Early Childhood in New Mexico: An Overview

Prepared by Eric Griego, Health Policy Fellow
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at the University of New Mexico

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The Intersections of Science, Policy, & Practice
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Early childhood programs in New Mexico include home visiting, child care assistance, Early Head Start/Head Start, New Mexico Pre-K, New Mexico Families Infants and Toddlers (FIT), early intervention, early childhood special education programs, and K-3 Plus.

**TABLE 1: Economic/Demographic Indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population (under 5)</th>
<th>138,724</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent White (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Black/African American</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent American Indian</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Asian</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent below FPP in last 12 months</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of children in HH on SSI/TANF/SNAP</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: American Community Survey 2013 Estimates

**TABLE 2: Early Childhood Program Funding in New Mexico**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Number Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NM Pre-K</td>
<td>$37 million</td>
<td>8,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Start/Early Head Start</td>
<td>$58.4 million</td>
<td>7,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Visiting</td>
<td>$10.6 million</td>
<td>1949¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Assistance</td>
<td>$97.8 million</td>
<td>16,825²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-3 Plus</td>
<td>$21 million</td>
<td>18,056³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NM Legislative Finance Committee 2014

**Home Visiting**

Home visiting is a home-based parent education program designed to assist primarily new parents with best practices for nurturing and caring for the physical, emotional, and cognitive health of their infants and young children. The program is voluntary and typically provides family support from pregnancy through preschool. Most services are provided through public or private providers. There are various home visiting programs and models in New Mexico, including First Born, Parents as Teachers (PAT), Early Head Start, Home Visiting, and the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP).

¹ LFC report of families served with CYFD Home Visitation 2014. In addition, there were approximately 700 families in private programs.
² LFC estimate of average monthly enrollment in child care assistance in 2014
³ LFC Special Report on Early Childhood, Jan. 2015
⁴ The average duration of state-funded home visiting in New Mexico is about six months.
### TABLE 3: Home Visiting Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Home Visiting Operating Budget FY15 (millions)</td>
<td>$10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income of Home Visiting Participants FY2014 (thousands)</td>
<td>$13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Home Visiting Children on Medicaid FY2014</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NM Legislative Finance Committee

According to the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) of New Mexico, the goals of state-funded home visiting programs are that: babies are born healthy; children are nurtured by their parents and caregivers; children are physically and mentally healthy; children are ready for school; children and families are safe; and families are connected to formal and informal supports in their communities.\(^5\)

In FY2014, 1,949 clients were served, and in FY 2015, state funding for home visiting is $10.6 million, which includes $3.1 million in federal funds.\(^6\) These funds will support 2,800 families. In FY14, 24 home visiting providers in 26 counties operated in New Mexico and received state or federal funds. In addition, private providers served about 700 families. In FY14, there were 24 home visiting providers serving 26 counties using state or federal funding.\(^7\)

### Child Care Assistance

The child care assistance program is a federal-state collaboration that subsidizes the cost of child care for families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), or about $48,000 for a family of four.

### TABLE 4: Childcare Assistance in New Mexico

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total State Child Care Assistance Appropriations FY15 (millions)</td>
<td>$97.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Children Enrolled in 4 or 5 Star Care FY14</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Cost Per Client</td>
<td>$3,984</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NM Legislative Finance Committee

The amount of the child care subsidy depends on the age of the child, the type of child care, the location of the program, and the quality rating of the child care

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\(^5\) New Mexico Children, Youth and Families (CYFD) www.cyfd.org.

\(^6\) New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee Special Report on Early Childhood, Jan. 15, 2015.

\(^7\) Ibid.
program. CYFD administers the childcare assistance program. Under current New Mexico rules families earning up to 150 percent of the FPL that are working and/or in school and have a need for child care are eligible to enter the child care assistance program. Once enrolled, they remain eligible for benefits until their income exceeds 200% of the FPL.

The Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) recommended $45 million in FY2015 for the state portion of the more than $97.8 million dollars appropriated for the program. The remainder of the funding will come from the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) block grant, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant, and related federal funds. In 2012 New Mexico was also awarded an additional $37 million federal Race-to-the-Top Early Learning Challenge grant to improve early childhood care and education programs through workforce development, a new tiered quality rating system (QRIS), and data systems improvement.

Child care subsidies can be used for the following types of providers and services:

- **Licensed Centers**: these exist in a variety of settings (schools, churches, private facilities) and generally serve larger groups of children using more than one classroom. They are inspected by CYFD annually and must maintain a two-STAR rating to qualify for a subsidy. Employees must undergo a federal background check and have at least 24 hours of annual training on early care and education.

- **Licensed Homes**: these providers offer services in the caregiver’s home and must also maintain a two-STAR rating.

- **Registered Homes**: like licensed homes, these providers offer services in the caregiver’s home but can serve only up to four non-resident children. These homes are required to take part in the Child and Adult Care Food program, which reimburses providers for offering healthy meals and snacks.

- **Before or After-School Care and Summer Programs**: these providers are not required to be licensed or registered, but child care assistance grants can be provided if the facility is licensed.

