



EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION IN DOÑA ANA

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Thank you to the Las Cruces Community Assessment Consortium: Doña Ana County Head Start, La Clinica de Familia Early Head Start, Primero los Niños, Doña Ana Healthy Start Initiative, and Las Cruces Public Schools.

WHO DO WE SERVE?



- Border community; ethnically and culturally diverse
- Southern central NM covers 3,500 sq miles composed of rich agricultural valley, mountains, and desert terrain
- Economically challenged – our border is one of the most rural and poorest areas in NM
- Doña Ana County population 206,419; 18% increase from 2000
 - Hispanics 65%, Black 3%, Native American 1.6%
- 54% speak a language other than English



DOÑA ANA: RATED MOST “AT-RISK” FOR CHILDREN



- Combined risk factor index – teen birth rate, late pre-natal care, low birth weight babies, families in poverty
- Poverty and levels of education are related. In 2002, 40% of all births were to mothers with less than a 12 grade education.
- District-wide at least 40 percent of students in third – fifth grades are reading less than proficiently.
- 18 to 64 Yr Olds With a High School Diploma 78.8%



UNMET NEED: QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION




- 19% of eligible children in Dona Ana are served by two different Head Start Programs
- 19% of children are enrolled in NM PreK programs
- The rest of the children are in public and private child care settings or at home.



GOAL: “... ENSURING THAT EVERY NEW MEXICO CHILD IS EAGER TO LEARN AND READY TO SUCCEED BY THE TIME THAT CHILD ENTERS KINDERGARTEN”

from the Early Childhood Care and Education Act (2011)

But what does it mean to be “ready”? Readiness is:

- A child’s abilities, behaviors, health
 - The capacity of families, early education programs, and communities to support children’s learning and development before kindergarten
 - Public school’s ability to accept each child and “meet them” as they begin formal schooling
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HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD?

- Develop an aligned system – all policies, programs and services for children and families must work together
- Build strong foundation of family support – promote strengths and stability
- Develop public awareness – early childhood is the most vital period for future school success



WHAT WE NEED IN SOUTHERN NM



- Practices for Well-being
- Partnerships and Continuity
- High Expectations and Equity
- Cultural Competence
- Learn Together
 - Play as pathway
 - Assessment for learning

