New Mexico Child Care and Early Education Task Force

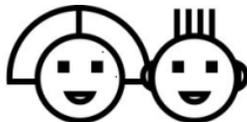| **FINAL REPORT**	➢ December 2014 ➢ Policy recommendations ➢ Context and background on child care in New Mexico

CONVENER

New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership

FACILITATOR

New Mexico First

new mexico early childhood development partnership

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Contents

Executive Summary

Quality child care helps children succeed in school and in life. Children who receive a quality early childhood education possess better math, language, and social skills as they enter school. Later, they require less special education, progress further in school, experience fewer interactions with the justice system, and earn more as adults.[1] Research is also clear that responsive and skilled caregivers, healthy and safe environments, and linkages to community supports help promote healthy development for infants and toddlers.[2]

Reliable child care also enables parents and guardians to maintain employment. More than 58% of U.S. mothers with children under the age of six are in the workforce.[3] The percentage is even higher for fathers. Given these realities, employers categorically rely on an effective child care system in order to maintain a stable workforce.

For these reasons, the **New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership** formed a task force of statewide stakeholders representing child care providers, early childhood education institutions, business associations, foundations, advocacy groups, state agencies, and legislators. The task force was facilitated, and this report prepared by, the public policy organization **New Mexico First.**

The task force organized itself into three committees, which align to the topics below. This report details the group's findings, which will be presented to legislators in November 2014. The high-level recommendations appear below. Specific strategies for advancing them follow in the body of this report.

NOTE: Several of the recommendations could require changes to funding. Before policymakers are likely to endorse any new or increased public investments, a clear accountability system is necessary to ensure the public investment is well spent. The context of this report requires that the accountability reforms be listed last, but it may be important to address some of these changes first. They may provide a foundation for a future "child care and early education act" in New Mexico.

STABILITY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
1. Adjust eligibility criteria for the state child care assistance so that more low-income families can qualify for and retain stable quality care.
2. Reduce administrative burdens for families and facilities regarding the state child care assistance.

CHILD CARE WORKFORCE
3. Create subsidies to support early childhood employees and directors.
4. Improve continuing education opportunities through changes in workplace practices.
5. Encourage and support early childhood directors and teachers to pursue additional higher education.

CHILD CARE QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY
6. Establish a set of indicators to measure the effectiveness of New Mexico's child care system.
7. As an alternative to FOCUS (the state's child care quality improvement system), create an outcome-based quality rating pathway within FOCUS for child care accountability, using an evidence-based quality-rating tool.
8. Improve the implementation of the FOCUS quality rating system.
9. Create structures enabling child care facilities to maintain financial stability while achieving quality standards.
10. Take steps to ensure that children with the highest needs are able to receive the highest quality care.

Additional details on each recommendation are provided in the complete report that follows.

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[1] (Barnett, 1995)
[2] (Burchinal, et al., 1999)
[3] (Cornille, Mullis, Mullis, & Shriner, 2006)

Foreword

Purpose of the Task Force

The task force and each of its subcommittees focused on changes to the state's Child Care Assistance Program. The goal of the group was to identify policy recommendations to strengthen the child care system in New Mexico. Members recognized that the child care field is in a time of transition, shifting from primarily serving as a support for working families to a broader mission that incorporates the provision of quality early learning for young children. With the support of national experts, task force members researched best practices for improving quality in child care, including workforce development and improved accountability. Prior to the 2015 legislative session, task force representatives will present the enclosed recommendations to lawmakers, community leaders, parents and child care professionals.

The task force was organized into three subcommittees:

1) Stability for families
2) Child care workforce
3) Child care quality and accountability

This report is organized into these three topic areas.

Convener

The **New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP)**, a public-private partnership, recognizes that when our young children are deprived of quality early life experiences, the result is a lack of readiness for school and life, depriving our state of its most precious "potential" resource. The mission of the NMECDP is to create statewide awareness, support and understanding of the overwhelming benefits of early childhood programs and their positive impact on future generations of New Mexicans. The NMECDP advocates for the creation, adoption and implementation of robust, effective and proven early childhood programs, available to all children, five and under, in New Mexico.

Accomplishments of the NMECDP include:

1) Early Childhood Care and Education Act, passed by the NM Legislature in 2011
2) Early Childhood Education Cost Analysis and Recommendation, developed in 2011 and updated in 2013
3) Early Childhood Education Revenue Options, developed in 2011 and updated in 2013
4) New Mexico Early Care and Education Cost Model, developed in 2013
5) Home Visiting Accountability Act, passed by the NM Legislature in 2013

A Child Care and Early Education Act will likely be proposed in 2015.

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, Alliance for Early Success, Thornburg Foundation, and United Way of Santa Fe County generously support the NMECDP.

Facilitator

New Mexico First engages people in important issues facing their state or community. Established in 1986, the public policy organization offers unique town halls and forums that bring together people from all walks of life to develop recommendations for policymakers and the public. New Mexico First also produces nonpartisan public policy reports on critical issues facing the state. These reports – on topics like water, education, healthcare, the economy, and energy – are available at nmfirst.org. Our state's two U.S. Senators, Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, serve as New Mexico First's honorary co-chairs. The organization was co-founded in 1986 by Senators Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici (retired).

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Child Care Stability for Families

Children benefit from the continuity of stable, quality child care. Their parents or guardians also benefit, as they are able to work or attend college/job training while engaging in the early education of their children. By contrast, when child care is characterized by interruptions or frequent changes in providers, the children, their families and employers suffer.

Impact of Poverty

Unstable child care is particularly problematic for low-income families. Poverty is a strong predictor of negative outcomes for children. Poverty can be especially detrimental for infants and toddlers, because their brains are developing rapidly during this phase of life. Children under three have the highest poverty rates of any age group in the country.[4]

Attachment to warm and loving caregivers is essential. Data shows that at-risk children who do not have access to quality child care and early education are:[5]

- 25% more likely to drop out of school
- 40% more likely to become teen parents
- 50% more likely to be placed in special education
- 60% more likely to never attend college
- 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime

Bottom line: Children in low-income families have the most to gain from access to consistent, quality child care and education.

New Mexico Children

The intersection between poverty and educational achievement is readily apparent in New Mexico:

- 7% of the state's population is under age five (or about 144,000 children)
- 31% of the state's children live at the federal poverty level (for example, an annual income of $23,550 for a family of four)
- 62% of the state's children do not attend pre-school
- 79% of fourth graders are not proficient in reading
- 33% of high school students do not graduate in four years[6]

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[4] (Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2010)
[5] (Ounce of Prevention Organization, 1982)
[6] (NM Early Childhood Development Partnership, 2014)

Child Care Assistance Program

One strategy to provide care for low-income families in New Mexico is the Child Care Assistance Program. This program pays all or part of child care costs for eligible children between the ages of six weeks and 13 years, or up to age 18 if, special supervision is needed. Any parent, grandparent or guardian who is working, going to school or in a job-training program may apply for child care assistance by visiting a New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) field office. There are 25 field offices throughout the state.[7] Eligibility is determined by family size and gross monthly income. Funds are paid directly to the child care provider based on a rate set by CYFD. Currently, the rate to enter the program is 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL); families may remain eligible through 200% of FPL.[8]

In New Mexico, almost 60% of children receiving child care assistance are under the age of five. As of May 2014, 17,800 children receive subsidized child care, with 385 on the waiting list.[9] Types of care in New Mexico include unlicensed, licensed, home-based and center-based. Approximately 80% of New Mexico children receive care from licensed providers.[10]

Only 22% of children under age six in New Mexico are eligible for child care assistance under the state's current policy. Of those who do receive assistance, the average length of stay in child care is only three to seven months.[11] Eligibility policies, job changes, and the reality that low-income people move more often than other families contribute to these short child care stays.

In New Mexico, the historical goal of child care assistance was to help parents work or go to school. Supporting the educational development of children was secondary. However, revised federal goals for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (the primary funding program for child care assistance) will require greater attention to program quality, child development, school readiness, and improved coordination of early child care and education.[12] The federal act, revised in September 2014, strengthens quality in child care by also requiring all providers to comply with state health, safety and fire standards, as well as undergo annual inspections.[13] In November 2014, President Obama signed the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 into law—the first reauthorization of the federal child care program since 1996. Passed with strong bipartisan support, the law aims to protect the health and safety of children in child care, facilitate families' access to child care assistance, and improve the quality of care.[14]

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[7] (The New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department , 2011)

[8] The maximum threshold eligibility is set by federal regulations at 85% of State Median Income. At the state level, CYFD determines when to implement a waiting list for families below 200% FPL, based on the need/demand exceeding budget availability. The goal is to strive for a reasonable degree of program stability for families and providers.

