



**Ending Child
and Family
Homelessness in
New Mexico**

A Report in Response to House Memorial 7
by the New Mexico Campaign to End Child Homelessness
November 2010





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Bill Richardson, Governor • Diane Denish, Lt. Governor



INTRODUCTION

During the 2008-2009 school year, an estimated 14,500 children and youth were homeless in New Mexico.¹ That number is, by all reports, expected to increase substantially in the coming year. Homelessness has a profound impact on a child's development and ability to learn, ultimately affecting his/her ability to succeed in life. For those reasons, House Memorial 7 (HM 7), sponsored by Representative Bill O'Neill and passed during the 2010 legislative session, requested the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) to assist the New Mexico Campaign to End Child Homelessness in studying child homelessness in the state and presenting a report to the interim Legislative Health and Human Services Committee. HM 7 requested that the report include legislative recommendations to alleviate child homelessness in New Mexico and that copies of the report be distributed to the Secretary of CYFD and the Governor.

The New Mexico Campaign to End Child Homelessness seeks to galvanize the public and political will necessary to end child homelessness in New Mexico. Based on the belief that it is unacceptable for any child to be homeless for even one night, the New Mexico Campaign is a call to action with the following goals:

- Increase public awareness of the scope and impact of homelessness on children and families;
- Inform state and local policies and plans to better address the needs of homeless children and families; and
- Improve program design and service delivery to effectively meet the unique needs of homeless children and families.

The New Mexico Campaign connects families, communities, service providers, advocates, policymakers, elected officials and the media to design, launch and coordinate a comprehensive effort to prevent and end homelessness for children and their families.

Current members of the New Mexico Campaign to End Child Homelessness Steering Committee include:

A New Day Youth and Family Services
Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless
Adelante Program, Santa Fe Public Schools
Albuquerque Public Schools, Title I Homeless Project
Center for Social Innovation
Cuidando Los Niños
Interfaith Hospitality Network of Albuquerque
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry of New Mexico
New Mexico Child Advocacy Networks
New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence
New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness

New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department
New Mexico Human Services Department
New Mexico Public Education Department,
Homeless Student Education Program
New Mexico Voices for Children
St. Joseph Community Health
St. Martin's Hospitality Center
The Life Link at Santa Fe
The National Center on Family Homelessness
United Way of Central New Mexico
Youth Shelters of Santa Fe

The New Mexico Campaign to End Child Homelessness is an initiative of Cuidando los Niños and The National Center on Family Homelessness in partnership with New Mexico organizations which comprise the Steering Committee. For more information about the New Mexico Campaign to End Child Homelessness, contact Wendy Wintermute, NM State Coordinator, at (505) 843-6899 x 115 or at wendyw@clnkids.org.

¹ New Mexico Campaign to End Child Homelessness (NM Campaign)(2010). Estimates of homeless children and youth in New Mexico, 2010 Update. Unpublished data. Estimate based on published McKinney-Vento school data adjusted to account for children under the age of 6.



CHILD HOMELESSNESS IN NEW MEXICO

Children and youth are the new face of homelessness in New Mexico and throughout the country. Parents with children are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population, now comprising roughly one-third of the total homeless population.² They are also the least visible. Families who are homeless are often hidden away, doubling up with friends or in motels rather than on the streets, many afraid to disclose their situation for fear of embarrassment, of having their children taken away, or of the family splitting up. Families experiencing homelessness are typically comprised of a mother in her late twenties with two children. Forty-two percent of homeless children are under the age of six.³

In 2009, New Mexico was ranked 47 out of 50 states on the problem of children homelessness according to *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness*.⁴ This ranking took into account the extent of child homelessness, child well-being, risk for child homelessness, and state policies and plans to address the issue. At the time of the report's publication, more than 8,900 children and youth were homeless in New Mexico each year, based on 2005-2006 school year data. Four years later, during the 2008-2009 school year, that number has increased to approximately 14,500 children and youth experiencing homelessness in New Mexico. Approximately 60 percent are school-aged children and 40 percent are under the age of six.⁵ In part, the increase is due to greater awareness and better outreach and identification of children and families who are homeless. But there is no doubt that the increasing numbers of homeless children and families are also a result of the impact of the current economic downturn.