**Early Head Start/Head Start**

Many low-income 3 and 4 year-olds in New Mexico attend preschool in federally funded and administered Head Start programs. In addition, Early Head Start programs serve children birth to three. Head Start programs support growth in areas such as language, literacy, and social and emotional development and emphasize

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8 New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee FY2015 Report to 51st Legislature Second Session
the role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher. In FY2014 federal funding for Head Start and Early Head Start was $58,442,526, with 140 centers serving 7,437 children.9

**New Mexico Pre-K**

New Mexico Pre-K is a voluntary program for 4 year-olds jointly administered by the Public Education Department (PED) and CYFD. While there are no individual eligibility requirements, New Mexico Pre-K focuses programs on communities where at least two-thirds of children live in a Title I10 elementary school attendance zone.11

In FY15, New Mexico appropriated $36.6 million to serve an estimated 10,000 4-year-old pre-kindergarten students, and the FY16 Legislative Finance Committee recommendation includes a pre-kindergarten appropriation of $30.4 million for half-day services for 4 year-olds and $15.4 million for extended-day services for 4 year-olds.12

According to PED and CYFD the purpose of New Mexico Pre-K is to:

- **Increase access** to voluntary, high-quality, pre-kindergarten programs
- Provide **developmentally appropriate** activities for New Mexico children
- **Expand** early childhood **community capacity**
- Support **linguistically and culturally appropriate curricula**
- Focus on **school readiness**

The PED oversees Pre-K programs in 53 Districts, at 4 state charter schools, and at 124 school sites serving 5,082 students. CYFD oversees Pre-K programs at 125 sites that include schools, childcare centers, and community centers.13

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9 Children Youth and Families Department cited in Report of the Legislative Finance Committee to the Legislature, Jan. 2015.
10 Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
11 Title 1 schools have at least 40 percent of students receiving free or reduced price lunch.
12 NM Legislative Finance Committee
13 NM Pre-K www.newmexicoprek.org
TABLE 5: Developmental Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of children 4 months to 5 years determined to be at moderate or high risk based on parents' specific concerns</th>
<th>22.7%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of children age 0-5 whose family reads to them everyday</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of children age 0-5 whose family sings or tells stories to them everyday</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of children who have had two or more ACE</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: New Mexico Report from the National Survey of Children’s Health 2011/2012

Families, Infants, and Toddlers (FIT) Program

The New Mexico FIT Program, administered by the Department of Health (DOH), provides early intervention services statewide to children birth to three who have or are at risk for developmental delays and their families.

The mission of the FIT program is to ensure that all families of infants and toddlers with or at risk of a developmental delay receive quality early intervention supports and services that are:

- **Accessible** to all groups and communities throughout New Mexico;
- **Respectful** of individual and family choices, priorities, and cultural diversity; and
- **Family-centered** by working in partnership with families within their everyday routines, activities, and places.\(^{14}\)

The FIT program is an entitlement program, and all infants and toddlers who have, or are risk for, a developmental delay are eligible for early intervention services. Services are defined through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and can include:

- Speech, occupational, and/or physical therapies
- Social work
- Behavior interventions

Services are usually center-based or provided in the family’s home, and some services are provided at child care centers or at other locations within the community.

\(^{14}\) NM Department of Health Website, www.nmhealth.org
Special Education Pre-school serves 3 to 5 year olds who have one or more of the following recognized disabilities:

- Mental retardation
- A hearing impairment, including deafness
- A speech or language impairment
- A visual impairment, including blindness
- Serious emotional disturbance
- An orthopedic impairment
- Autism
- Traumatic brain injury
- Another health impairment
- A specific learning disability
- Deaf-blindness
- Multiple disabilities

Services are provided in multiple settings, including classrooms and at home. The purpose of special education is to ensure a “free appropriate public education” (FAPE) in the “least restrictive environment” (LRE) with appropriate modifications and accommodations.\(^{15}\)

**K-3 Plus**

The K-3 Plus program provides help to struggling students from kindergarten to third grade by offering 25 additional instructional days before the start of the school year. Though the program does not maintain eligibility requirements for participating students, schools must have earned a D or an F according to the state’s school grading system or be composed of 80 percent or more free or reduce lunch students to apply for program funding, which is allocated by the Public Education Department (PED). In FY15, the Legislature appropriated $21.3 million to serve roughly 18,000 students.\(^{16}\)

K-3 Plus programs are now operated in most eligible schools, and the majority of eligible students who do not receive services attend elementary schools with K-3 Plus programs. Since FY08, K-3 Plus enrollment has increased 625 percent from 2,491 to 18,056 in FY14. Roughly 26 percent of the 71,000 students eligible for K-3 Plus received services. The majority of schools eligible for K-3 Plus funds applied (234 of 329) but often did not receive enough funding to serve all eligible students; 73 percent of eligible students who did not receive K-3 Plus attend schools that have K-3 Plus programs. If schools are unable to offer enough slots to serve the majority of students, they likely will not see sufficient school-wide academic gains to improve overall school performance.\(^{17}\)

\(^{15}\) New Mexico Public Education Department.  http://www.ped.state.nm.us

\(^{16}\) New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee

\(^{17}\) New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee Special Report on Early Childhood, Jan. 15, 2015
### TABLE 6: Health Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Children in excellent or very good health</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Children born premature (3 or more weeks early)</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Children 0-5 who were ever breastfed</td>
<td>80.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Children lacking consistent insurance coverage in the past year</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Children age 2-17 with problems requiring counseling who received mental health care</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant Mortality Rate (Per 1000 births 2013)</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Birth Weight (Percent of all births 2013)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prenatal Care in First trimester 2013 (Percent of all births 2013)</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES & DISCLAIMER

This report and overview was compiled in preparation for the Early Childhood Development & Health Symposium: The Intersections of Science, Policy, & Practice.

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