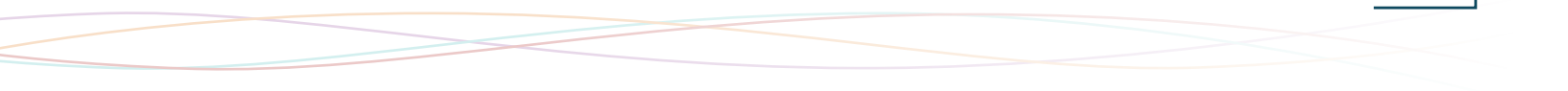
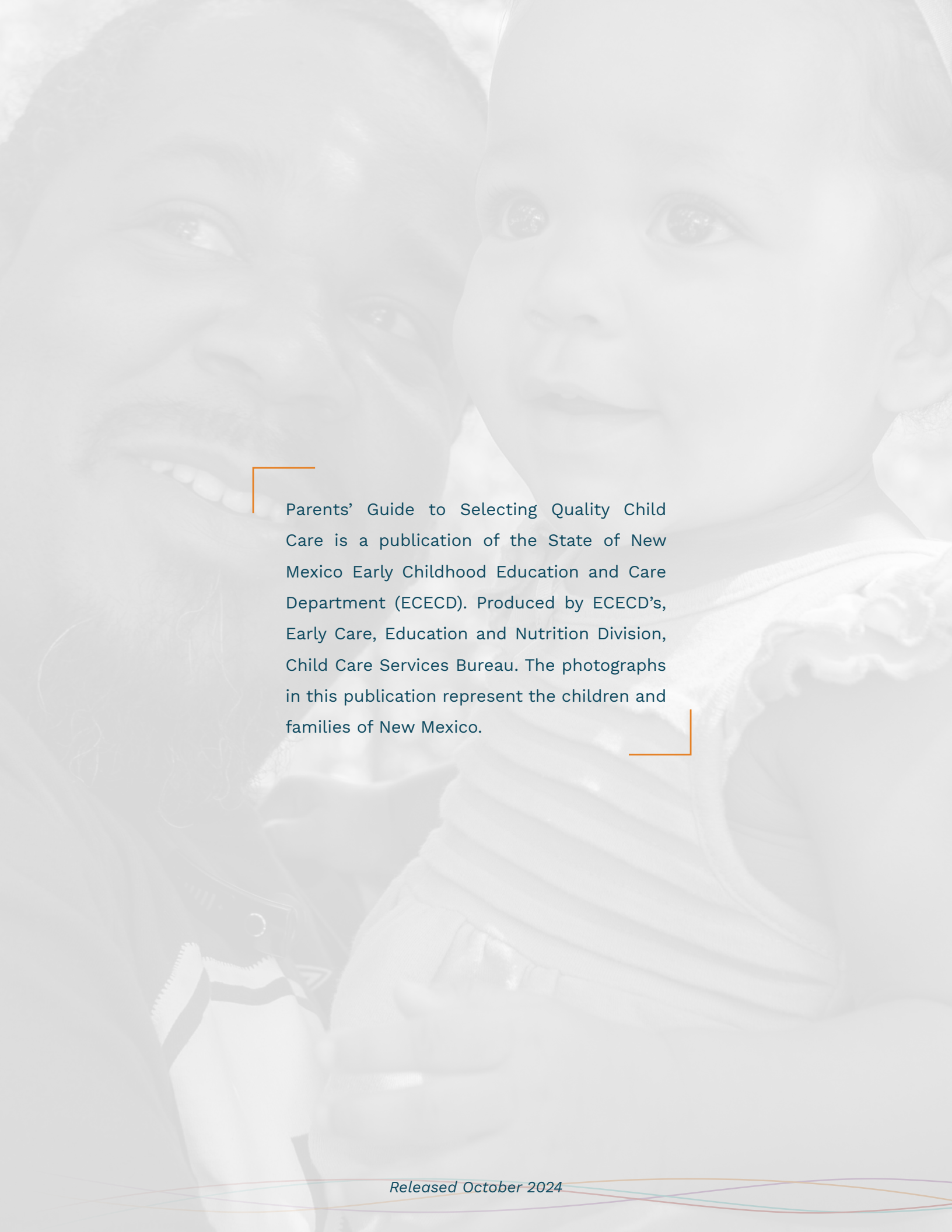