With rising unemployment, foreclosure rates nearing a 16-year high, and higher costs for housing, health care, food, and fuel, many more children and families are at risk of becoming homeless. One parent earning the state's minimum wage would need to work 77 hours per week to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market rates.⁶ The proportion of households in New Mexico's counties who face "significant housing burdens," including those who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing, range from 24 percent to 43 percent (see Table 1). In Albuquerque alone, 14,400 families are "significantly housing burdened."⁷ For families in this situation, even a seemingly minor event can trigger a catastrophic outcome, pushing a family onto the streets.

Homelessness is a devastating experience that significantly impacts the health and well-being of adults and children.⁸ Families can become homeless for many reasons, including a lack of affordable housing, unemployment, limited access to resources and supports, health and mental health issues, and experiences of violence. Two in three mothers with children who are homeless have left their homes because of domestic violence.⁹ In 2003, New Mexico was ranked third highest among the 50 states for incidents of domestic violence.¹⁰ In nearly six in ten cases, children were present during the incidents.¹¹ About one in four homeless children have witnessed acts

2 The National Center on Family Homelessness (The National Center)(2009). *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness*. Newton, MA.

3 The National Center, 2009.

4 The National Center, 2009.

5 Sanchez, Joseph. E-mail to Wendy Wintermute, July 22, 2010.

6 The National Center, 2009.

7 Chaplin, Douglas. Interview by Wendy Wintermute, City of Albuquerque Housing Services, Albuquerque, NM.

8 Rog, D.J., & Buckner, J.C. (2007). Homeless families and children. Paper presented at the 2007 National Symposium on Homelessness Research, Washington, D.C. Retrieved May 12, 2010 from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/homelessness/symposium07/rog/index.htm>

9 The National Center, 2009.

10 National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV). New Mexico Domestic Violence Facts. Retrieved September 17, 2010 from <http://www.ncadv.org/files/NewMexico.pdf>.

11 NCADV, 2010.

of violence within their families.¹²

Homelessness increases the likelihood that families will separate or dissolve. Many homeless children end up in foster care. At least 30 percent of children in foster care could return home if their parents had access to housing.¹³ Children and youth in foster care can be significantly affected by the instability that accompanies long periods of out-of-home placement. Anywhere from 12 to 36 percent of young people who transition out of the foster care system will experience homelessness at some point in their lives.¹⁴

Young people also often leave their homes because of dangerous family situations, including physical and sexual abuse. These young people often end up on their own, temporarily “couch-surfing” with friends, or living on the streets. In 2010, over 1,300 young people were served by New Mexico’s homeless shelters for unaccompanied youth.¹⁵



Stories of Hope and Homelessness

A Second Chance

Ruth was forced to leave her home in New Mexico at the age of fifteen and survive on her own. By the time she was thirty-three, her husband was abusing her.

“He grabbed my neck and cracked my tailbone,” she said.

She decided to leave with their twin sons who were infants at the time. They lived in motels until her money ran out, and then they sought refuge in a shelter for families who have survived domestic violence.

“I didn’t know what else to do. The shelter took us in. It was really tough. I went through a lot of counseling,” explains Ruth.

Ruth and her sons then entered a supportive housing program run by Saranam, an organization in Albuquerque that provides transitional housing, education, and supportive services to help parents and children move beyond homelessness. When living in the shelter, the boys had no space to crawl.

“The night I was given a key to our Saranam apartment, my boys crawled everywhere. I cried. It was amazing to be able to give them that. It is so hard to feel good about yourself even when you are doing the best that you can do for your children,” says Ruth.

Ruth and her sons are getting the supports and services they need to move on from homelessness. Ruth participates in parenting, stress relief and budgeting classes offered by the Central New Mexico Community College. She receives intensive case management services at Saranam. She says that this support helps her eliminate multiple stressors from her life so she can focus on living independently. She is taking care of herself and her sons, and she is going to school.

Her goal is to become a pediatric nurse: *“I would like to make a difference, even if it is in just one life. I am hopeful about the future. Saranam has given me a second chance.”*

¹² The National Center, 2009.

¹³ The National Center, 2009.

¹⁴ Child Welfare League of America. Programs and Resources for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care. Retrieved October 6, 2010 from <http://www.cwla.org/programs/foster-care/agingoutresources.htm>.

¹⁵ Cobbs, Kim. E-mail to Wendy Wintermute, August 23, 2010.



THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Losing one's home can be devastating for everyone involved, but particularly for children. The process of becoming homeless involves the loss of belongings, community, and a sense of safety. Families experiencing homelessness are under considerable stress. They may move often, doubling up for a time in overcrowded apartments with relatives or friends. Others stay in motel rooms or sleep in cars or campgrounds. Often, families must split up in order to find shelter. Once in shelter, families must quickly adjust to overcrowded, difficult, and uncomfortable circumstances. Despite the efforts of dedicated staff, many shelters are noisy, chaotic, overcrowded, and lack privacy. Living in shelters is isolating and can lead to a loss of personal control. Moving out of shelter into permanent housing requires resources often beyond the reach of many families.

The prevalence of traumatic stress in the lives of families who are homeless is extraordinarily high. Often these families have experienced on-going trauma in the form of childhood abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and community violence, as well as the trauma associated with poverty and the loss of home, safety, and sense of security. These experiences may have a significant impact on how children and adults think, feel, behave, relate to others, and cope.

The level of fear and unpredictability in the lives of homeless children can be extremely damaging to their growth and development. Children experiencing homelessness suffer acute and chronic health problems four times more often than other children. They go hungry at twice the rate of other children. They have three times the rate of emotional and behavioral problems.¹⁶

Children experiencing homelessness are four times more likely to show delayed development and twice as likely to have learning disabilities. Studies of homeless children have documented an array of developmental delays, including difficulties with attention, speech delays, language development and disabilities, and cognitive delays. Homeless children demonstrate significant delays in gross motor skills, fine motor skills, and social and personal growth. More than half of homeless preschoolers show at least one major developmental lag.¹⁷

The education of homeless children is often disrupted as they move about in search of shelter. One-third will repeat a grade in school. Homeless children are 16 percent less proficient at reading and math than their peers. Fewer than 25 percent of homeless children graduate from high school.¹⁸ The constant barrage of stressful and traumatic experiences has profound effects on their development and ability to learn, ultimately affecting their success in life.

There are also great social costs incurred in dealing with the adverse consequences of homelessness. These include the more immediate costs of shelter. It costs taxpayers more money to place a family in emergency shelter than in permanent homes.¹⁹

¹⁶ The National Center, 2009.

¹⁷ The National Center, 2009.

¹⁸ The National Center, 2009.

¹⁹ National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2006). Promising Strategies to End Family Homelessness. Washington, D.C.: National Alliance to End Homelessness.

Other costs to taxpayers include: Medicaid or health care for treating acute and chronic health conditions; mental health care and substance abuse treatment; police intervention; incarceration; and foster care. There are also “opportunity costs,” representing the lost opportunities that stable housing would provide in terms of greater educational attainment, better health, more stable employment, higher wages, and increased income. These carry not only personal, but social benefits through increased productivity, increased ability to purchase goods and services, and decreased unemployment and disability compensation. As one advocate asserted, “Being fiscally prudent and socially progressive is not an oxymoron ... all that is needed now is the political will and the financial commitment to avoid paying for extensive services in twenty years for today’s homeless children and their future offspring.”²⁰



Stories of Hope and Homelessness

None of Us Felt Safe

“We had no money and no toys. I am sad because we didn't have a car with all of our stuff, and we moved into motels every single night. I feel really sad and made about that right now.”

A child, age five, reflects on having no home for a year in New Mexico with her siblings and two parents.

After losing their rental home to burglary and a fire, Susan, David, and their four children became homeless overnight. David lost a full-time job a week later because their car broke down, and he could not drive to work or afford to fix it. For one year, the family traveled on the city bus system during the day and moved nightly between often unsanitary motels. They sold everything they had to extend their nights in motels and used motel vouchers from a local organization. While David looked for work, the next meal, or a new motel, Susan was alone with the children.

“I am afraid of being homeless again,” admits Susan. “We do not make enough money to cover the bills. We have to find work.”

They reached a point where they were out of options and signed up at St. Martin’s Hospitality Center to get help finding housing and supportive services. From the day they signed up, it took three months to find a place to live.

Currently, Susan, David, and their children have been housed for the last four months. They have a case manager at St. Martin’s that they meet with once a week, and their housing is funded through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development until David or Susan can find full-time work. The payment for the home is \$1,100 a month, and David is only making \$7.50 per hour through part-time work. Once the couple finds full-time work, thirty percent of their income will go towards paying the monthly rent.