[9] (The New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department, 2014)

[10] (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2013)

[11] (NM Early Childhood Development Partnership, 2014, p. 16)

[12] (NM Early Childhood Development Partnership, 2014, p. 10)

[13] (The United States Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions , 2014)

[14] (National Women's Law Center, 2014)

Types of Child Care Settings[15]

When a child qualifies for child care assistance in New Mexico, the family chooses the setting for that care. Options include a licensed home, registered home, licensed center, or before/after-school program. The following table summarizes child care options in New Mexico.

Type of Setting	Number of Sites[16]	Description
Unlicensed but registered home	3,301 homes	- Private dwellings that provide care for no more than four children at any one time. - Operated by independent care givers - May participate in the NM child care assistance program (must register with the CYFD) - May participate in the USDA food program (must register with the CYFD) - Must attend six hours of training annually - Must complete first aid and CPR certification - Do not participate in the NM quality rating improvement system (QRIS) - USDA completes registered home certification visits - CYFD investigates complaints and hosts training sessions for providers
Licensed family home	113 homes	- Private dwellings that provide care for up to six children or four children under the age of two - Must meet minimal CYFD licensing standards that focus on the health, safety, and development of children in care, including: - Zoning and capacity requirements - Administrative requirements - Record-keeping standards - Staffing ratios - Environmental expectations - Trainings
Licensed family group home	149 homes	- Private dwellings that provide care for seven to twelve children - Must meet minimal CYFD licensing (same as above)
Licensed child care center	718 centers	- Operate in commercial settings and provide care for larger groups of children - Must meet minimal CYFD licensing (same as above) - Meet different levels of quality standards, depending on the facility (see accountability section)

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[15] (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2013)
[16] (The New Mexico Children, Youth & Families Department, 2014)

State Policy Options

States hold the authority to make a number of policy choices regarding child care:[17]

- Determine eligibility requirements
- Set income eligibility and prioritize low-income families and groups
- Define work, education, and training requirements of parents
- Set how care is authorized
- Set provider payment rates and methods
- Determine sliding fee scales of payment
- Determine policies and practices

In order to stabilize the child care system, many states are pursuing reforms. Some examples include the following:[18]

- 17 states set the income eligibility limit for child care subsidies at or above 200% of federal poverty level
- Three states' child care assistance reimbursement rates met the recommended 75th percentile of the market rate for two consecutive years
- 26 states re-determine the eligibility for child care subsidies no more than once per year
- 41 states, including New Mexico, fund a pre-kindergarten program and/or supplement Head Start

Stability for Families Policy Recommendations

Given the intersections between poverty, continuity of child care and school readiness, the task force committee on family stability chose to recommend changes to the state's Child Care Assistance Program. This program is a powerful tool that could positively impact low-income families by delivering more stable child care to families who most need support. The following table lists the committee's recommendations, which were subsequently voted on by the full task force to determine the group's overall level of support. Each recommendation contains multiple strategies, which are listed in order of their support level.

RECOMMENDATION 1-ELIGIBILITY

Adjust eligibility criteria for the state child care assistance so that more low-income families can qualify for and retain stable, quality care.

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
A. Change child care eligibility period from six months to 12 months – thus improving continuity of care.	Regulatory	*Note:* The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act reauthorization requires this. *Advantages*: • Keeps children in a stable child care environment	HS=96% MS=4% DS=0%

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[17] (CLASP-Policy Solutions that Work for Low-income People, 2014)
[18] (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2014)

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
		• Increases likelihood children can complete a full year of early childhood care and education • Increased stability for child care providers *Barrier*: • Potentially increases state costs	
B. Enable child care funding to remain in place during high school and college breaks.[19]	Legislative (funding) and Administrative	*Advantages*: • Continuity of care for children • Funding stability for providers • Policy change has already been enacted with positive results in other states *Barrier*: • Requires identifying a new source of dollars within the state's general fund	HS=83% MS=17% DS=0%
C. Research the effect that the child care co-pay plays on access to and continuity of care.	Administrative	*Advantages*: • Research would help determine if the co-pay should be reduced or eliminated	HS=80% MS=20% DS=0%
D. Lengthen the amount of time low-income parents can be enrolled in career education or training programs while receiving the state child care assistance.	Regulatory	*Advantages*: • Keeps children in a stable child care environment • Increases likelihood children can complete a full year of early childhood care and education • Potentially increases families' long-term earning potential *Barrier*: • Change would require consultation with TANF program administrators, due to time limits imposed by federal regulations	HS=48% MS=43% DS=9%
E. Set entrance eligibility for child care assistance to 200% of the federal poverty level, and exit at 250%.	Administrative	*Advantages*: • Increases number of children served *Barriers*: • Political feasibility • Cost • Could be setting up an unsustainable system	HS=36% MS=20% DS=44%

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[19] There is a perception among child care providers and students that teen parents and college students lose their child care slots during school breaks. This perception may be a disincentive to providers to enroll some children.

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
F. Extend job-search period to 90 days for families who already qualify for subsidized child care and whose parents have lost their jobs.[20]	Regulatory	*Advantages*: • Facilitates job search for families • Continuity of care for children • Increases child outcomes • Financial stability for providers *Barriers*: • Cost	HS=27% MS=73% DS=0%

RECOMMENDATION 2-ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

Reduce administrative burdens for families and facilities regarding the administration of the Child Care Assistance Program.

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
A. Eliminate reporting of income increases between certification periods.[21]	Procedural	*Advantages*: • Simplifies paperwork for families *Barrier*: • Potentially increases program costs	HS=92% MS=8% DS=0%
B. Educate families regarding child care support requirements and strengthen the training for caseworkers.[22]	Procedural	*Advantages*: • Addresses lack of family reporting due to misconception on requirement *Barriers*: • Cost and time involved in training caseworkers	HS=75% MS=17% DS=8%
C. Expand the ways people can apply for child care assistance (e.g., online).[23]	Regulatory	*Advantages*: • More convenient for families, especially in rural areas • Eliminates transportation barrier • Online system could streamline application process *Barriers*: • Large procedural change for CYFD • Cost of procedural change for CYFD	HS=64% MS=36% DS=0%

[20] Currently the approved job-search period is 30 days.

[21] This strategy will become moot if the child care eligibility period is changed from six months to up to 12 months. Currently, temporary increases are not counted unless family income exceeds the current limit.

[22] There are misconceptions about current requirements, which may deter some families from applying or updating child care assistance needs (e.g., immigration verification on deportation, domestic violence, lack of clarity on existence or parameters for waivers, etc.)

[23] NM has 33 counties and 25 CYFD offices. Currently most people must file application forms in person. However, some applicants can submit via fax or be interviewed by phone.

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
D. Enable families that are eligible for SNAP to be deemed eligible for child care assistance.[24]	Procedural	*Advantages*: • Simplifies paperwork for families *Barrier*: • Challenges in aligning procedures among programs (e.g., TANF, SNAP)	HS=64% MS=36% DS=0%

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[24] The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), previously named Food Stamps, helps low-income families purchase food. Allowable income for the NM child care assistance is higher than that of SNAP.

Child Care Workforce

In order to provide families with stable, quality child care, New Mexico needs an effective cadre of child care teachers and directors. In a study of child care professionals, education and training were the strongest predictors of quality care.[25] However, in the United States, there are no minimum educational standards for those who provide child care.[26] Many providers are formally trained in child care or early childhood education, but certainly not all. Only 13 states require child care professionals to have pre-service training in early childhood education before working in the field, and 32 states require only a high school diploma for lead teachers.[27]

Given these facts, early childhood experts call for higher levels of education and training for all levels of child care professionals. However, given the salaries most child care workers earn, many are understandably reluctant to sacrifice the money and time required to pursue a college degree.

Wages

Child care providers generally earn low wages and receive few benefits.[28] Women dominate the field, comprising about 95% of the child care workforce.[29] For home-based child care providers, 99% are women, many of them raising children of their own.[30] Child care is often viewed as an extension of traditional "women's work" and is sometimes not viewed as a true profession.[31] The wages child care employees earn are often close to the poverty line.[32]

U.S. Hourly Wages of Center-based Teachers and Caregivers Serving Children Birth-5, by Educational Attainment[33]

Highest Degree Received	Mean Hourly Wage of Center-Based Teachers and Caregivers
High school or less	$9.60
Some college, no degree	$10.50
Associate degree	$12.90
Bachelor degree or higher	$17.30

NM EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The NM Children, Youth and Families Department contracts with NM Association for the Education of Young Children (NMAEYC) to administer the T.E.A.C.H. program. T.E.A.C.H. works with the FOCUS TQRIS program, the STARS quality rating improvement system (QRIS), NM PreK, and other statewide efforts to increase the overall quality of care and education for New Mexico's most vulnerable children. T.E.A.C.H. has been active in New Mexico since 2004. NMAEYC is licensed by Child Care Services Association in North Carolina—the T.E.A.C.H. parent organization—to offer scholarships to NM child care educators.

