

# Toward a Consensus Vision for Early Childhood Development in New Mexico Executive Summary

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The New Mexico Child Care Education Association (NMCCEA), the New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children (NMAEYC), the New Mexico Association for Infant Mental Health (NMAIMH), the Southern New Mexico Early Childhood Alliance, the Community Partnership for Children, the Montessori Network of New Mexico, the Businesses, Educators, & Families Organizing to Reform Education (BEFORE), the Western New Mexico University (WNMU) Early Childhood Programs, and the New Mexico Early Childhood Council

Throughout New Mexico, the stars are aligning toward a consensus vision for early childhood development.

During the past year, Early Learning New Mexico released the “Sustainability Report: A Vision for Early Learning New Mexico,” the New Mexico Early Childhood Funders Group<sup>1</sup> released a “*Business Plan for Early Childhood in New Mexico*” and New Mexico Now<sup>2</sup> released, “*A Path Forward for New Mexico’s Children: The Case for Funding Pre-k through the School Funding Formula.*” In September, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced a new funding award, the Preschool Development Grant B-5,<sup>3</sup> which offers states a grant to both conduct and strengthen strategic plans related to birth to 5 early childhood services alignment, coordination, and integration.

These plans provide an opportunity to reframe the discussion and set a course of action toward developing a unifying vision for early childhood services throughout the state.

The recommendations we offer are intended to help guide that discussion and to ensure that any strategies related to expanding early childhood services also take into consideration the impact of such strategies on child care centers within communities.

The conversation is not about whether to expand publicly funded Pre-k, but how to do so in a manner that builds on community capacity and avoids pitting programs against each other, which undermines the overall goal of supporting families better.

Children live in families. Working parents need access to high-quality child care within their community in order to obtain and retain employment. Service delivery within the state is currently based on funding stream or program rather than community need or vision. Our recommendations provide a pathway for policymakers and the public to embark on the next steps building on community strengths.



## Our Recommendations:

**Continuing the conversation toward a consensus vision for early childhood that:**

- ✓ **Creates strong coordination with clear and focused leadership from an Executive between all departments that govern services related to young children**
  - Requires strategic, intentional coordination by one Executive between currently fragmented programs across the Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD), the Public Education Department (PED), and the Department of Health (DOH),
  - Consolidates all birth to five services within CYFD’s Early Childhood Services Division since CYFD administers the majority of services,

- Creates a new Department of Early Learning that consolidates all birth to five services within the new department, or
  - Reinstates the New Mexico Children’s Cabinet (requires strong leadership from the Executive Office) that will ensure that all agencies are coordinating all birth to five services.
- ✓ **Connects the overall state vision to the impact on the ground of early childhood services**
- Requires local coordinating councils to conduct an annual review within communities to promote coordination and integration of services that build on community strengths (i.e., does not negatively impact community-based child care where capacity exists to offer public Pre-k)
  - Meets the needs of young children (as well as their families) and supports professional development for the early education workforce
- ✓ **Prioritizes talent development strategies to strengthen the early education workforce**
- Triples the number of new T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipients over the next five years to promote access and completion of higher education coursework (AA, BA, and higher degrees)
  - Increases wage supplements tied to higher education achievement (INCENTIVE\$ and refundable tax credits) to incent professional development and retain individuals with higher education credentials in the field
- ✓ **Grows the expansion of current early childhood services to promote the healthy development and school readiness of children under age five (including infants and toddlers)**
- Enables parents to work and children to learn by doubling the percentage of eligible children under age 5 who receive child care assistance and supports them in 4- and 5-star quality care
- Requires the review of public pre-k expansion to ensure that pre-k expansion through public schools does not supplant services provided by existing community-based programs
  - Requires the review and prevention of the reversion of home visiting funds
- ✓ **Utilizes federal resources through the Preschool Development Grant B-5 to conduct a comprehensive needs analysis**
- Reviews the need for child care assistance compared to eligible children who receive assistance
  - Reviews the impact of school-based Pre-k on community child care centers before further expansion of Pre-k slots
  - Supports parent choices and family needs, particularly low-wage working families, based on community strengths, not funding streams
- ✓ **Supports data-driven strategies through public access to an early childhood integrated data system (ECIDS)**
- Shows a comparison of the number of children receiving services compared to those who are eligible to receive services by program
  - Shows a comparison of the number of children receiving services segregated by age by program
  - Provides data visualization through mapping with cross-agency data by program to show communities by poverty level, services available, gaps between services provided and percentage of eligible children served
- A detailed set of recommendations are included in the full report.

<sup>1</sup> The New Mexico Early Childhood Funders group is a collaborative of eight private and public charitable foundations: the Brindle Foundation, McCune Foundation, Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Santa Fe Community Foundation, JF Maddox Foundation, Keeler Foundation, and the Thornburg Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/ALESC%20081518%20Item%208%20.1%20-%20NM%20Now%20Pre-K%20Presentation.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Preschool Development Grant B-5, [https://ami.grantsolutions.gov/files/HHS-2018-ACF-OCC-TP-1379\\_1.pdf](https://ami.grantsolutions.gov/files/HHS-2018-ACF-OCC-TP-1379_1.pdf)