“Once we got into this house, it was nowhere near the end of our problems. We moved in here and slept on the floor for months. The kids were afraid to sleep in their rooms by themselves. They were terrified. We were terrified. None of us felt safe.”

Although still struggling, Susan, David, and their children are putting their lives back together with the help of housing assistance and supportive services.



SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WHO ARE HOMELESS

Extensive research and practice have identified cost-effective ways to support children and families who are homeless and to prevent others from becoming homeless. The New Mexico Campaign to End Child Homelessness endorses and builds on the recommendations of the Housing First Task Force Report of 2009.²¹ A Housing First model recognizes that housing—safe, affordable, accessible, and permanent—is the core requirement for ending homelessness. In addition, many children and families will need supportive services in order to obtain and remain in permanent housing. These services are more effective when people are living in their own homes. Housing First recognizes that housing is a basic human right, and that access to housing should not be contingent on service program participation and success. In addition to being a basic human right, safe, decent, and affordable housing provides a foundation for success in school and work, and therefore contributes to the growth of healthy communities throughout New Mexico.

The National Center on Family Homelessness, a partner of the New Mexico Campaign to End Child Homelessness, has identified “Basic Principles of Care” for children and families experiencing homelessness. At a minimum, all programs and policies serving families and children experiencing or at risk of homelessness should promote and ensure:

- **Family Unity:** Families experiencing homelessness should not be separated unless the health and well-being of children are at immediate risk. In addition, a broad definition of family should be used that allows for female-headed, male-headed, two-parent, same-sex parent, LGBT parent, and extended families to be served together with their children.
- **Physical and Emotional Safety:** Services must be provided in a safe physical and emotional environment. All clients should be treated in a respectful, supportive, and non-judgmental manner. Ensuring client confidentiality during assessment, planning, and service delivery is essential.
- **Rapid Re-Housing:** Every effort should be made to re-house families as quickly as possible, minimizing their time in shelter.
- **Meeting Immediate Needs:** Families experiencing homelessness often have complex needs. Ensure that families’ immediate needs for safety, housing, entitlements/benefits, and pressing health, mental health, and substance abuse needs are addressed before engaging in longer-term care.
- **Linkages Among Housing, Services, and Supports:** For all families, housing is essential, but not sufficient. Families need an array of specialized, supportive services, such as child care and transportation at various points in their lives and connections to mainstream services and natural supports in the community.
- **Assessment and Individualized Housing/Service Plans:** Homeless families and children are heterogeneous, each with their own strengths and challenges. Policies and programs must address the needs of each family member and develop individualized housing and service plans.

21 Housing First Task Force. (2008). Report of the 2008 Housing First Task Force: A Report in Response to Senate Memorial 2. Santa Fe, NM. New Mexico Children, Youth & Families Department.

- **Effective, High Quality Service Delivery:** Ensure that families who are homeless receive effective, high quality services that are: evidence-based, promising practices; family-oriented; strengths-based; developed in partnership with the family; culturally and linguistically competent; trauma informed; and coordinated and integrated.
- **Client Rights:** Each parent, child, and individual who is homeless has a basic set of rights. Programs should create and abide by a “Client Bill of Rights” to ensure clients are served in a dignified, empowering manner. Clients should participate in the creation of the bill of rights along with program staff.
- **Addressing Unique Needs of Children:** Children are particularly vulnerable to the vagaries of homelessness; it is essential that their needs are addressed while in shelter and after through: child-specific services and child-friendly settings; developmentally appropriate services; partnerships with schools and parents; direct education supports; and health and mental health services.
- **Training and Supervision:** On-going training, supervision, and professional development for all staff working with homeless families ensure that policies and programs meet acceptable standards of care.
- **Monitoring Progress:** Monitoring the effectiveness of programs and policies is essential for improving our understanding of family needs and ensuring high quality services.



Stories of Hope and Homelessness

Healing Young Children Who Are Homeless

The lives of children who experience homelessness are often filled with chaos, uncertainty, and fear. Play therapy provides a gentle path towards learning to cope with the traumatic events they experience. At Cuidando Los Niños, an organization in Albuquerque that provides early childhood development services to meet the special needs of young children who experience homelessness, play therapists work with children to help them begin to heal.

“Their lives are so chaotic and inconsistent. They have trouble processing all the change they experience, so they often bottle up their emotions. When they come here, they start to feel that it is safe to feel what they are feeling,” explains Carol, a bilingual play therapist at Cuidando Los Niños.