INCENTIVES Early Childhood, an affiliate of Child Care WAGE$® in North Carolina, was started by NMAEYC in the summer of 2010 as a pilot program in Santa Fe County. The program is now being implemented in Bernalillo County as part of a partnership between NMAEYC and the United Way of Central New Mexico. NMAEYC plans to expand the INCENTIVES program statewide. The program provides pay supplements every six months to early childhood teachers or assistant teachers based on their level of education. This pay supplement is designed to encourage educators to commit both to their education and to the early childhood field. In the first year of the Santa Fe pilot, no INCENTIVES participant left their place of employment, and approximately half enrolled in additional college courses toward degrees in early childhood education.

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[25] (Burchinal, Howesa , & Kontos, 2002)
[26] (Gable, Rothrauff, & Thornburg, 2007)363-378.
[27] (National Association of Childcare Resource & Referral Agencies, 2012)
[28] (Cornille, Mullis, Mullis, & Shriner, 2006)631.
[29] (Bureau of Labor Statistics. U.S. Department of Labor., 2010-2011)
[30] (National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, 2012)
[31] (Tuominen, 2003)
[32] (Bureau of Labor Statistics. U.S. Department of Labor., 2010-2011)
[33] (Whitebook, 2014)

New Mexico Median Hourly Wages, Selected Occupations 2013[34]

Occupation	Median Hourly Wage
Customer Service Representatives	$13.60
Bakers	$11.20
Cosmetologists	$11.14
Retail Sales Persons	$10.32
Building Cleaners	$9.99
Home Health Aides	$9.81
Teacher Assistants	$9.47
Baristas	$9.02
Child Care Workers	$8.83

Average Annual Salary by Occupation[35]

Management/ Administration	Child Care/Preschool	$52,850
	Elementary & Secondary Education	$77,080
	Social & Community Services	$57,960
	Food service	$50,878
Non-Management Workers	Child Care	$18,310
	Baristas	$18,754
	Dishwashers	$18,450
	Home Health	$21,660
	Housekeeping	$19,130

Percentage of Mean Salaries for U.S. Teachers with Bachelor's or Higher Degree (2012)[36]

Labor Force Participants	Mean Annual Salary for BA or Higher Degree
Elementary school teacher	$56,130
Kindergarten teacher	$53,030
School-sponsored Pre-K teacher	$42,848
Other public Pre-K teacher	$33,696
Head Start teacher	$33,072
All other early childhood education teachers	$28,912

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[34] (New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, 2014)

[35] (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012)

[36] (Whitebook, 2014)

Educational Attainment of New Mexico's Early Childhood Workforce[37]

Education	Number	Percentage
Less than High School	1,910	14%
High School Graduate	3,682	27%
Less than 1 year of college	880	6%
1+ years college, no degree	3,364	24%
AA	1,370	10%
BA	1,887	14%
MA	587	4%
Other graduate degree	37	1%
PhD	59	0%
Total	**13,776**	**100%**

Less is known regarding the benefits child care professionals may receive, such as health insurance, retirement benefits, and free or discounted rates for child care for their own children.[38]

Employee Turnover

High teacher turnover leads to lower quality care, which compromises children's development.[39] The annual turnover rate for child care professionals is estimated to fall between 30% and 40%.[40] Turnover rates of center-based child care providers are more than four times greater than the 7% rate found among elementary school teachers.[41]

Several factors may influence a child care provider's decision to leave the profession:

- Low salary[42]
- Lack of health and disability insurance and pension benefits[43]
- Lack of supplies and equipment[44]
- Few opportunities for employer-supported educational advancement[45]
- Stress related to job demands, job control, and job resources[46]

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[37] (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011)
[38] (Child and Family Research Institute , 2013)
[39] (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003)
[40] (Baumgartner, Carson, & Apava, 2009)
[41] (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003)
[42] (Cornille, Mullis, Mullis, & Shriner, 2006)631-641.
[43] (Holochwost, DeMott, Buell, Yannetta, & Amsden , 2009, pp. 227-237)
[44] (Holochwost, DeMott, Buell, Yannetta, & Amsden , 2009, pp. 227-237)
[45] (Holochwost, DeMott, Buell, Yannetta, & Amsden , 2009, pp. 227-237)
[46] (Curbowa , Spratta, & Ungarettia , 2000)

Shared Services

Another strategy that potentially strengthens the workplace of child care providers is "shared services." This type of alliance enables child care and early education centers to share costs and deliver services more efficiently. Most early care and education (ECE) services are delivered via very small programs, led by individuals trained in child development, and often not skilled in managing the business side of early care and education. With limited resources to support strong fiscal and program management, quality suffers. [47]

Shared services enable organizations to reduce costs by joining forces on specific functions such as bulk buying, staff sharing, centralized administration, personnel paperwork, staff training, mentoring and supervision, and collaborative improvement processes. In short, Shared Services centralizes management functions to save dollars, build professional management capacity, and offer staff opportunities to focus their expertise and work in teams. [48] The task force endorsed this concept in Recommendation 4C.

New Mexico Example

Since October 2013, teachers and directors from early childhood centers and home-based programs in Santa Fe County have been meeting at the Santa Fe Community Foundation to discuss the shared services model of collaboration. Two specific areas of interest emerged during these monthly meetings: the opportunity for collaborative advanced professional development and a shared pool of substitute teachers. The participating programs are creating a shared services structure to support these interests called the Collaborative Teachers Institute (CTI).[49]

Child Care Workforce Recommendations

The task force's workforce committee developed recommendations to recruitment, retain, and improve the professional development of quality child care educators. The committee's recommendations were voted on by the full task force to determine the group's overall level of support. Strategies are listed in the order of their level of support.

RECOMMENDATION 3-EMPLOYEE SUBSIDIES
Create subsidies to support early childhood employees and directors.

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
A. Increase appropriations for TEACH®[50] scholarships and the INCENTIVES[51] program.	Legislative	*Advantages*: • Successful models worthy of replication • Increases higher-paying jobs, reducing the likelihood that trained teachers will leave child care to earn higher wages *Barriers*: • Costs	HS=83% MS=13% DS=4%

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[47] (Opportunities Exchange, 2014)
[48] (Opportunities Exchange, 2014)
[49] (Dry)
[50] (New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children, 2014)
[51] (New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children, 2014)

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support

B. Offer tax credit incentives to:
   i. Early child care employees for furthering their education
   ii. Early childhood directors for improving their businesses
   iii. Individuals and businesses for donating to early childhood programs (in addition to the charitable contribution deduction)
	Legislative	*Advantages*:
		• Direct dollar-for-dollar reductions in tax liabilities for early care employees and directors, as well as families who pay for child care, and businesses and individuals who donate to early childhood services
		• Stable and non-stigmatizing sources of revenue that could be a longer-term, more sustainable funding stream
		• Familiar system of incentives
		• Administered by universally used system (i.e., IRS)
		Barrier:
		• Costs
			HS=42%
			MS=22%
			DS=37%

C. Generate support to organizations like the NM Association for the Education of Young Children to advocate for higher wages in birth-to-5 early childhood programs.	Public Awareness	*Advantages*: • Creates broad support that recognizes the value of quality, early childhood education • Can lead to healthy, educated, tax-paying residents	HS=38% MS=42% DS=20%
D. Eliminate the gross receipts tax for NM Pre-K providers funded by NM CYFD.	Legislative	*Advantages*: • Increases program savings • Allows for investment in other areas such as quality, infrastructure, and employee wages and benefits *Barrier*: • Costs	DS=35% MS=23% DS=42%

RECOMMENDATION 4-EDUCATION AT WORK
Improve continuing education opportunities through changes in workplace practices.