  
NEW MEXICO  
**Early Childhood**  
Education & Care Department

*Parents'*  
**GUIDE TO SELECTING  
QUALITY CHILD CARE**





Parents' Guide to Selecting Quality Child Care is a publication of the State of New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD). Produced by ECECD's, Early Care, Education and Nutrition Division, Child Care Services Bureau. The photographs in this publication represent the children and families of New Mexico.



# Contents

<b>2</b>	<b>About the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD)</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Child Care Assistance (CCA)</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Child Care Options</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Types of Child Care Settings</li><li>• Types of Early Childhood Education Programs</li><li>• Early Childhood Approaches</li></ul>
<b>9</b>	<b>What is the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)?</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Selecting a Quality Child Care Program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comprehensive Background Checks</li></ul>
<b>13</b>	<b>Questions to Ask a Child Care Provider</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children With Special Needs</li></ul>
<b>17</b>	<b>Parental Involvement</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>Early Childhood Information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child Abuse</li><li>• Tips for Dealing with Challenging Behavior</li><li>• Transitions</li><li>• Immunizations</li></ul>
<b>21</b>	<b>Resources</b>

# About

In 2019, Gov. Lujan Grisham and the New Mexico Legislature created the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD), consolidating all early childhood programs and services into a single cohesive, equitable, and responsive system designed to meet the unique and diverse needs of New Mexico families and young children ages prenatal-to-five.

## VISION

---

All New Mexico families and young children are thriving.

## MISSION

---

Optimize the health, development, education, and well-being of babies, toddlers, and preschoolers through a family-driven, equitable, community-based system of high-quality prenatal and early childhood programs and services.

Finding the right child care for your family is a very important decision. ECECD's goal is to make this decision easier by offering valuable information and resources to guide you in making the best choice. Use this guide to:

- Understand your child care options and explore what's available.
- Learn about different child care settings and whether they are licensed and regulated.
- Discover additional quality standards that help programs exceed licensing requirements to provide high-quality care, supporting your child's growth, learning, and preparation for school.

This guide will equip you with the information and tools to make an informed choice that benefits both you and your child. Parenting is one of the most rewarding jobs in the world, and we hope this information helps you succeed and enjoy the rewards of supporting your child's learning and growth.

*Sincerely,*

New Mexico's Early Childhood Education and Care Department's  
Child Care Service Bureau



## CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

### What is the Child Care Assistance (CCA) program?

Child Care Assistance (CCA) in New Mexico is managed by the Early Childhood Education and Care Department's (ECECD) Child Care Service Bureau. CCA subsidizes the cost of child care for families earning at or below 400% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), which amounts to an income of up to \$120,000 annually for a family of four. You can find the most recent income guidelines for ECECD's Child Care Assistance program at [nmececd.org/child-care-assistance/](http://nmececd.org/child-care-assistance/).

Any parent or legal guardian who is working, going to school, or in a job training program can apply for Child Care Assistance. Individuals who are searching for employment and need help with child care expenses are also eligible to apply.

Currently, families who qualify for the program do not have to make co-payments for child care services, making it a cost-effective option for many. ECECD will let parents know three months in advance if co-payments are going to start again. To learn about the most recent co-payment news related to the Child Care Assistance Program, visit the Child Care Assistance page on ECECD's website at [nmececd.org/child-care-assistance/](http://nmececd.org/child-care-assistance/). The page provides updates on co-payments, eligibility criteria, and other important details for families seeking assistance.

### What ages qualify for the Child Care Assistance program?

Any child between the ages of six weeks and 13 years, or up to 18 years of age if special supervision is required.

### Who may provide care for my child?

You can choose the best option that meets your family's needs. This includes a licensed child care center, licensed child care home, Out-of-School-Time program, or a registered family child care home. If you are approved for Child Care Assistance, ECECD pays your provider directly each month based on the Department rate. You may also be required to pay a co-payment.

