Using Data to Create a Roadmap

Building a narrative about NM children to impact policy

28th Annual New Mexico Data Users Conference
November 18, 2026

NEW MEXICO VOICES FOR CHILDREN

Emily Wildau, MPP, Director of Policy

We champion public policies that improve the well-being of New Mexico's children, families, and communities.

KIDS COUNT Framework









Strengths and Weaknesses

- Clear and consistent measures of child outcomes over time
- Comparable to other states
- Deficit based and limited snapshot of 16 indicators
- Individual outcomes do not directly measure failing systems

Two poverty measures provide distinct insights

- **Official Poverty Measure (OPM)**
  - Most commonly recognized measure
  - Created in the 1960s
  - Used to determine eligibility for benefit programs

Two poverty measures provide distinct insights

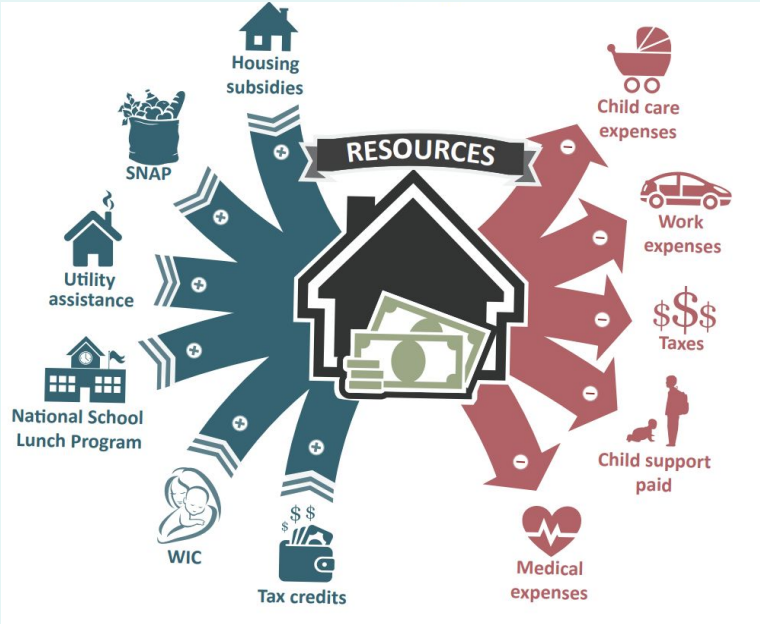
- **Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM)**
  - Less known, but offers a more comprehensive and contemporary view of poverty
  - Created in 2000s
  - Used by researchers and policymakers to assess the effectiveness of income-support programs

The OPM measures a precise definition of “income”

- Only includes pre-tax money income, such as:
  - Wages and salaries
  - Social Security benefits
  - Interest and dividends
  - Pensions and other retirement income

The SPM measures tax credits and non-cash income supports

- Shows how many households are lifted out of poverty by benefits
- Shows how many households are pushed in to poverty by expenses
- Thresholds include adjustment for geographic differences in housing costs



A defining moment for how we shape our next chapter for New Mexico's children

How does this policy improve a child's life?

The Roadmap includes three overarching categories:

Education and Care

Health and Wellbeing

Family Economic Security

We looked at key data points that tell the broader story of the ecosystem, considered the policy recommendations, and selected outcome indicators.

New Mexico is making historic investments in kids—often in the face of challenging circumstances.