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support

A. Encourage job-embedded professional development through grants from NM CYFD that address the following through a collaborative approach:
   i. Provide mentoring / coaching in the classroom
   ii. Involve floater-substitute pools
	Regulatory & Legislative (funding)	*Advantages*:
		• Higher quality educators who see themselves as professionals
		• Opportunity for a paradigm shift from safety and care to higher level of child/adult interactions
		Barrier:
			HS=63%
			MS=25%
			DS=12%

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
iii. Consider alternatives to pay employees planning / reflection time iv. Allow ratios to decrease during nap time v. Supply substitute teachers for after-hours care vi. Provide support for leadership in early childhood programs in schools		• Takes time to integrate training into daily practice	
B. Provide joint professional development opportunities for birth-to-5 and K-3 teachers.	Education Sector	*Advantages*: • Provides a continuum of understanding • Integrates, rather than separates, early child care and K-3 systems *Barriers*: • Change of mindset about separate systems • Buy-in from elementary school principals • Cost	HS=57% MS=30% DS=13%
C. Provide incentives for shared services (i.e., providers coordinate services such as administrative, financial, and professional development).	Regulatory (funding) & Child care Sector	*Advantages*: • Reduces costs • Allows for investment in other areas such as program quality • Greater local capacity • Increased quality in rural and urban areas *Barriers*: • No operational plan currently • Takes time to build trusting relationships to coordinate efforts	HS=25% MS=20% DS=55%

RECOMMENDATION 5-ADDITIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Encourage and support early childhood directors and teachers to pursue additional higher education.

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
A. Make higher education more accessible to all students, including non-traditional students, by funding and supporting the following: i. Dual Language Learners ii. Provide course schedules that are feasible for students (e.g., summertime, online options, etc.)	Education sector	*Advantages*: • Can increase student retention and graduation rate • Increases bilingual teachers in early childhood programs *Barriers*: • Increases the burden on higher education	HS=40% MS=24% DS=36%

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support

iii. Set up a menu of supports addressing specific student barriers (e.g., CNM Connect)
iv. Provide child care to students
v. Create pathways to obtaining a degree in higher education (e.g., the CNM peer support "cohort" approach)
vi. Strengthen current, and create new education pipelines. Strategies include:
  1. Link high schools/charter schools with community colleges that have early childhood degree programs (e.g., Santa Fe Teen Parent Center's *Mother Tongue* program)
  2. Redefine the role of high school vocational programs to serve as a feeder to higher education early childhood degree programs
  3. Strengthen existing high school programs such as GRAD and Dual Credit
		• Institutions have their own policies and practices that could require change
		• Requires collaboration	

B. Revise the educational requirements for program directors and educators, and include support for leadership, vision, business, and pedagogical training for directors.	Regulatory and legislative (funding)	*Advantages*: • Better trained workforce with a solid foundation in early childhood development and learning • Higher education creates expectation for higher pay, which is an incentive to pursue more education (this is also a barrier) • Changes mentality from "babysitter" to "educator" • Staff education levels raise the quality of care for children *Barriers*: • Centers will have to pay staff higher salaries, hire qualified staff, and encourage current staff to get higher credentials • Directors will need to work with staff to cultivate leadership so they have time for professional development, and developing processes (e.g., shared services) • It may be difficult for staff to return to school (e.g., ability, desire, access)	HS=35% MS=30% DS=35%

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
		• Teachers with degrees are seeking higher paying jobs with FOCUS, CYFD, Head Start, NM Pre-K, and universities	
C. Fund early childhood I-BEST[52] program.[53]	Legislative	*Advantage*: • Increases the number of bilingual and I-BEST instructors in birth-to-5 programs *Barrier*: Costs	HS=54% MS=25% DS=21%

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[52] The I-BEST program assists students who would benefit from a program that offers GED test prep, English language skills development, and a college certificate. This program is available for early childhood education students in several NM colleges and universities.
[53] (The Santa Fe Community College, 2014)

Child Care Quality and Accountability

The previous two sections focused on stability of care and a highly trained child care workforce. If implemented, those proposed recommendations would require significant public investment. However, policymakers and taxpayers may be reluctant to devote additional dollars without assurance that their investment will result in measurable improvements in the child care system.

Quality standards provide one set of tools to measure the effectiveness of child care – and the public investments that underlie it. New Mexico sets quality standards for licensed providers and administers the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS). The state rates child care programs on a five star scale, five stars indicating the highest level of quality. The quality standards focus on the following: [54]

1. Staff qualifications, evaluation, and communication
2. Environment (both the physical and social-emotional responsive environments)
3. Observation and documentation of children's progress and curriculum planning
4. Staff/caregiver professional development plan
5. Family involvement plan
6. Administrative plans
7. Employee compensation and benefits
8. Child/adult ratios and group size
9. Accreditation

Licensed providers that choose to meet higher quality standards receive higher child care assistance payment rates (a system called "tiered reimbursement"). The system also supports family choice by providing guidelines for quality.[55] The state pays a different rate depending on the provider type and location, and age of the child.

Provider Star Level Assistance Rate Paid by NM Child Care Assistance Program: Per Child, Per Month Served (2013)[56]

Provider Star Level	Assistance Rate Paid by NM Child Care Assistance Program
2 Star (base rate)	$326-$521
3 Star	Base rate + $88
4 Star	Base rate + $122
5 Star	Base rate + $150

NM Quality Rating and Improvement System: Participating providers and Children Served[57]

QRIS Star Level	Number of participating providers	Percentage of total participating children
2 Star	612	53%
3 Star	62	13%
4 Star	84	9%
5 Star	179	25%
Total	937	100%

[54] (University of New Mexico, Division of Continuing Education, 2009)
[55] (NM Early Childhood Development Partnership, 2014)
[56] (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2013, p. 24)
[57] (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2013)

The state, through the CYFD, verifies that licensed homes and centers meet basic licensure requirements. The agency also grants contracts to the Training and Technical Assistance Programs (TTAPs) to ensure that providers at the three or four-star levels are meeting quality requirements. External accrediting agencies verify that five star providers are meeting quality requirements.[58]

FOCUS

In January 2013, through the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant, CYFD began revamping its quality rating system to support participating providers in establishing specific goals to meet new quality benchmarks. The voluntary system, called FOCUS, includes the following quality elements that foster program leadership, cultivate teacher quality, and supports positive outcomes for children: [59]

1. Authentic child assessment and curriculum planning process
2. Family engagement strategies
3. Health, safety, and health promotion practices
4. Comprehensive program assessment and continuous improvement
5. Early childhood educator qualifications

Providers that participate in FOCUS will continue to be rated on a five-star scale. About 200 child care providers currently participate in FOCUS.[60] The full rollout of FOCUS is expected to be complete by 2018. Registered homes do not participate in FOCUS.

While many providers support the goals of the new FOCUS standards, they worry that the cost of meeting those standards exceeds what the state currently pays them per child and makes it more difficult to recruit and retain staff. Some providers argue that there are other ways to achieve good results than those offered through FOCUS (i.e., faith-based models, Montessori, alternative staffing approaches). They call for an accountability option based on the child's performance rather than adherence to a specific set of rules. In addition, providers participating in the pilot version of FOCUS also report challenges in the rollout of the new system.

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[58] (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2013, p. 13)
[59] (University of New Mexico, Division of Continuing Education, 2014)
[60] (University of New Mexico, Division of Continuing Education, 2014)

BACKGROUND

Race-to-the-Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC)

The RTT-ELC is a federal grant program administered by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. The grant supports states to establish statewide systems that raise the quality of early learning and development programs, and increase access to high-quality care and education programs for children with high needs. The primary goal is to increase the probability that all children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

The priorities of the RTT-ELC are:

- Promote school readiness for children with high needs
- Include all early learning and development programs in the TQRIS
- Understand the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry

The grant supports five essential areas that represent the foundation of an effective early learning and development agenda:

- Successful state systems
- High-quality accountable programs
- Promotion of early Learning and Development outcomes for children
- A great early childhood education workforce
- Measuring outcomes and progress

Funds were granted to states in two rounds (in 2011 and 2013), based on a competitive process. In the second round, New Mexico was selected to receive $37.5 million. New Mexico's application focused on the following:

- Expanding the current TQRIS and implementing the FOCUS pilot program
- Increasing the infrastructure and capacity of the CYFD designated early childhood investment zones
- Expanding professional development activities
- Developing a cross-agency early childhood data system
- Developing a universal kindergarten assessment tool and process

The grant was divided among three state agencies:

- Funds to support NM Public Education Department to manage the overall statewide budget for its share of the data systems project, the kindergarten entry assessment project, and the TQRIS project
- Funds to support NM Children, Youth and Families Department to manage the overall statewide budget for its share of the TQRIS project, the data systems project, the investment zone project, the evaluation project, the professional development project, and grantee technical assistance project
- Funds to the NM Department of Health for the overall statewide budget, and for a portion of the data systems project

Child Care Quality and Accountability Recommendations

To address these concerns, one task force committee focused on accountability measures that could indicate whether public dollars are being well spent, whether improvements are being made to existing quality measurement systems, and which reforms are in place to strengthen the fiscal viability of child care centers so they can afford to deliver on higher expectations. The strategies are listed in order of their level of support by the full task force.