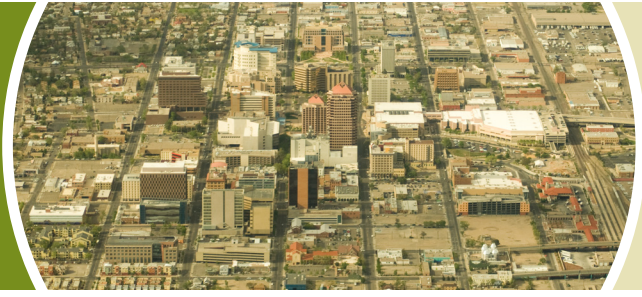
When one three-year-old girl started play therapy with Carol, she would enter the room, hide under the table and cry. She did this for several weeks. One day, she became fascinated with some baby dolls in Carol’s office.

“She was drawn to them and started bringing them to me, rocking them, and treating them in a symbolically nurturing manner.”

The next session, she sat on Carol’s lap and cried the whole time. After that, she seemed to understand that she was safe. Today, she is smiling, talking, and playing with the dolls.

With help, children who appear angry, closed-off, and incommunicative can become nurturing, tender, and open.

Carol explains: “When children feel very safe, they are able to resolve these emotions, re-story their lives, and start the healing process to let go of some of the ugly things.”



RECOMMENDATIONS

The New Mexico Campaign to End Child Homelessness has identified a number of recommendations for action in a range of areas that together begin to lay the path towards preventing and ending child and family homelessness. These efforts must be coordinated across traditional areas of practice and government structures to provide an effective network of support and opportunity for children and families, so that not one child will be homeless in New Mexico for even one night. Please note that this is not a comprehensive set of recommendations to end child and family homelessness in New Mexico, rather a targeted list responding to the request of HM 7.

Underlying assumptions.

These recommendations are based upon a set of underlying assumptions:

- Ending child homelessness in New Mexico is urgently necessary and possible.
- To end child homelessness in New Mexico, there must be a stable, fully-funded continuum of services for children and their families including housing, early care, education, and health care.
- To ensure that all programs that serve children and their families are of the highest quality, we must invest in and support continuous quality improvements for staff and programs that serve families and children who experience homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness.
- Strong, on-going coordination and collaboration between all stakeholders is required to ensure that resources are distributed effectively and strategically so that a comprehensive, coordinated effort to end child homelessness will accomplish its goal.

Increase coordination and collaboration among state agencies, service providers, and community leaders working to prevent and end homelessness.

- Establish a New Mexico Interagency Council on Homelessness charged with writing and implementing a 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness that includes a strong focus on the needs of homeless children and families. The Council should develop specific, measurable goals including funding goals and numerical targets for ending homelessness, and report to the Governor, Legislature, and public on its progress, updating the Plan on an annual basis. The Council should include (but not be limited to) representatives from the Governor's Office; Legislature; Human Services Department; Children, Youth and Families Department; Department of Workforce Solutions; Mortgage Finance Authority; Corrections Department; Department of Health; Public Education Department; and Department of Veterans' Services; as well as people who have experienced homelessness and social service, community, and advocacy organizations that serve or advocate for families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in both urban and rural areas of the state. The Council should have at least one full-time employee that provides support to the members.

Ensure access to quality, affordable housing in New Mexico.

- Secure a dedicated source of funding for the New Mexico Housing Trust Fund that generates at least \$20 million annually.
- Expand the *Linkages* program to provide additional housing vouchers for households with children whose head of household has a mental health disability. *Linkages* is a state-funded pilot program providing rental subsidies paired with individualized support services in two urban sites and one rural site in New Mexico. The program targets those with demonstrated housing needs, prioritizes individuals with serious mental illnesses, and targets 10 percent of the available units to Native Americans living off-reservation. Currently, there are 30 available vouchers statewide, divided evenly among the three pilot program sites.
- Expand the *Transitions* program to provide additional housing vouchers to youth who are transitioning out of foster care or the juvenile justice system and who have no place to live. Also a state-funded pilot program, *Transitions* provides rental subsidies and supportive services to youth with behavioral health needs who are in transition. Currently, 20 vouchers are available to youth in the Albuquerque area. Youth are offered housing of their own, along with services that support their transition to independence. The cornerstone of the program is choice, both in housing and support services. With stable housing and effective support, transitioning youth are able to achieve other important life goals, including improved physical and behavioral health, education, job training, and employment, and can become valuable members of the community.
- Fund a Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program that provides short-to-medium term, accessible rental-assistance and supportive services for households who are about to lose their housing or for those families and youth who are homeless, but could obtain housing quickly with some support. Currently, New Mexico has a Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program, but it is funded through federal stimulus dollars and will operate only through 2012.

