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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 1/31/2007

SPONSOR Chasey LAST UPDATED _____ HB 257

SHORT TITLE Expand UNM Corinne Wolf Children's Law Center SB _____

ANALYST McOlash

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY07	FY08		
	\$240.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)
Higher Education Department (HED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 257 appropriates \$240,000 from the General Fund to the Regents at UNM for expenditure in FY 2008 to expand the Corinne Wolf Children's Law Center.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$240,000 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the General Fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY08 shall revert to the General Fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The Corinne Wolfe Children's Law Center (CLC) is a center at the Institute of Public Law, UNM School of Law, working to enhance the knowledge and skills of the many professionals and volunteers who work in the child abuse and neglect and juvenile justice systems. It was

established in December 1997 by memorandum of understanding between the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Institute, upon the recommendation of the New Mexico Supreme Court Foster Care Task Force. Named in honor of the late Corinne Wolfe, a lifelong advocate for New Mexico children and families. The CLC is overseen by a steering committee that includes judges, attorneys, CYFD personnel, volunteer advocates, and AOC and Court Improvement Project personnel.

The CLC was established to address the critical need for comprehensive, statewide training opportunities for the many professionals and volunteers working in the child abuse and neglect system. An extensive assessment and evaluation conducted by the Supreme Court Foster Care Task Force found that these individuals had received minimal training, if any, in the complex legal, medical and psychological issues of their cases. Few training opportunities existed and what little was offered was fragmented and haphazard.

The proposal of \$240,000 was submitted to the HED by the UNM Law School. The Department's funding recommendation for FY08 as a continuance of recurring funding of \$68,400, but not the expansion.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

The General Appropriation Act (HB 7/SB 2) appropriates \$68,400 to the CLC – the same level as in FY 2007.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The AOC reports that, as of October 2006, the Children's, Youth, and Families Depart (CYFD) had taken custody of more than 2,400 children due to abuse and neglect, a 31% increase of children in care since 2003. The New Mexico Child Abuse and Neglect Citizen Review Board composed of interested citizens from across the state, listed increased funding for the Children's Law Center as one of its top priorities for the 2007 legislative session, focusing on the need for better trained legal professionals and lay advocates. New Mexico's children are the ultimate beneficiaries of improving the quality of judges, attorneys, lay advocates, and others in the system.

BM/csd