RECOMMENDATION 6-INDICATORS

Establish a set of indicators that will measure the effectiveness of New Mexico's child care system.

Potential Indicators	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
A. Evidence of the availability of affordable, high-quality child care for families with low-income, working parents.	HS=85% MS=15% DS=0%

B. Evidence that children are healthy and safe:
   i. Regular attendance
   ii. Immunization rates
   iii. Regular health and developmental screenings
   iv. Evidence of an referral system to other social services
   v. Evidence that children receive regular meals
	HS=82%
	MS=18%
	DS=0%

C. Evidence of high quality early education:
   i. Staff retention rates
   ii. Teacher education levels
   iii. Percent of children who enter kindergarten ready to learn, as measured by a kindergarten entry assessment [61]
   iv. Percent of children who took part in child care and by 3rd grade are reading proficiently[62]
   v. Evidence that children are happy and engaged
	HS=83%
	MS=17%
	DS=0%

D. Evidence that families are constructively engaged	HS=83% MS=9% DS=8%

RECOMMENDATION 7-ALTERNATIVE TO FOCUS

As an alternative to FOCUS, create an outcome-based quality rating pathway within FOCUS for child care accountability, using an evidence-based, quality-rating tool.

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
A. Use a kindergarten readiness assessment as a major indicator for the system.	Administrative	*Advantage*: • Provides an objective tool to assess effectiveness of models different from FOCUS *Barriers*: • Assessment tool must be selected • Some populations (i.e., English language learners or low-income children) may	HS=83% MS=13% DS=4%

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[61] While data might be collected for all students, child care facilities would only be held accountable for academic achievement by students who received at least one year of intentional instruction. Data would be collected on which facilities/programs the child attended.
[62] See above.

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
		struggle with the assessment despite quality early learning opportunities	
B. Use a quality-rating tool to accommodate facilities that operate within different accrediting bodies (i.e., Montessori, faith-based) or deploy teaching/training techniques different from the FOCUS standards.	Administrative	*Advantage*: • Provides another pathway to achieving the equivalent of a higher star level for state reimbursements *Barrier:* • Requires consensus regarding equivalent outcome	HS=71% MS=13% DS=16%

RECOMMENDATION 8-FOCUS IMPROVEMENTS

Improve the implementation of the FOCUS quality rating system.

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
A. Ensure FOCUS training is widely accessible to different audiences (i.e., online, bilingual, geographically dispersed, etc.).	Administrative	*Advantages*: • Increases the likelihood that centers can train all or most of their staff • Addresses cultural differences *Barrier*: • State staffing for training	HS=84% MS=12% DS=4%
B. Recognize equivalent training, and create a structure where experienced teachers can "test out of" new training if they can demonstrate proficiency with the content.	Administrative	*Advantages*: • Saves time and money by not requiring repeat training for experienced or qualified staff members • Expands the range of training options, putting less demand on the state *Barriers*: • CYFD must review and determine which trainings will qualify • Test must be valid and reliable	HS=83% MS=17% DS=0%
C. For star rankings, reduce the initial employee professional development requirement from 100% to 80% of teachers who have taken mandatory training.	Administrative	*Advantage*: • Enables centers to achieve star rankings while addressing the reality of high turnover within the child care industry	HS=74% MS=21% DS=5%

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
D. Assign each multi-site child care facility only one FOCUS consultant, and ensure that all consultants are trained consistently.	Administrative (Contractual)	*Advantages*: • Avoids different interpretations of rules by different consultants • Improves effectiveness of FOCUS implementation	HS=62% MS=38% DS=0%

RECOMMENDATION 9-FINANCIAL STABILITY
Create structures enabling child care facilities to maintain financial stability while achieving quality standards.

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
A. Create quality incentives for all licensed child care providers as an alternative to assistance.	Administrative	*Advantages*: • Financially motivates centers that are not dominated by subsidized children to improve quality *Barriers*: • Costs	HS=68% MS=27% DS=5%
B. Develop additional financing strategies so that child care centers remain economically viable.	Administrative	*Advantages*: • Helps centers remain in business, and supporting families, while improving quality of care *Barriers*: • Research required to vet different strategies • Philosophical disagreements exist regarding what types of strategies to pursue • Costs	HS=63% MS=17% DS=20%
C. Publish data on the cost of meeting FOCUS quality standards.	Administrative	*Advantages*: • Enables the state and child care centers to make informed decisions	HS=58% MS=38% DS=4%

RECOMMENDATION 10-HIGHEST NEEDS CHILDREN

Take steps to ensure that children with the highest needs are able to receive the highest quality care.

Strategies	Type of Change	Advantages/Barriers	Level of Support HS=Highly Support MS=Moderately Support DS=Don't Support
A. Research and pursue incentive options that would encourage child care assistance families to select high quality, evidence-based child care.	Administrative	*Advantage*: • Prompts parents to consider quality instead of just considering the value of the child care voucher *Barriers*: • Must make any incentive equitable	HS=88% MS=12% DS=0%
B. Set an attainable goal for the percentage of subsidized children who attend high quality programs within the next five years.	Administrative	*Advantages*: • Provides needed support for home-based providers *Barriers*: • Potentially negatively affects registered (but unlicensed) home-based providers	HS=79% MS=21% DS=0%
C. Provide support enabling registered home-based providers to become licensed.	Administrative	*Advantages*: • Increases the number of home-based providers meeting minimum licensing standards *Barriers*: • Costs to provide support	HS=76% MS=24% DS=0%

Conclusion

This report identifies a range of policy options and considers the advantages and barriers for each. The overall intent is to ensure stability for families, continuity and quality of care for children, and financial stability for child care providers, all leading to improving outcomes for children. The group's conclusions and recommendations will provide a solid platform for policy change during the 2015 New Mexico legislative session that can help our youngest children succeed in school and in life.

Appendix A

Feedback from Regional Forums

During October 2014, the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership convened regional meetings in Farmington and Las Cruces. The purpose of these meetings was to review the recommendations proposed by the task force. Twenty-two participants in Farmington and forty-four participants in Las Cruces had the opportunity to voice their opinions regarding the recommendations. A significant number of Spanish-speaking child care professionals participated in the Las Cruces forum. The executive summary, recommendations, and presentation slides were provided in Spanish, and a Spanish interpreter ensured Spanish-speakers could fully participate in the meeting discussions.

Consolidated Results from Regional Forums

Participants at both forums brought up the following recommendations for discussion:

Recommendation 1A: Change the child care eligibility period from six months to 12 months.
Overall, participants supported this recommendation. Improving the continuity of care helps child care providers improve the quality of their programs.

Recommendation 1B: Enable child care funding to remain in place during high school and college breaks.
Participants thought this recommendation would encourage students to stay in school.

Recommendation 1C: Research the effect that the child care co-pay plays on access to and continuity of care.
Participants agreed with this recommendation. They believed more parents would be able to pay for quality care if they had better co-pays. They also supported the need for additional research to support this recommendation and believed the researcher should be chosen carefully.

Recommendation 1E: Set entrance eligibility for child care assistance to 200% of FPL and exit at 250%.
Participants saw this as a positive way to increase working families' access to affordable child care. They mentioned that many parents and guardians refuse promotions and overtime because the extra income disqualifies them for child care assistance.

Recommendation 2C: Expand ways people can apply for child care assistance (e.g. online).
Participants supported this recommendation, as it would save families time and expense. However, they did not view an online application as a panacea. An online system would require training and must be available in various languages. They also saw the possibility of an online application becoming a one-stop-shop for applying to multiple family support programs.

Recommendation 3A: Increase appropriations for TEACH scholarships and the INCENTIVES program.
Participants appreciated these two programs, which help child care professionals advance their education. However, they also acknowledged that this advancement also contributes to the high turnover in the workforce. Child care providers lose their investment in employees as employees move on to higher paying jobs (i.e., Pre-K positions in the public school system). The providers need support to compete with salary rates and benefits options. One idea is to make incentives available through program providers that benefit both the employees, and the programs.

Recommendation 3D: Eliminate the gross receipts tax (GRT) for early child care and/or Pre-K providers.
Participants liked this recommendation, but were skeptical of its acceptance by the legislature due to its impact on state funding. Some participants believed passing along the gross receipts tax to families limits the number of those who can afford child care. Other participants believed that, given families already pay taxes on other types of family expenses, the practice of sheltering families from paying GRT for child care services needed to change. Passing the GRT tax for child care to families could make a positive difference in the providers' ability to invest in program quality, child health, and improved environments.