Ensure access to educational opportunities.

- Authorize a line item in the New Mexico budget to support education and related education services for homeless students to supplement the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act funding received by the state. This should include alternative education opportunities for unaccompanied homeless youth, with supports that help them succeed (e.g., transportation assistance, case management, and one-on-one tutoring). In spite of growing numbers of students enrolled in homeless programs across the state, federal funding to support implementation of the education section of the McKinney-Vento Act has remained relatively static or decreased (see table 2).

Increase access to high quality early childhood development and care.

- Expand state funding for pre-Kindergarten and early childhood programs and capacity so all children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have the opportunity to participate.
- Allocate resources for professional development to support training for pre-Kindergarten and early childhood staff in the “Basic Principles of Care” for children and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
- Assist public and private providers receiving state pre-Kindergarten and early childhood funds, including child care assistance, to reach out to and support the enrollment of children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Extend the education requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to all state-funded pre-Kindergarten programs, including those funded and administered by state agencies outside of the public education system.
- Ensure that homeless children and their families are served by home visiting programs administered or funded by the State.

Increase income support.

- Index the state minimum wage to inflation.
- Increase the Low Income Comprehensive Tax Rebate.
- Fund supportive employment opportunities and mentorships for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Improve the Human Services Department's screening for domestic violence among TANF recipients, so that families who are victims of domestic violence can receive appropriate services and accommodations that will allow them to stay safe and become self-sufficient.

Improve access to health and behavioral health care.

- Prepare for 2014, when the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will expand Medicaid coverage to all children and adults under 133 percent of the federal poverty level. This expansion of Medicaid will ensure that families who are homeless or most at risk of homelessness can obtain physical health care, mental health care, and substance abuse treatment. To prepare for this expansion, New Mexico must:
 - Provide adequate funding for Medicaid, so the healthcare system in New Mexico remains intact for children and their parents.
 - Create an outreach structure for reaching homeless families and enrolling them in Medicaid.
 - Increase the healthcare workforce, particularly in rural areas, so that newly covered New Mexicans can obtain the care they need.
- Expand the service definition for the Interagency Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative's Comprehensive Community Support Services (CCSS) to include a full continuum of pre- and post-housing services.
- Develop and fund case management services for people experiencing homelessness who do not meet the CCSS criteria, but still require assistance in obtaining and maintaining housing.

Ensure access to supportive services.

- Fund supportive services for families and youth that help them obtain and remain in housing. This should include outreach services, housing specialists who can help youth and families obtain a place to live, and case management services to help families and youth connect to the services they need to stabilize their lives, including job training, behavioral health, and child care assistance. Neither youth nor family members should need to have a mental health diagnosis to qualify for these kinds of services.
- Extend the length of time for which a person can continue to receive post-housing services under the Continuum of Care following his or her attainment of TANF program income limits.
- Review state-funded programs designed to provide nutritious and affordable food for children and youth and expand outreach if necessary to ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness have access to these programs.
- Support the development and utilization of an official, statewide, web-based, bi-lingual comprehensive resource directory for child and family services, including services to children and families experiencing or at risk of becoming homeless (e.g., mycommunitynm.org) by state and contracted service agencies.

Increase data collection efforts.

- Support the development of a standard protocol and shared system for state agencies to collect and report housing status information on the children and adults they serve to the newly established

New Mexico Interagency Council on Homelessness. The comprehensive and statewide data collection system will enable the Interagency Council and communities throughout the state to gain a more accurate and current picture of the need for, provision, cost, and effectiveness of services that aim to end and prevent child and family homelessness in New Mexico.

Increase revenue to support initiatives to prevent and end child homelessness.

- Ending child homelessness in New Mexico will require adequate, stable, and predictable sources of funding. State revenue for this funding must be raised in a way that is fair and does not unduly burden taxpayers, especially low and moderate income families, and is not redirected funding from other essential services for children and families.

