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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2-3-06

SPONSOR Gardner LAST UPDATED \_\_\_\_\_ HB 812

SHORT TITLE RURAL CYFD OFFICE MOTOR VEHICLES SB \_\_\_\_\_

ANALYST Lucero

### APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY06	FY07		
	\$2,500.0	Non-recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

#### Responses Received From

Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 812 appropriates \$2,500.0 from the general fund to Children, Youth and Families Department for the purpose of purchasing motor vehicles for use in rural field offices.

### FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$2,500.0 contained in this bill is a non-recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2007 shall revert to the general fund.

### SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The programs and services provided by CYFD are intended to protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, provide childcare, Pre-k, domestic violence, and juvenile reform. Current services encompass responding to emergencies involving the well being of children. They are aimed at preserving or maintaining families, the reunification of families, adjudication, assistance with adoptions and intervention-type services, inspections, licensing, etc.

The performance of these duties requires travel throughout the state. Many of the CYFD vehicles are old, in some cases be in questionable working order, and may be unsafe for the transport of New Mexico's children.

Workers sometimes find that it is more convenient and safe to use their private vehicle in the performance of duties.

### **PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS**

Safe and reliable vehicles improve the safety and productivity of CYFD employees and improve their ability to provide important health services for New Mexicans.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

CYFD would gladly absorb any administrative costs associated with acquiring new vehicles.

### **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

Hazards faced by workers and the children they transport include heavy snowfall, extreme temperatures, and bad roads. CYFD employees must have the basic resources, including a sufficient number of vehicles, that they need to perform their jobs and get themselves and the children that they are charged to protect out of potentially dangerous situations. Reliance upon the use of employee-owned vehicles to respond to reports of harm or to transport children exposes the employee-transporter and the State to potential liability

### **OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

Some CYFD employees in rural areas spend between 50-60% of their working week out of the office performing investigations, conducting home visits, going to court, transporting children, attending case planning meetings, and performing other case-related activities.

The need for reliable transportation is need because worker's case loads continue to increase, requiring more frequent use of vehicles for longer periods of time for State employees in highly contentious situations. Worker safety and efficiency demand that staff be adequately equipped. While many needs can be postponed, the current request involves items that are needed for workers to function safely and effectively

A shortage of vehicles is not a matter of inconvenience, but is one of safety and liability. For example, a social worker may perform a routine home visit, find that a child or children are being abused or neglected and determines that the child or children must be taken into emergency custody. If the only vehicle available is an unsafe vehicle the worker may have to take their personal vehicle. The worker must call the field office to request a transport. In the meantime, the child's (children's) parent becomes agitated and hostile. The emotionally charged nature of this type of situation can quickly escalate into violence

**ALTERNATIVES**

CYFD could be mandated to enter into agreements with other state agencies to share vehicles in the more rural areas of the state.

**WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL**

New Mexico's children may be transported in unsafe and unreliable vehicles.

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