Recommendation 4A: Encourage job-embedded professional development through grants from NM CYFD through a collaborative approach.
Participants found the specifics noted in this recommendation (refer to page 16 of the report) very meaningful for staff members, as the recommendation provides for both professional development in the workplace as well as working on real-life issues with coaching support. There was a suggestion that this approach be implemented and count toward the 24 hours of mandatory training.

Recommendation 4B: Provide joint professional development opportunities for birth-to-5 and K-3 teachers.
Some participants believed joint professional development would be beneficial. However, others believed the investment should focus on birth-to-5 teachers. The training would need to be authentically useful for both groups.

Recommendation 5A: Make higher education more accessible for all students, including non-traditional students, by funding it (refer to page 17 of the report for specific strategies).
Participants viewed this recommendation as a way to encourage high school students to get the training they need to be employed in the child care field and to see themselves as professionals. However, some participants warned that providers are liable for damages if a student under 18 years of age hurts a child.

Recommendation 7: As an alternative to FOCUS, create an outcome-based quality rating pathway within FOCUS for child care accountability, using an evidence-based, quality rating tool.
Participants at both regional meetings supported the FOCUS system, but acknowledged there needs to be improvements in its implementation. Participants in Las Cruces were more supportive of FOCUS than those in Farmington. Las Cruces advocated for patience as FOCUS was fine-tuned, and did not want it to be eliminated. Some participants found that FOCUS affects stakeholders in a number of positive ways: standards and training influence beliefs about child care; educators are provided tools to improve communication with families regarding their children's development; and employees become better professionals equipped with a new set of child care tools. They acknowledged improving quality takes time, but the investment was worth it as it was an opportunity for professional development without costs to providers. Some participants pointed out that as FOCUS is primarily funded by the Race to the Top grant, the state needs a plan to sustain the program.

Recommendation 8: Improve the implementation of the FOCUS professional development standards to ensure a viable child care workforce and support staff retention.
Participants highly supported professional development. However, they mentioned several challenges they believed should be addressed:
1. There has been a decrease in **Training and Technical Assistance Programs (TTAP) and other community-based training. Traveling to regional trainings is difficult for staff.**

2. There are limited training sessions and limited seats available, which makes it difficult for staff to meet the current mandatory training. Completing 24 hours annually of mandatory training is difficult for employees and may not mean higher quality programs.
3. Approved training sites do not include community rooms at local churches or at a child care center.
4. Communications between TTAP and child care providers need to be improved.
5. Move away from one approved university (or universities altogether) as TTAP providers, and move to private providers of professional development.

Recommendation 10C: Provide support enabling registered home-based providers to become licensed.
Participants at both regional meetings believe that if a home-based provider is receiving state funds, they need to fulfill the requirements to become licensed. They suggested that registered home providers should be mandated to become licensed and encouraged to move up through the STAR rating system within a specific timeframe.

Results Specific to Farmington Regional Forum

Recommendation 2A: Eliminate reporting of income increases between certification periods.
Participants at the Farmington meeting supported this recommendation, which would simplify the certification process.

Recommendation 2B: Educate families regarding child care support requirements and strengthen the training for caseworkers.
Participants believed that more training and information regarding the child care system, processes, and requirements would be helpful. They suggested that early child care information should be distributed through all hospitals to new parents. Simplifying the process and receiving consistent information would encourage parents to enter and remain in the education system. Waiting for an available appointment, having to miss work or school, and long waiting times before being served are disincentives to applying for child are assistance and therefore a disadvantage for children.

Recommendation 2D: Enable families that are eligible for SNAP to bypass additional income eligibility paperwork.
Some participants supported "presumptive eligibility" (i.e., if a family qualifies for other support programs, they should qualify for childcare assistance).

Recommendation 5B: Revise the educational requirements for program directors and educators, and include support for leadership, vision, business, and pedagogical training for directors.
Participants advocated for aligning training requirements and reducing the duplication of training. They believed that a director or educator with an associate or bachelor's degree should not be required to attend additional training. Participants acknowledged that the NM Higher Education Task Force is discussing this issue and may possibly support legislation to add "sunset" language to bring higher education programs into alignment.

Recommendation 7A: Use kindergarten readiness assessment as a major indicator for the system.
Participants warned that there are many variables (such as the definition of quality) in assessing system quality. They warned that caution should be taken in choosing multiple assessments. They also suggested that the kindergarten readiness assessment only be used with children who have had extended stays in a child care program.

Recommendation 7B: Use a quality-rating tool to accommodate facilities that operate within different accrediting bodies (i.e., Montessori, faith-based) or deploy teaching/training techniques different from the FOCUS standards.
Some participants saw the need for multiple accreditations and others believed that using an alternative to FOCUS was not a good idea. Some stressed that accreditation does not necessarily translate to higher quality. Others mentioned that meeting the FOCUS standards raises costs for child care centers.

Recommendation 8B: Recognize equivalent training.
Participants identified this as an important recommendation, especially for educators with an associate or bachelor's degree. If for any reason a degreed employee cannot attend the required training when it is offered, a child care center's quality status can be blocked.

Results Specific to Las Cruces Regional Forums
Recommendation 1F: Extend job-search period to 90 days for families who already qualify for subsidized child care and whose parents have lost their jobs.
Participants at the Las Cruces meeting supported this recommendation because it could encourage parents to pursue job training for a longer period. However, some believed 90 days could lead to abuse of the child care system and suggested a 60-day job search extension instead.

Recommendation 3C: Generate support for organizations like the NM Association for the Education of Young Children to advocate for higher wages in birth-to-5 early childhood programs.
Participants acknowledged that early child care and education are not competitive with Head Start, Pre-K, and elementary school educator, and believed these compensation structures should be more aligned. However, they would prefer to see funding used to serve families, rather than support advocacy.

Recommendation 6: Establish a set of indicators that will measure the effectiveness of New Mexico's child care system.
Participants believed that all the indicators were important, but warned against using the percentage of children who took part in child care and by 3rd grade are reading proficiently. The providers did not see the child care system as responsible or accountable for reading proficiency.

Recommendation 9A: Create quality incentives for all licensed child care providers as an alternative to subsidies.
Participants saw the need to maintain the practice of child care subsidies. Subsidies support the financial sustainability of child care centers, and help providers pay for the rising costs of insurance and minimum wage increases.

Conclusion
In general, participants viewed all the strategies that support families in accessing high quality child care as important. They also expressed the opinion that child care providers should be supportive of the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department and their programs. Finally, participants believed that if parents feel more stable, children would benefit.

In addition, participants recognize that legislators and regulators need the costs of these recommendations to be analyzed, as well as, to know which of these recommendations are considered a high priority for implementation.

Appendix B

Government Funding

In FY14, New Mexico budgeted approximately $108 million to fund child care with $95 million to be spent on child care assistance. The following table shows the key sources of funding for child care assistance in the state. The table also shows how the funds are allocated.

CHILD CARE FUNDING SOURCES AND USES[63]

Revenue Source	FY14 Budget
Child care and Development Block Grant (federal)	$39,107,000
Title IV-E (federal)	$900,000
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant (federal)	$27,278,000
Employment & Training (federal)	$589,000
State General Fund	$37,840,000
Other State Funds	$2,750,00
Total Federal and State Revenue	$108,464,000
Revenue Use	**FY14 Budget**
Child Care Services	$94,964,000
Quality Initiatives	$4,623,000
Administration/Eligibility	$8,289,000
Total Spending	$107,875,000

State Funding

State funds support a number of early childhood efforts. The budget signed by Governor Susana Martinez at the conclusion of the 2014 New Mexico Legislative session included $231.1 million total funding to support early childhood programs. This was an increase in funding for early childhood initiatives by $26 million, almost a 13% increase over the FY14 appropriation.