Stories of Hope and Homelessness



Emerging from Youth Homelessness: A Story of Resilience

Maria was raised in a home filled with violence. She was forced to leave her home in New Mexico before the age of fifteen.

"I had been sleeping on the floor or the couch in a home where I had to protect my brother from my mother's boyfriend. He threw me across the room for trying to protect my brother. This was the first time I felt that I did not have a home. I felt I was losing everything."

Sent out of her house as a youth, she moved between friend's houses and cars, and was in and out of school. She managed to maintain her grades despite this transience. She floated from place to place until she realized she was becoming what she had been told she would become. It was this moment of realization that shifted her course.

After seeking help, Maria lived in her own car, started three jobs, and attended school daily, showering in the school gym before anyone arrived. A coach inquired about her well-being and was able to connect her with services from the Title I program at her school in New Mexico.

Currently, she is full-time student at The University of New Mexico with a four-year scholarship from The Daniels Fund. She has come to a place of gentle insight, after a young lifetime of trauma, neglect, homelessness, and countless hardships.

When Maria reflects on her resiliency in the face of trauma and homelessness, she now understands that she has always had an inner drive to succeed.

"I have never wanted to fail," says Maria. "I don't know what I am going to major in, but I know it will be about working in the community. Life is beautiful, and I didn't realize this for such a long time."



CONCLUSION

As a state, we can no longer ignore the fact that 14,500 New Mexican children go without homes, food, or access to health care and educational opportunities each year.²² The cost is too great to our children and families and to our communities and state. Now is the time to end child and family homelessness.

The New Mexico Campaign to End Child Homelessness pledges to work with the Legislature, state government agencies, and our communities and partnering organizations to accomplish this goal. Specifically, the New Mexico Campaign to End Child Homelessness will:

- Continue to build public awareness of the causes, consequences, and solutions to ending child homelessness in New Mexico.
- Identify and support programs from within New Mexico and from other areas around the country that exemplify the “Basic Principles of Care” that best support children and families who are homeless and prevent others from becoming homeless.
- Encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration and coordination across areas of service and government structures to provide professional development for those who work with children and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
- Help build community networks of support that will ensure that all children and families have the resources and opportunities needed to thrive.
- Advocate for local, state, and national policies that effectively address the needs of children and families who are homeless and that prevent others from becoming homeless.
- Establish and work with the New Mexico Interagency Council on Homelessness to develop a comprehensive 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness that will end and prevent child and family homelessness in New Mexico.

²² NM Campaign, 2010.

APPENDIX

TABLE 1: COST-BURDENED* HOMEOWNERS AND RENTERS BY COUNTY

County	Cost-Burdened Homeowners: 2000 Census	Cost-Burdened Renters: 2000 Census
Bernalillo	24.22%	41.56%
Catron	19.09%	25.81%
Chaves	18.43%	34.68%
Cibola	14.35%	23.76%
Colfax	18.34%	29.62%
Curry	20.95%	26.99%
De Baca	14.06%	25.15%
Doña Ana	19.29%	41.38%
Eddy	14.82%	31.66%
Grant	19.88%	35.24%
Guadalupe	19.94%	27.67%
Harding	16.67%	27.94%
Hidalgo	16.98%	26.25%
Lea	15.34%	31.26%
Lincoln	20.35%	34.88%
Los Alamos	12.41%	23.91%
Luna	18.97%	36.65%

County	Cost-Burdened Homeowners: 2000 Census	Cost-Burdened Renters: 2000 Census
McKinley	15.93%	23.63%
Mora	18.92%	32.78%
Otero	18.75%	28.03%
Quay	19.08%	23.24%
Rio Arriba	20.85%	27.56%
Roosevelt	21.28%	35.57%
San Juan	17.60%	31.67%
San Miguel	29.98%	43.30%
Sandoval	23.02%	39.79%
Santa Fe	26.51%	41.91%
Sierra	19.80%	36.01%
Socorro	23.74%	38.97%
Taos	25.39%	43.50%
Torrance	27.69%	34.99%
Union	19.58%	36.80%
Valencia	26.20%	38.42%

*Cost-burdened households pay more than 30% of gross household income for housing costs. For renters, housing costs include rent paid by the tenant plus utilities. For owners, housing costs include mortgage payment, taxes, insurance and utilities.