Education and Care funding | grew 96%



Health and Wellbeing funding | grew 65%

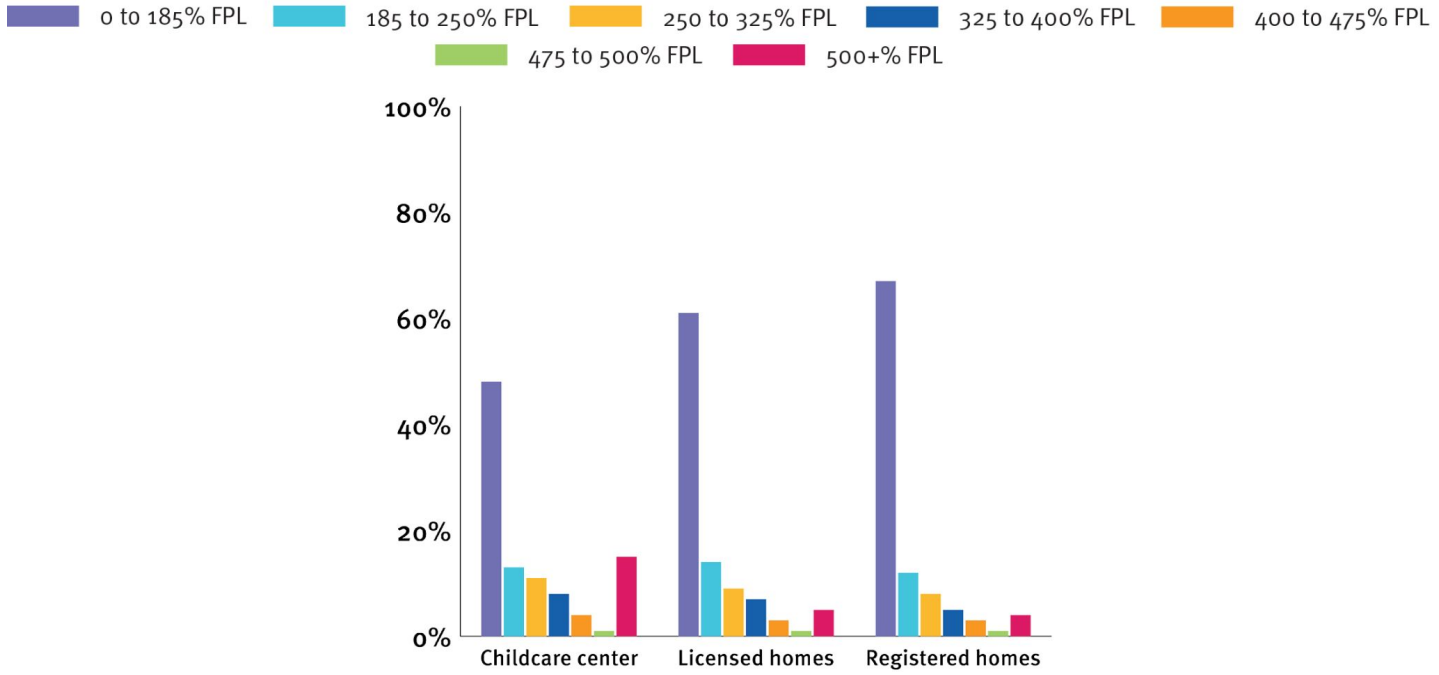


Family Economic Security | grew 81%

The Status of Early Childhood Care

FIGURE II

Distribution of New Mexico children receiving CCA by childcare center type (2026)



The Status of Early Childhood Care

- Quality levels have stayed relatively flat with an increasing number of children in care
- Need for focus on increased supply of providers at a high quality statewide



Moving the Needle for Early Childhood Care

Increase number of infants and toddlers receiving childcare assistance in rural, Tribal and other underserved communities by:

20%

Current number: 30,950
Goal: 37,140

Increase the rate of children receiving childcare from providers with 4- or 5-STAR quality ratings by:

15%

Current rate: 69%
Goal: 80%

Increase in overall School Readiness (as measured by the Early Development Instrument) for children in New Mexico Kindergarten by:

30%

Current: 47%
Goal: 62%

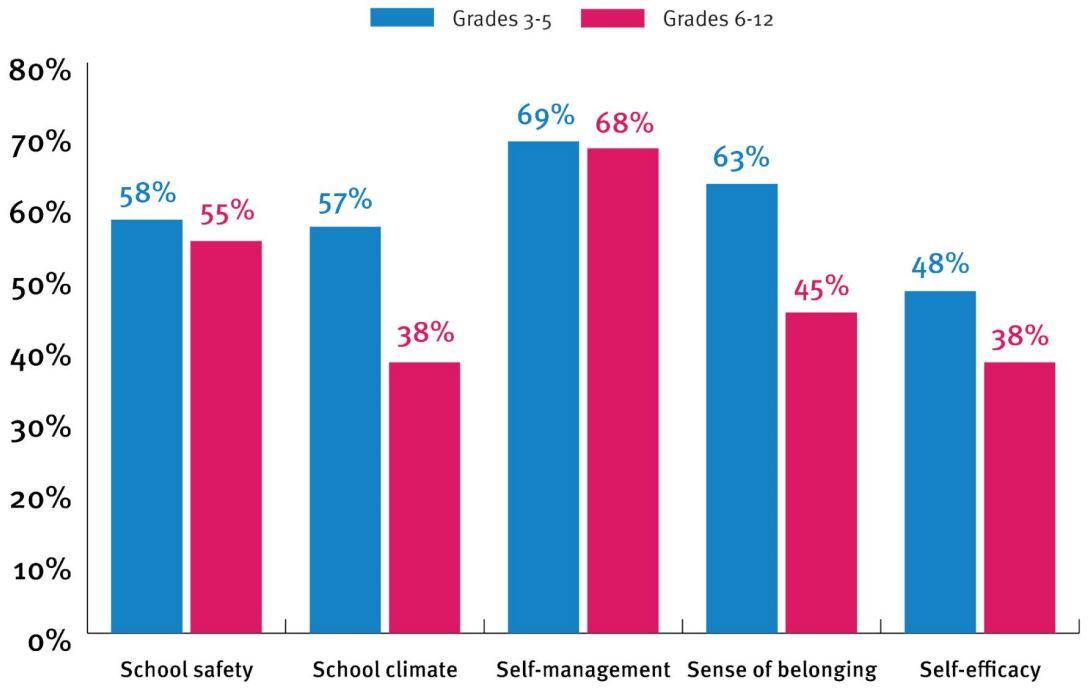
Opportunities in Early Childhood Care

- **Policy Considerations**
  - Create programs to improve support and capital for increasing the number of childcare providers statewide, with an emphasis on areas lacking sufficient access
- **Administrative Implementation Considerations**
  - Improve quality in registered homes by strengthening standards, expanding technical assistance, and supporting providers in meeting higher-quality benchmarks
- **Funding Considerations**
  - Provide sufficient funding to fully implement the ECE Wage and Career Ladder to improve teacher education, recruitment, and retention, which impacts the quality of childcare

The Status of K-12 Education

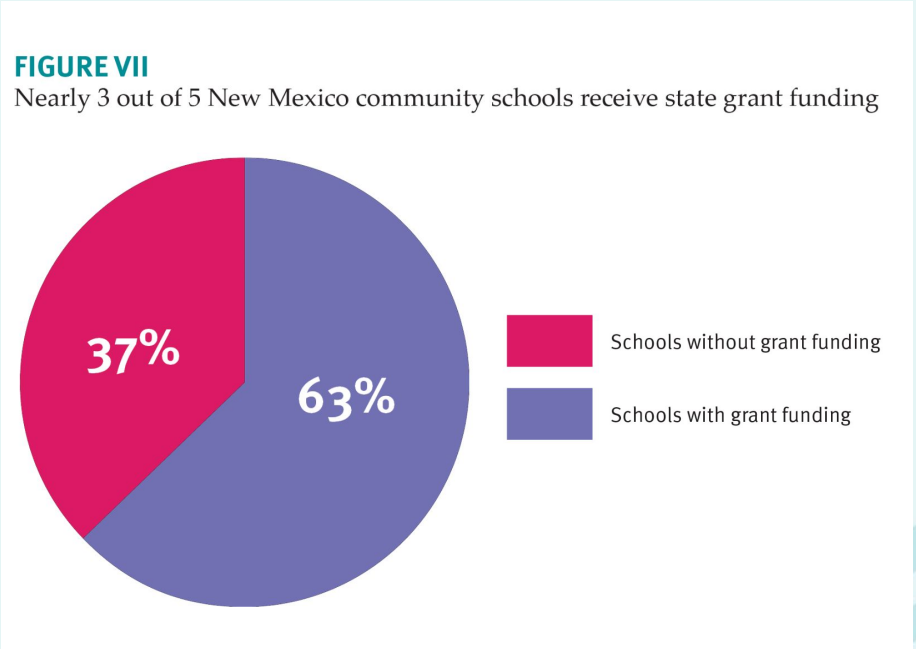
FIGURE VI

Fall 2024 student supports, environment, well-being and competency survey, by grade cohort[5]