### New Mexico Child Care Finder

Visit ECECD's New Mexico Child Care Finder to filter results that meet your family's needs. The Child Care Finder, allows parents and caregivers to search for one of the 1000+ child care programs statewide, filtering by proximity, age of child, quality rating, tuition, language, program type, and more. Need a customized referral with a Family Specialist? Please call NewMexicoKids Resource and Referral at 1 (800) 691-9067. The call will be personalized to your specific needs.

It takes approximately 15 minutes to complete, and referrals will be given to you via e-mail or over the phone. Calls are returned Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.



**Scan Me** for the  
New Mexico Child Care Finder  
and locate Child Care settings.  
[childcare.ececd.nm.gov/search](http://childcare.ececd.nm.gov/search)



## HOW DOES MY CHILD CARE PROVIDER GET PAID?

ECECD's Child Care Services Bureau pays your provider directly each month based on the Department rate. You may also be required to pay a co-payment.

### How to Apply for Child Care Assistance

You can visit, call, or email a Child Care Services Bureau field office using the information below:

#### Northern Region

##### Gallup and Grants

1720 E. Aztec  
Gallup, NM 87301

##### Farmington

2800 Farmington Ave.  
Farmington, NM 87401

##### Santa Fe and Moriarty

1920 5th Street  
Santa Fe, NM 87505

##### Española and Taos

912 N Railroad Ave.  
Española, NM 87532

##### Las Vegas and Raton

2518 Ridgerunner Rd.  
Las Vegas, NM 87701

#### Central Region

##### Albuquerque

4801 Indian School NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87110

##### Rio Rancho

4359 Jager Drive NE Ste A  
Rio Rancho, NM 87144

##### Los Lunas and Socorro

750 Morris Rd.  
Los Lunas, NM 87031

#### Southwest Region

##### Silver City

3082 32nd By Pass Rd Ste A  
Silver City, NM 88061

##### Las Cruces

2805 Roadrunner Parkway  
Las Cruces, NM 88011

##### Alamogordo

2200 Indian Wells Rd.  
Alamogordo, NM 88310

##### Deming

918 E. Pear  
Deming, NM 88030

##### Anthony

Address: 945 Anthony  
Anthony, NM 88021

Call Early Childhood Services  
at 1-800-832-1321 or email  
at [Child.care@state.nm.us](mailto:Child.care@state.nm.us)

Apply online at  
[eligibility.ececd.state.nm.us](http://eligibility.ececd.state.nm.us)

#### Southeast Region

##### Roswell

400 N. Pennsylvania Ave. Suite 441  
Roswell, NM 88201

##### Clovis

1104 E Manana  
Clovis, NM 88101

##### Carlsbad

901 De Baca St.,  
Carlsbad, NM 88220

##### Hobbs

907 West Calle Sur,  
Hobbs, NM 88240



The following items are needed to establish eligibility for child care assistance:  
To apply, families need to provide:

ELIGIBILITY

- Current proof of countable earned and unearned income for applicant and biological parent, step-parent, and/or legal guardian living in the household, if applicable
- School schedule for applicant and biological parent, step-parent, and/or legal guardian living in the household (if applicable)
- Documentation of Incapacitation, if applicable
- Documentation of Custody/Dependency, if applicable
- Verification of birth for all applicant children
- Photo Identification for applicant
- Proof of New Mexico residency, such as a lease/rental agreement or utility bill

**Submit Child Care Assistance inquiries, comments, or concerns regarding an application, placement agreement, payment, or change to:**

[ECECD.CCA-South@ececd.nm.gov](mailto:ECECD.CCA-South@ececd.nm.gov) for counties: Doña Ana, Chaves, Guadalupe, Lea, Eddy, Otero, Sierra, De Baca, Curry, Grant, Luna, Lincoln, Hidalgo, Catron, Quay, Roosevelt

[ECECD.CCA-North@ececd.nm.gov](mailto:ECECD.CCA-North@ececd.nm.gov) for counties: San Juan, McKinley, Rio Arriba, Taos, Sandoval, Santa Fe, San Miguel, Bernalillo, Colfax, Union, Cibola, Los Alamos, Mora, Harding, Valencia, Socorro, Torrance

A centralized child care resource and referral service for parents searching for other resources is available by calling 1-800-691-9067.