TABLE 2: NEW MEXICO EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAM

Homeless Children and Youth Enrolled in New Mexico Schools, 2006-2009				
2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	Numerical Increase 2006-2009	Percentage Increase 2006-2009
4,383	6,152	8,380	3,997	91%

Selected New Mexico School Districts				
School District	2007-2008	2008-2009	Numerical Increase	Percentage Increase
Albuquerque Public Schools	3,428	4,915	1,487	43%
Santa Fe Public Schools	798	980	191	24%
Las Cruces Public Schools	303	450	147	48%
Farmington Municipal Schools	99	198	99	99%
Silver Consolidated Schools	69	122	53	76%
Lordsburg Municipal Schools	12	47	35	295%

McKinney-Vento Funding, 2006-2010				
2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	ARRA Homeless Education
\$545,962	\$471,828	\$523,227	\$506,671	\$548,313

Number of School Districts Receiving McKinney-Vento Subgrants: 15
 Number of School Districts Receiving ARRA Homeless Education Subgrants: 28

Services Provided through McKinney-Vento: Coordination between schools and community agencies; school supplies; tutoring or other instructional support; referrals for medical, dental and other health services; transportation; assistance with participation in school programs; counseling; before and after school mentoring; summer programs; obtaining or transferring records necessary for enrollment; expedited evaluations; staff development and awareness; early childhood programs; and emergency assistance related to school attendance.

Greatest Challenges: Increased funding for the current grantees as well as increased funding to support more school districts to participate, funding for transportation, awareness and identification, use of Title I Part A set-asides, and "awaiting foster care placement."

State Coordinator: Joseph Sanchez; **Phone:** (505) 222-4743; **E-mail:** joseph.sanchez1@state.nm.us

HOUSE MEMORIAL 7

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT TO ASSIST A COALITION OF ORGANIZATIONS DEDICATED TO AMELIORATING CHILD HOMELESSNESS TO STUDY CHILD HOMELESSNESS IN NEW MEXICO AND PRESENT LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS.

WHEREAS, more than eight thousand nine hundred New Mexico children experience homelessness each year; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico Title 1 homeless programs served forty percent more homeless children in the 2007-2008 academic school year than they did in the 2006-2007 school year; and

WHEREAS, the Albuquerque public school district alone anticipates serving over five thousand homeless students in the 2009-2010 academic school year; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico ranked forty-seventh among the fifty states on the national center on family homelessness's state report card; and

WHEREAS, the national center on family homelessness ranked New Mexico forty-fourth among the fifty states on mitigating a child's risk of becoming homeless; and

WHEREAS, children experiencing homelessness are four times more likely to have developmental delays, relative to the general population; and

WHEREAS, seventy-five percent of homeless children under the age of five years have at least one major developmental

delay; and

WHEREAS, children who are experiencing homelessness, or who are living with families at high risk of homelessness, are much more likely to experience physical health and behavioral health problems, such as asthma and depression; and

WHEREAS, children experiencing homelessness are much more likely to have problems in school; and

WHEREAS, many parents do not earn enough money to pay for housing and other basic necessities; and

WHEREAS, a single parent earning minimum wage cannot afford rent on a two-bedroom apartment priced at the fair market value in New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico's working families need affordable child care, early childhood development programs, health care, education and housing, not only to avoid homelessness but also to thrive; and

WHEREAS, fully funding programs and services such as high-quality child care, early childhood development, education, affordable housing, medicaid and behavioral health services will prevent children from becoming homeless; and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico campaign to end child homelessness is a collaboration to end child homelessness in New Mexico by increasing public awareness about the scope and impact of child homelessness, informing state policies to better address the needs of homeless children and improving

services to homeless children; and

WHEREAS, that campaign is led by cuidando los niños, Albuquerque health care for the homeless, the Albuquerque Title 1 homeless project, the New Mexico coalition to end homelessness, New Mexico voices for children and the national center on family homelessness;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the children, youth and families department be requested to assist the New Mexico coalition to end homelessness, in collaboration with members of the New Mexico campaign to end child homelessness, to conduct a study on child homelessness in New Mexico and present a report to the interim legislative health and human services committee, along with legislative recommendations to alleviate child homelessness, by November 2010; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the secretary of children, youth and families, the executive director of the New Mexico coalition to end homelessness and the governor.

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New Mexico Children, Youth & Families Department
P.O. Drawer 5160
Santa Fe, NM 87502-5160