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[63] (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2013, p. 21)

The signed budget included additional funding for home visiting, New Mexico PreK, infant child care assistance rates, Kindergarten to Third Grade Plus in public schools, and the Early Literacy Reading Initiative in public schools. The budget also included funds for early childhood teacher compensation and retention. The final budget included the following General Fund appropriations:

- **Home Visiting:** $2.5 million was appropriated to support home visiting programs.
- **Families, Infants and Toddlers Program (FIT):** $5.6 million was appropriated to support the FIT program, including $500,000 to support reimbursement increases for providers. The FIT program is a statewide program that provides early intervention services to infants and toddlers who have or are at risk for developmental delay, and their families in New Mexico.
- **New Mexico PreK:** $6.2 million was appropriated to support the existing half-day New Mexico PreK program. This includes a $3.5 million appropriation to support a full-day pilot program. New Mexico PreK is jointly administered by the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department and Public Education Department. Since the development of New Mexico PreK, funds were distributed equally between both departments. For the first time, additional funding was appropriated to the Public Education Department.
- **K-3 Plus:** $5.3 million was appropriated to support the K-3 Plus program which provides additional educational time (extending the school year for K-3 by 25 instructional days beginning before the school year) for students in "high-poverty public schools," kindergarten through third grade.
- **Reads to Lead!:** $3.0 million was appropriated to support New Mexico Reads to Lead! This initiative funds a K-3 formative assessment system for reading which is provided to local school districts, at no cost. The funds are also used for professional development for parents, teachers, administrators, reading coaches, and other stakeholders.
- **Training, Technical Assistance and Professional Development:** $600,000 was appropriated for two specific functions: 1) $300,000 for training, technical assistance, and professional development for child care assistance programs and 2) $300,000 for statewide child care teacher education, retention, and compensation. This funding could be used to support the expansion of the New Mexico INCENTIVES Early Childhood program which is an affiliate of Child Care WAGE$® North Carolina that provides wage supplements to early childhood care and education professionals.
- **Planning Grants:** $450,000 was appropriated to support high quality early childhood development center planning grants. These funds are administered by CYFD.
- **Support for Family Child Care Homes:** $400,000 was appropriated to support quality improvements in family child care homes. These funds will be administered by CYFD.
- **Child Care Assistance:** $1.3 million was appropriated to increase child care assistance rates for infant care and education. An additional $1 million was appropriated to ensure sufficient funds to sustain a 4% increase in rates that went into effect in the fall of 2013, while continuing to serve all families needing care who have incomes up to 150% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Federal Funding

In order to receive federal funds, New Mexico must meet statutory matching and maintenance-of-effort requirements. [64] The table below describes the various federal funding programs that address child-related needs. New Mexico participates in all of the programs outlined.

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[64] (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2013)

FEDERAL FUNDING FOR CHILDREN-RELATED PROGRAMS[65]

Program	Description
Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)	These grants are the primary source of federal funding for child care subsidies for low-income working families and improvements to child care quality. Each state receives a set amount of funds and can receive additional funds by spending more state money on child care subsidies and quality initiatives. Annual CCDBG appropriations include an earmark for investments in infant-toddler care.
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant	States have broad discretion when using their grant funds and designing their TANF programs. States may provide child care assistance to families directly through TANF funds and may also choose to transfer up to 30% of its TANF funds to CCDBG.
Head Start/Early Head Start	Children and their families receive comprehensive early child care and education services. All programs are required to meet Head Start Program Performance Standards, which include mental and physical health, dental, family, and social services. The Early Head Start program is funded through a set-aside within the Head Start budget.
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C	This program supports services for infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities and delays. When a child is determined eligible for Part C, the family and the Part C agency develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), which outlines the goals for the child and the services available.

In addition to the programs listed above, New Mexico has received approximately $38 million from the Race-to-the-Top Early Learning Challenge grant (RTT-ELC). [66]

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[65] (Schmit & Matthews, 2013, p. 2)
[66] (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2013, p. 13)

Appendix C

Policy Accomplishments in NM Early Childhood Development

New Mexico has a long history of commitment to its children, their families and their communities. Public policies are built upon the belief that families and communities are the platform from which all efforts must be launched. This commitment requires that all work be informed and driven by a deep respect for the diverse values and cultures of New Mexico's families.

There is evidence of strong and increasing public support of early childhood care and education. This is an important indicator of long-term commitment to building a sustainable, high quality system of early learning. Although New Mexico faces all of the challenges of a poor state, it has been blessed with an abundance of talent and personal initiative. There is a dedicated cadre of early childhood experts and political champions who have worked tirelessly over many years to evolve and refine a coordinated system of early child care and education. The work of these individuals over so many years has ensured that the knowledge – embedded in systems, statute, and policy – to design, implement, and support high-quality programs is present. Early childhood educators in New Mexico now see increasing public and political will to expand early childhood funding so that services can be provided to more children.

The policy accomplishments demonstrating New Mexico's commitment to improving children's school readiness are woven together, yet can be organized into four parallel threads, listed by a detailed chronology in the table below:

- Building a unified and effective system of governance and systems alignment
- Creating three generations of a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Developing a universal, fully-articulated, professional development system
- Building public support and political will for increased early childhood funding

Governance and Systems Alignment

1989	The Office of Child Development (OCD) and a governor-appointed **Child Development Board** were created in statute. The OCD and Board were given responsibility to: 1) establish a professional development system for those working with children, birth through third grade; 2) develop program standards for state-funded, early childhood programs; 3) establish a system of state-funded, child development programs for children, birth to age five; 4) coordinate systems of early childhood care and education.
1991	The NM Governor appointed a **Task Force on Children and Families** to study the feasibility of creating a single, cabinet-level agency to focus on the issues of children and youth.
1992	The **Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD)** was created in statute with the vision to bring together diverse programs for children and families. New Mexico was the first state in the nation to bring so many divisions and departments together in one cabinet-level agency to streamline services, reduce duplication, and create family-friendly access. The focus was on administrating services that would "strengthen client self-sufficiency and emphasize prevention." The legislation directed CYFD to: 1) develop priorities for state

	services and resources; 2) increase collaboration and coordination; 3) develop and maintain a database that would include client tracking for children and families; and 4) develop standards for accountability.
2003	The NM Legislature requested that the Child Development Board lead a study regarding the alignment of early care, education, and family support systems by establishing the **Early Childhood Alignment Task Force**. The work of the task force was to provide a comprehensive analysis of the early learning system and to gather information regarding 1) the number of children and families being served, 2) the location of systems within state government, and 3) how systems interact. Of particular interest was the potential duplication of effort, the amount of money being spent, the source of the funds and the categorical nature of each funding source. "A Plan for the Alignment of Early Education Programs" was presented to the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) in November 2003.
2003	The NM Constitution was amended and the **Public Education Department (PED)** was established and headed by a Cabinet Secretary reporting to the Governor.
2003	The LESC asked CYFD, PED and the Department of Health (DOH) to establish an **Early Learning Plan**. The plan was to include three components: 1) a policy brief describing the attributes of a coordinated and culturally/linguistically appropriate early learning system for children, birth through third grade; 2) early learning outcomes for children, birth through third grade; and 3) early learning standards for children birth through third grade. Hundreds of early childhood stakeholders from throughout the state participated in a yearlong process to develop the New Mexico Early Learning Plan.
2003	The **New Mexico Children's Cabinet** was established. (It was later incorporated into state statute in 2005). The purpose of the Cabinet was to create a venue for collaboration across departments in order to maximize resources and track the well-being of children and youth in New Mexico. The Cabinet tracks outcomes in four areas: early childhood development, health and nutrition, education and pre-K – grade 3, and child welfare & public safety. On an annual basis, the Children's Cabinet is charged with developing the Children's Cabinet Report Card and Budget report.
2007	New Mexico received an **Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Grant** from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of Health Resources and Services Administration (MCHB/HRSA) to convene a cross-agency, cross-sector group to develop a comprehensive early childhood strategic plan to align systems for young children birth to five and their families. As part of this grant, hundreds of early childhood stakeholders and multi-agency state government personnel participated in a statewide process to create an Early Childhood Strategic Plan for 2009-2012, which was endorsed by a number of Cabinet Secretaries.
2008	Based upon the vision, goals, and objectives of the Early Childhood Strategic Plan, DOH was awarded one of the first six **Project LAUNCH grants** from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The purpose of the five-year grant was to align and improve systems and programs serving children birth to five and their families at the state and local level. The local demonstration site is the Santa Fe Children's Project administered by the United Way of Santa Fe County that provides a concrete example of the impact a comprehensive, community-based system can have on children's lives.
2011	The NM Legislature passed the **New Mexico Early Childhood Care and Education Act**. The Act has three primary components: 1) a description of the essential components of a high quality early childhood system;