## CHILD CARE OPTIONS

### What types of Child Care settings are available in New Mexico?

**Licensed Programs:** Licensed programs offer care in a variety of settings and must meet the minimum licensing regulations overseen by the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD). These settings include child care centers, child care homes and out-of-school time programs.

- **Child Care Center** – Provides early childhood education and care services in a commercial building where children are cared for in a classroom-like environment with groups of other children typically their same age.
- **Child Care Home** – Provides early childhood education and care services to a small group of children, in the caregiver’s own home. A caregiver in a Family Child Care Home may provide care to no more than six. They can also be considered a Family Child Care Group Home when there is a second caregiver present. A Group Child Care Home can serve a group of seven to 12 children with a second caregiver present.
- **Out-of-School Time Program** – Provides supervised recreational and educational care services to young school-aged children when school is not in session. Care is often provided at the elementary school that the child attends, or a community center. This type of care can also be called “Before and After School Care”.

**Registered Homes:** Registered homes are not licensed, but are required to follow New Mexico’s non-licensed child care requirements set by ECECD. A registered home provider cares for up to four non-resident children. Registered homes are ideal for families looking for non-traditional hours of service, an emphasis on family values and culture, and more one-on-one attention.

**Tribal Programs:** Tribal child care programs are established within many Native communities. Early learning is rooted in Indigenous culture with a strong emphasis on family involvement. Tribal child care programs provide quality early care and education along with Native language acquisition and preservation, while nurturing the traditional and cultural values of the Pueblo, Tribe, or Nation to which they belong. Many Tribal child care programs are funded through the Head Start Program.

**Summer Programs:** Summer programs are not required to be licensed or registered. Be sure to check with each individual program for details and requirements.

**Before-and-After School Care:** Before-and-after school care is not required to be licensed or registered. Verify with the specific program for details. If the facility is licensed, Child Care Assistance may be applied to this type of care.





## What types of Early Childhood Education Programs are available in New Mexico?

Head Start follows federally established eligibility requirements to determine who qualifies for its programs. These qualifications are primarily based on family income, and certain families, such as those receiving public assistance or experiencing homelessness, automatically qualify. Additionally, children in foster care are also eligible. Each local Head Start program may have specific guidelines, but the federal income threshold typically determines basic eligibility.

### Head Start and Early Head Start

- **The Early Head Start Home-Based** program serves children prenatal to 3 and is available for working or non-working families.
- **Center-Based Early Head Start** programs serve children 6 weeks up to 3 years old and are designed for working families.
- **Center-Based Head Start** programs serve children 3 years old to 5 years old and are designed for working families.
- Both Early Head Start options support families to transition to Center Based Head Start when age appropriate, or for those in Home Based to transition to Center Based Early Head Start when needed for working purposes.
- Head Start Programs are federally administered and can be tribally regulated or licensed by ECECD.

**New Mexico PreK (NM PreK)** is a free program during the school year that delivers high-quality education in both community-based and school-based settings. NM PreK focuses on providing a fun, rewarding, and developmentally appropriate learning environment for children ages 3 and 4. Visit our web page [www.nmececd.org/prek/](http://www.nmececd.org/prek/) to learn more.

**Home Visiting** - New Mexico provides a coordinated continuum of high-quality, community-driven, culturally and linguistically appropriate home visiting services that promote maternal, infant, and early childhood health, safety, development, and strong parent-child relationships. Home Visiting helps families to: gain knowledge regarding child development, connect with community support services, discover ways to support learning through play and interactions, receive emotional support through challenges associated with raising a child, and access support to get out of dangerous or unhealthy situations. For more information visit [www.nmececd.org/homevisiting/](http://www.nmececd.org/homevisiting/).





