



Legislative Finance Committee
**FINANCE
 FACTS**

Understanding State Financial Policy

Early Childhood Services

With substantial evidence that early childhood experiences influence long-term health and brain development, New Mexico has steadily increased its investment in early childhood services—10-fold between FY12 and FY24—in an effort to improve the long-term economic and educational success of every child. These services range from supports for first-time mothers to the first years of elementary school. New Mexico’s early childhood services are supplemented with federal nutrition and early education programs.

Programs

Home Visiting, operated by the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) and the Human Services Department (HSD), is an intensive parent education program with demonstrated success in reducing child maltreatment and improving child health.

The voluntary program provides basic supports and guidance in parenting skills through home visits. LFC analysis emphasizes some New Mexico home visiting programs are not based on successful programs elsewhere and results are uncertain.

Target: Children prenatally through age 3.

2023 Cost: \$4,395 average per family.

Family, Infant, Toddler (ECECD) provides early interventions for infants and toddlers with developmental delays, an established medical condition, or at risk for disabilities due to biological, medical, or environmental conditions. The federally funded program is required under Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. (Children with special needs ages 3 to 21 are covered under IDEA Part B.) Most children receiving FIT services show improvement on social-emotional skills and acquisition and use of knowledge and skills.

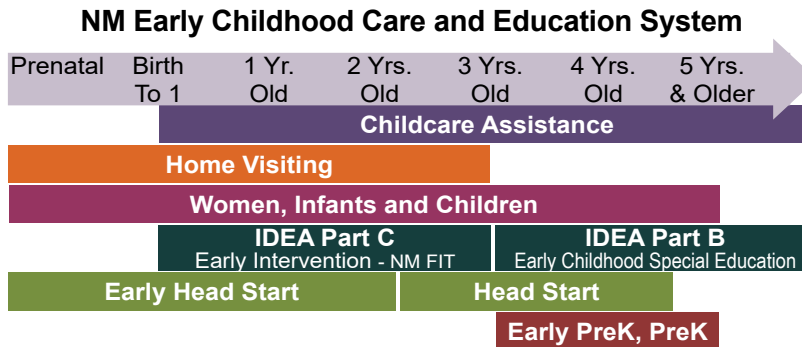
Target: Children from birth through age 3.

2023 Cost: \$2,822 average per child.

Women, Infants, and Children (federal Food and Nutrition Service) provides supplemental food, healthcare referrals, and nutrition education for pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, as well as children at nutritional risk. WIC may decrease food insecurity in low-income communities. While WIC attempts to encourage women to breastfeed, the rate of breastfeeding in the program is lower than that in home visiting programs.

Target: Certain women and children from birth to age 5.

2023 Cost: \$640 average per family.



Childcare Assistance (ECECD) subsidizes childcare for low-income families by directly paying a set amount to certain department-licensed or -registered childcare providers. LFC analysis indicates, while the program helps working parents with child care, children

in low-quality programs do not show educational improvement or reduced risk for abuse.

Target: Children from ages 3 weeks to 13 years.

2023 Cost: \$6,780 average per child.

Early Prekindergarten/Prekindergarten (ECECD) provides early education for 3- and 4-year-olds both through private community providers and the public schools. LFC analysis found children who attended prekindergarten had better test scores through 12th grade, had less need for special education, and were less likely to be retained.

Target: Children ages 3 and 4.

2023 Cost: \$12,300 average per 3-year-old for full day, \$15,700 average per 3-year-old for extended day, \$10,300 average per 4-year-old for full day.

Early Head Start/Head Start, federal Administration for Children and Families, supports childhood development through education, health screenings, intervention, and parental supports. While a Brookings Institute study linked Head Start with long-term student improvements, the New Mexico program, with limited ECECD oversight, is ranked lowest in the nation in teacher credential and supports by the National Institute for Early Education Research and has not demonstrated similar results.

Target: Children from birth to age 5.

Cost: \$9,824 average per child.

For More Information:

A Finance Facts on childcare assistance is available at https://www.nmlegis.gov/Entity/LFC/Documents/Finance_Facts/finance%20facts%20childcare%20assistance.pdf