The Status of K-12 Education

- 150 Community Schools out of nearly 900 total schools; 3 in 5 with state funding
- Case studies of successful New Mexico Community Schools found:
  - Improved school climate
  - A shift away from exclusionary discipline practices
  - Increased family and community engagement
  - Decreased chronic absenteeism
  - Increased graduation rates
  - Improved academic performance



Moving the Needle for K-12 Education

Increase the number of students who are in community schools by:

20%

Current number: 30,000
Goal: 36,000

Increase the number of students served by SBHCs by:

10%

Current number: 21,400
Goal: 23,500

Improve the rate of students with a positive perception of school climate by:

30%

Current lowest scoring dimensions: 38%
Goal: no score lower than 50%

Opportunities in K-12 Education

- **Policy Considerations**
  - Develop and revise policies to ensure K-12 district-level spending is benefiting targeted student groups
- **Administrative Implementation Considerations**
  - Gather community input to develop a New Mexico-created and -owned K-12 survey of school climate, and collect robust statewide data annually
- **Funding Considerations**
  - Make community school funding consistent and reliable year over year
  - Increase funding so all counties can implement at least one SBHC, prioritizing the six counties with no SBHC
  - Increase funding to grow the number of new community schools

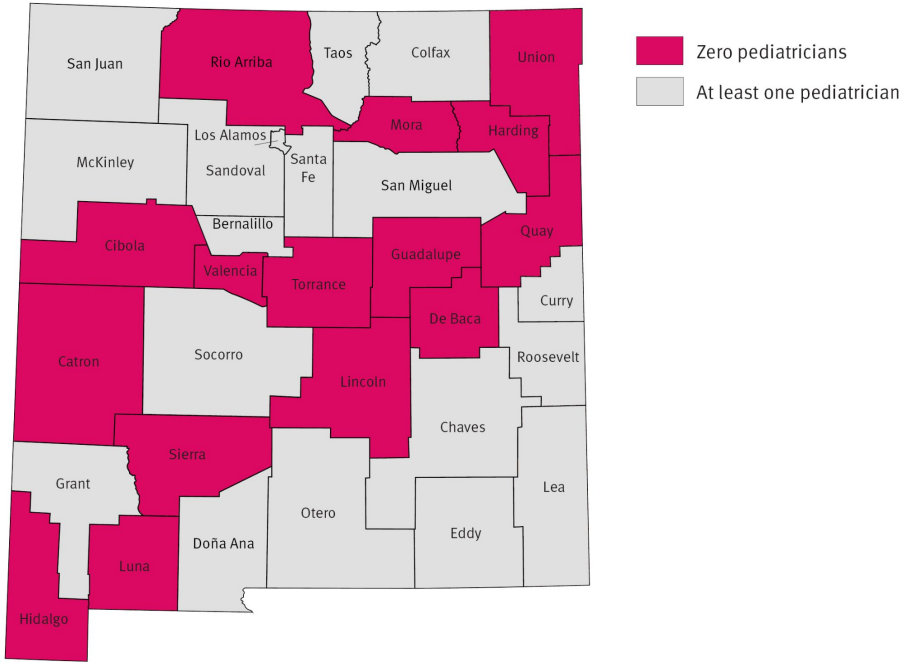
The Status of Health and Well-being

23% of families stopped receiving home visiting services because they had completed the program	**23%** of families left home visiting programs because they were not using the services	**46%** of participating families were enrolled for 11 months or less, even though families can receive home visiting services until their child turns five	**30%** of families remained enrolled in home visiting services for 24 months or more

The Status of Health and Wellbeing

- **15 counties** have zero pediatricians (in pink)
- **1 in 4** New Mexico children did not receive any preventive medical care visits

FIGURE III
Fifteen counties in New Mexico have zero pediatricians[23]



Moving the Needle for Health and Wellbeing

Reduce maternal deaths from pregnancy- and childbirth-related complications (up to six weeks postpartum) by:

45%

Current rate: 28.5 per 100,000
Goal: 15.7 per 100,000

Increase the rate of children who remain enrolled in home visiting services for at least 12 months to:

75%

Current: 54%
Goal: 75%

Increase the rate of children ages 0–17 who received at least one preventive medical visit in the past 12 months to:

85%

Current: 77.5%
Goal: 85%

Opportunities in Health and Well-being

- **Policy Considerations**
  - Explore policy solutions to expand the maternal health workforce to increase provider availability in rural communities
- **Administrative Implementation Considerations**
  - Increase the number of practicing pediatricians through a targeted physician recruitment strategy, as part of the new Interstate Medical Licensure Compact
  - Clarify eligibility, services, and payment structures for home visiting providers and families, and improve outreach to newly-pregnant people to inform them of the availability of home visiting programs
  - Align and stabilize Medicaid and state reimbursement rates for home visiting services

Opportunities in Health and Well-being

- **Funding Considerations**
  - Increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for specialty, preventative, and rural healthcare services
  - Increase funding for wages, training, and retention of home visitors

The Status of Economic Security

How Much Does a Single Mother Need to Earn to Cover the Cost of Living in New Mexico?



Single Parent w/ One Child

$67,639

Annual living wage

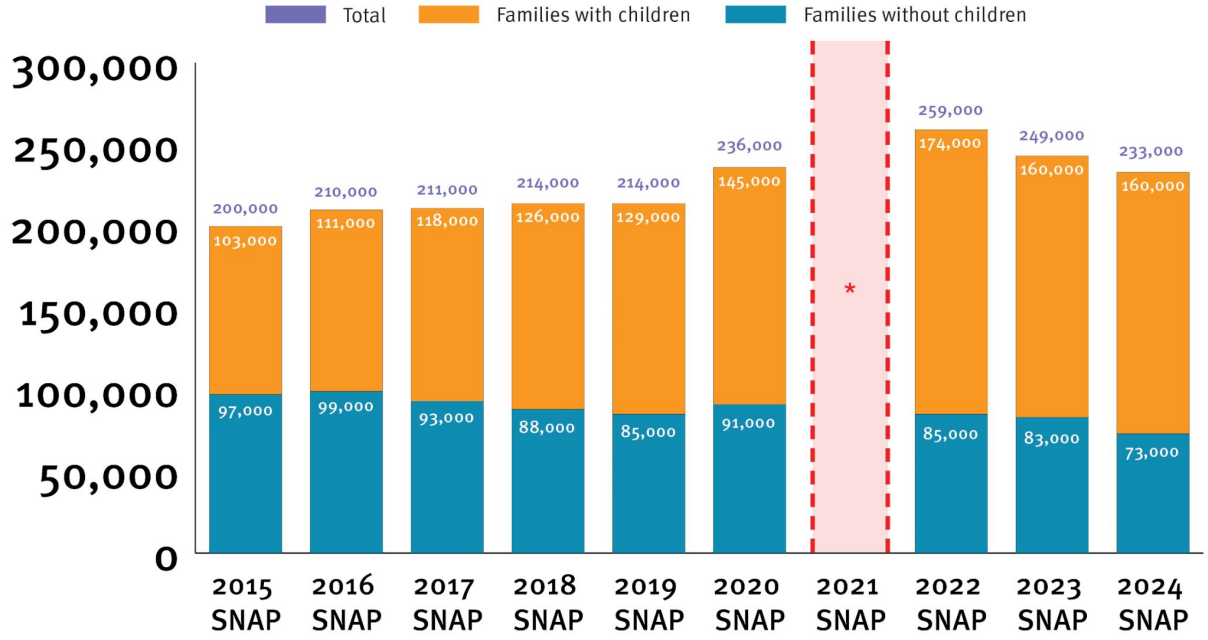
$37,514

Median annual wage for female-headed households with children under 18

The Status of Economic Security

FIGURE III

SNAP use among New Mexico families, by family structure[45]