	2) the establishment of a state Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC); 3) the establishment of a non-reverting fund to support the establishment of a comprehensive, aligned early childhood system of systems. Based on provisions in the Act, four Implementation Teams were established: Data Systems, Quality, School Readiness and Finance. These teams met regularly. The School Readiness Team wrote a School Readiness Policy Brief for consideration by the ELAC.
2013	The NM Legislature passed the **Home Visiting Accountability Act**. This act provided a definition of CYFD-funded home visiting programs and created a framework for "standards-based" home visiting to ensure a level of quality and consistency in home visiting programs around the state. The act further ensured a level of accountability for reporting, sharing outcomes, understanding the state's return on investment, and utilizing data to drive decision-making.
2013	NM received a **Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC)**. Administered by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, the RTT-ELC grants support states in establishing statewide systems that raise the quality of early learning and development programs and increase the access to high-quality care and education programs for children with high needs, so that all children enter kindergarten ready to succeed. In New Mexico, the grant was divided among three state agencies: PED, CYFD and DOH. Grant funds are used to support the following: • Expanding the current TQRIS and implement the FOCUS pilot program • Focusing on increasing the infrastructure and capacity of the CYFD designated early childhood investment zones • Expanding professional development activities • Developing a cross-agency early childhood data system • Developing a universal kindergarten assessment tool and process

Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

1997	CYFD implemented the **Tiered Quality Rating System (TQRIS)** for all licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes. This system recognized programs with a voluntary gold, silver or bronze designation. This system was not widely recognized or utilized.
1999	CYFD created a task force to determine the lessons learned from the gold, silver and bronze TQRIS. After review of the data and input from parents and early childhood practitioners, CYFD created **AIM HIGH: Essential Elements of Quality**. AIM HIGH had three long-term goals to increase the: • Quality of child care licensing regulations by systematically moving AIM HIGH quality criteria into the child care regulations • Number of high quality child care programs • Number of low income children on assistance in high quality child care programs The system defined five tiers of criteria above the minimal child care regulations. Level 5, the highest level of quality, was accreditation by a national accrediting entity approved by CYFD. Lower levels were based on criteria that would enable a program to be successful when applying for accreditation. The state reviewed assistance rosters, and prioritized the recruitment of programs serving the highest percentage of children receiving state assistance, as a strategy to incentivize program participation. In order to assist with the costs

	of quality, substantial increases were made to the assistance rates for children attending programs demonstrating higher levels of quality. To support the participating programs, the focus of the Child Care Resource and Referral system was changed to training and technical assistance. Considerable federal and state funding was provided to the statewide network of Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance Program (TTAP) contractors to provide on-site support, training and technical assistance to interested programs. The on-site support included a task as simple as writing a Parent Handbook or as complex as conducting a self-study in preparation for national accreditation.
2005	At least seventy percent of all licensed programs had attained **AIM HIGH Level 1 or higher** by 2005. CYFD embedded the AIM HIGH Level 1 criteria into child care licensing regulations. That left only levels 2, 3, 4 and 5 in the AIM HIGH Essential Elements of Quality. Two landmark decisions solidified the quality rating system: • All child care licenses would indicate the program's level of quality. One star meant the program met basic licensing regulations with 2, 3, 4 or 5 stars indicating the program's level of quality based on the AIM HIGH Essential Elements of Quality. The "*Look for the STARS*" campaign was initiated and consumers were educated regarding the quality criteria at each star level. • The revised 2005 Child Care Assistance Regulations included the requirement that programs must have 2 stars or higher license by July 1, 2007 in order to serve children receiving child care assistance.
2010	Seventy percent of the state licensed programs had achieved a **2 STAR license or higher** by 2010. The child care licensing regulations were revised to include the AIM HIGH 2 STAR criteria.
2010	Federal stimulus funds were used to begin a **comprehensive review of the AIM HIGH/"Look for the STARS" System**. CYFD convened a task force with representatives from the early childhood community to review the system and make recommendations. Using the group's recommendations and the newly released quality benchmarks proposed by the federal government, CYFD revised the state's TQRIS standards.
2011	**FOCUS** is the third generation TQRIS and built upon the considerable successes of AIM HIGH, as well as many years of utilizing a criteria-based authentic observation – documentation – and curriculum planning process in state-funded child development and Pre-K programs. The revised TQRIS focused on children's learning with teachers becoming increasingly competent observers and planners of appropriate curriculum. Program assessment tools (e.g., the Environmental Rating Scales) that were previously used as high-stakes "ends," were now to be used as a "means" for self-assessment within a continuous quality improvement process that is "<u>focused</u>" on children being ready for successful entry into kindergarten.
2014	About 100 child care providers **participate in FOCUS** as of 2014.

Professional Development System

1991	The OCD, the Child Development Board, and the State Board of Education established a **Professional Development Task Force**. The group recommended the creation of a competency-based, Bachelor's level, teacher's license for individuals working in programs with children birth through third grade. This license would be intended for individuals working in any early child care and education program, including those outside of the public schools. Statewide meetings with stakeholders were held and guiding principles were established. These principles are the basis for New Mexico's current training, certification and licensure system for early child care, education and family support.
1993	NM became the first state in the nation to adopt an inclusive, **competency-based teacher's license** for children birth through third grade. Committed to the diversity of the state, the competencies were written with the expectation that early childhood educators understand and meet the needs of all children and their families, including those who are low-income, English-Language Learners and children with disabilities or developmental delays.
1994	NM was one of four states chosen to partner with the Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education at Wheelock College in Boston in an initiative called **Partners in Change.** This initiative established a three-way partnership between higher education, state government and local practitioners. The project focused on identifying barriers that individuals faced when attempting to further their training and formal education in early childhood and the creation of a career lattice.
1995	The **Early Childhood Higher Education Task Force** was created and included faculty members from every state college and university, program managers from state departments that included early childhood programs, and other stakeholders. This group has continued to meet monthly up to the present.
1997	The W. K. Kellogg Foundation funded the **Continuous Journey Project** for three years. The goals of the project were to: 1) increase access to higher education, early childhood, and personnel preparation programs by traditionally disenfranchised individuals, particularly minorities; and 2) create strategies that would make personnel preparation programs more responsive to community needs, particularly in the areas of language and culture. NM is now implementing the third generation of a professional development system that is fully articulated and has a universal course of study with three pathways: Early Childhood Educator, Early Childhood Program Administration and Family Infant Toddler Studies (especially for those aspiring to be early interventionists or home visitors). State-issued certification and licensure is available in all three pathways at three levels: Entry Level, Associate Degree and Bachelor's Degree. Competency-based master's degrees are available in early childhood education and early childhood special education. A doctoral degree is available online for working professionals.
2004	CYFD began funding the **T.E.A.C.H.® Scholarship Program** so that child care teachers could access the professional development system. The program began with 59 T.E.A.C.H.® scholars in 2005 and increased to 746 in 2010. There are now T.E.A.C.H.® scholars from Head Start, child care, Pre-K and public school special education and kindergarten programs.

Sustainable Funding

2008	The **Early Childhood Investment Committee (ECIC),** a group of business leaders and economists, was convened to recommend short and long-term strategies to: 1) increase public investment in early childhood, and 2) engage business leaders in advocacy efforts for legislative action in support of early childhood development. The recommendation of the ECIC was to create the NM Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP) to advocate for the creation, adoption, and implementation of effective and proven early childhood programs for children up to five years.
2009	The **New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership (NMECDP)** was formed. The NMECDP is governed by an Advisory Board made up of public, private and philanthropic leaders and is supported by funding from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. The partnership sponsored the NM Economic Summit on Early Childhood in 2009, a retreat for 60 state business leaders in 2010 and a Business Leaders' Summit in 2011. They also held Community Conversations and Town Hall meetings in six regions during 2010. NMECDP was instrumental in the development, passing and implementation of The NM Early Childhood Care and Education Act.
2010	The **Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)** was established with members appointed by the Governor. The group established a plan for transforming seven major early child care and education systems into a "system of systems". This plan was the basis for the Early Childhood Care and Education Act. The goal of ELAC is to ensure every child in NM will have an equal opportunity for success in school, based upon equitable access to an aligned and high quality early learning system. Objectives include: • Establish an integrated data system with two primary components that will allow us to correlate services being provided with results-based accountability measures: a unique identifier system and a data warehouse. • Establish an aligned early learning system with programs that are more efficiently and intentionally funded, so that all families have consistent access to a seamless continuum of appropriate services, and children most at risk for school failure have equitable access to the highest quality programs. • Increase the participation of children (especially those who are at risk for school failure) in the highest quality programs. • Establish family support as a recognized early learning system and ensure that a continuum of family support services is equitably available to all families in NM. • Align the early learning system with the public education (K-3) system as the foundation for NM's P-20 education system through the promotion of Ready Schools.
2011	The ELAC reviewed past efforts and drafted a revised Early Learning Plan called the **Early Learning Framework**.

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