – 71.3 percent^{xxv}

Women who had live birth with all five elements of the Healthy Birth Index – 32 percent^{xxvi}

Teen birth rate (ages 15-19) – 61.7 per 1,000^{xxvii}

Low-birth weight babies (less than 5.5. pounds at birth) – 8.9 percent^{xxviii}

Infant mortality – 6.1 per 1,000^{xxix} (national rank: 16^{xxx})

Leading causes of death (ages 1-4) – unintentional drowning (26.7 percent), pedestrian accidents involving motor vehicles (26.7 percent), and motor vehicle accidents (20 percent)^{xxxi}

Children with up-to-date immunizations, 2007 (ages 19-35 months) – 76 percent^{xxxii}

CHILD POPULATION BY ETHNICITY (AGES 0 – 4)

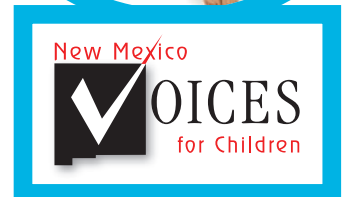


Source: 2009 New Mexico Children's Cabinet Report Card & Budget Report

ENDNOTES

- ⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2007 American Community Survey
- ⁱⁱ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2008
- ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2007 American Community Survey
- ^{iv} Ibid
- ^v Kaiser Family Foundation, State Health Facts (2006-2007)
- ^{vi} NM Human Services Department, March 2009
- ^{vii} U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2007 American Community Survey
- ^{viii} 2009 New Mexico Children's Cabinet Report Card & Budget Report
- ^{ix} Ibid.
- ^x Ibid
- ^{xi} Annie E. Casey Foundation 2008 KIDS COUNT Data Book
- ^{xii} Ibid
- ^{xiii} U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2007 American Community Survey
- ^{xiv} 2009 New Mexico Children's Cabinet Report Card & Budget Report
- ^{xv} Ibid
- ^{xvi} Annie E. Casey Foundation 2006 KIDS COUNT Data Book
- ^{xvii} U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2007 American Community Survey
- ^{xviii} Ibid
- ^{xix} Ibid
- ^{xx} Ibid
- ^{xxi} Ibid
- ^{xxii} 2009 New Mexico Children's Cabinet Report Card & Budget Report
- ^{xxiii} Kaiser Family Foundation, State Health Facts (2006-2007)
- ^{xxiv} Ibid
- ^{xxv} New Mexico Department of Health (2006)
- ^{xxvi} 2009 New Mexico Children's Cabinet Report Card & Budget Report
- ^{xxvii} New Mexico Department of Health, (2006)
- ^{xxviii} Ibid
- ^{xxix} Kaiser Family Foundation, State Health Facts (2003-2005)
- ^{xxx} Annie E. Casey Foundation 2008 KIDS COUNT Data Book
- ^{xxxi} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System, 2005.
- ^{xxxii} Ibid

Prepared by New Mexico Voices for Children, a non-partisan, nonprofit organization advocating for policies to improve the health and well-being of New Mexico's children, families and communities.



www.nmvoices.org

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