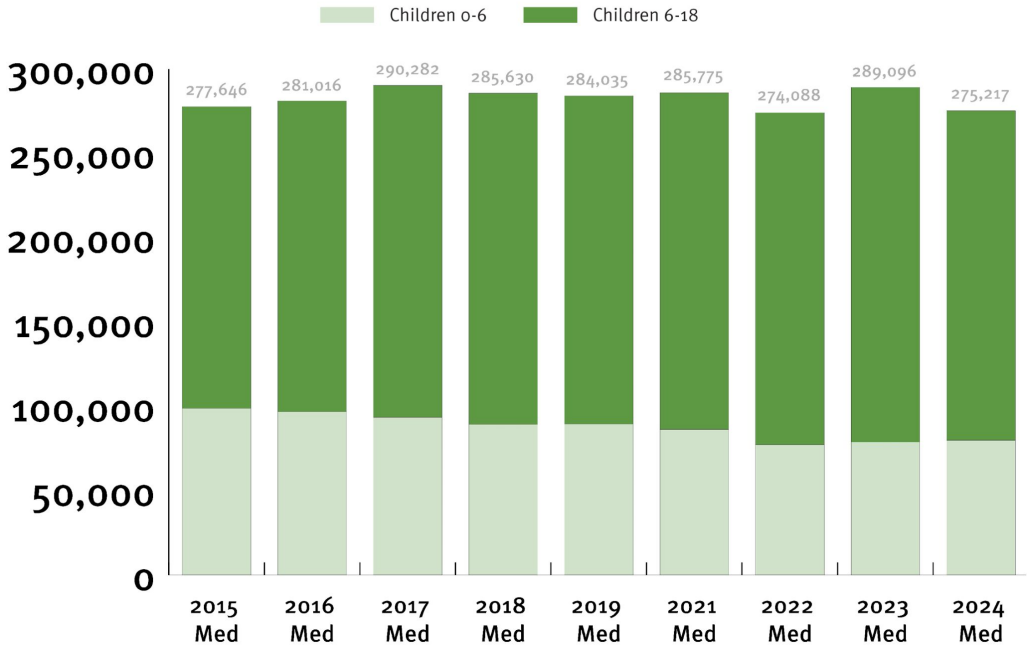


*Data for 2021 are not available due to COVID-19 waivers; 2020 data reflect available data during the early months of the pandemic waiver period.

The Status of Economic Security

FIGURE IV

New Mexico children enrolled in Medicaid, by age group



Moving the Needle for Economic Security

Increase the rate of single-parent households that meet the living wage threshold by:

85%

Current: 27%
Goal: 50%

Decrease the rate of children in New Mexico that are uninsured by:

50%

Current: 6%
Goal: 3%

Increase the rate of families claiming the state CTC by:

10%

of eligible families
Current: 90%
Goal: 100%

Opportunities in Economic Security

- **Policy Considerations**
  - Raise the minimum wage and index it to inflation
  - Review personal income tax brackets to evaluate and improve progressivity and explore wealth taxes
  - Amend the New Mexico Public Assistance Act to allow HCA the flexibility to create programs that extend food assistance to certain populations, including immigrant households with children
  - Adopt and fully fund a plan that will expand affordable and quality health coverage to all New Mexicans
- **Administrative Implementation Considerations**
  - Ensure all caseworkers are adequately trained and supported to accurately and efficiently administer SNAP and Medicaid benefits

Opportunities in Economic Security

- **Administrative Implementation Considerations**
  - Support robust outreach to Medicaid enrollees about upcoming policy changes
  - Improve and enhance SNAP Employment and Training Programs to help more people meet the new work requirements
  - Minimize Medicaid cost sharing by maintaining low copays and ensuring they are not enforced in ways that delay or deny access to care
  - Identify and improve outreach to eligible families who are not claiming the state CTC
- **Funding Considerations**
  - Expand refundable tax credits and increase benefit amounts
  - Provide full and sustainable funding for HCA to meet increased staffing and administrative demands resulting from recent federal changes

The roadmap is just the beginning. We have heard from communities across New Mexico to shape the next chapter and build lasting momentum for children

Questions? Thank you!

Contact Info: ewildau@nmvoices.org

Follow us: NMVoices

NMVoicesforChildren

NMVoices