## EARLY CHILDHOOD APPROACHES

There are many philosophies, methods, and approaches to early childhood education and care, and better understanding them will help you decide what best fits your family's needs. Child care providers will often advertise which philosophies/methods they use. Below are brief descriptions of some of the most common:

**Bank Street/Developmental Interaction:** This approach focuses on the child as they are presented with opportunities to make meaning in their world. Children are prompted to engage with the social and physical aspects of the environment in order to gain more understanding. The educators are the facilitators that connect the children to the real-world environments and opportunities.

**Faith-Based:** A faith-based child care program may provide religious instruction or impart values that reference faith in their curriculum. Some faith-based early childhood programs may not provide specific religious instruction but may operate under a mission aligned with their faith or religious culture.

**High Scope:** High Scope is an early childhood approach that views children as “active learners” meaning that they learn best from activities that they can plan, carry out, and reflect on. The educator's role is to help the children learn to make choices, solve problems, and engage in a variety of activities by engaging in conversations and supporting children's plans.

**Montessori:** This approach is highly focused on environment and materials paired with structure and routine. The Montessori method encourages independence and often includes practical activities such as sweeping or personal care. Children are given choices within limits of a variety of tasks and activities prepared by educators.

**The Project Approach:** In this approach, students are engaged in selecting their own real-world topics to explore and determining a project to demonstrate what they've learned. A project may be short-term or long-term depending on the level of children's interest.

**Reggio Emilia:** This approach takes its name from a city in Northern Italy and has its roots as far back as the end of World War II. In this approach, families are actively involved in helping their children thrive and contribute to community learning, and the environment is seen as the teacher. Reggio Emilia uses a project approach based on child inquiry.

**Waldorf:** In this model educators create the classroom and the curriculum around the children. This is a play-based approach which focuses on children's interests, and acceptance of each child. A Waldorf approach provides opportunities for exploration through play as well as consistent and predictable rhythms and routines throughout the day, week, and year.

## WHAT IS THE CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP)?

ECECD's Family Nutrition Bureau administers two USDA Child Nutrition Programs, the Child and the Adult Care Food Program and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). CACFP provides reimbursement to childcare providers for nutritious meals and snacks served to children in child care settings. The meals provided through child care programs help to ensure that eligible children and adults in child care facilities receive nutritious meals that meet USDA meal pattern requirements. Institutions which can participate in the programs include:

- School food authorities
- Local government entities
- Private non-profit organizations (such as faith-based organizations, Boys & Girls Clubs and community action agencies)
- Head Start programs
- Certain for-profit institutions that meet eligibility requirements

### How to access CACFP

CACFP benefits are available to all enrolled participants. Enrollment takes place through your child's early childhood program, which include Head Start programs, child care centers, before-and after-school care programs, family child care home providers, PreK programs, emergency housing shelters, hospitals and clinics, schools, preschools, and adult day care facilities.

Participation in CACFP is free in most centers. If your early childhood program has opted to use the pricing program provision and charge for meals, parents must complete an Income Eligibility Application in order to qualify for free meals. Otherwise, parents are required to pay a fee—either a reduced rate or a full rate, depending on family income. For more information visit [www.nmececd.org/family-nutrition/](http://www.nmececd.org/family-nutrition/).



## SELECTING A QUALITY CHILD CARE PROGRAM

### What is a licensed program?

Child care centers, licensed homes and some after school programs follow New Mexico's child care licensing regulations. Licensed programs offer various types of care in a variety of settings and must meet minimum licensing regulations. Licensed programs must have their license posted visible to families, staff members and visitors. Their STAR Quality Level is indicated on their license.

### What is the FOCUS program?

A licensed program's quality level is indicated on their license by STARS. The number of STARS on a child care provider's license tells you the level of quality criteria that the program has met. A license will have one, two, three, four, or five STARS on it. A higher STAR level indicates a higher **level of quality**. **Some quality indicators a parent can look for can include lower teacher-to-child ratios, increased training and education, the use of daily schedules and planned learning activities, as well as age and developmentally-appropriate environments.**

You can view providers' survey inspection reports by going to [New Mexico Child Care Finder](#), search for the provider, once the provider profile is located click the number under Health & Safety Report.

The **FOCUS** program in New Mexico was created for several key reasons:

- **To help parents, families, and legal guardians identify quality child care programs:** FOCUS provides a clear rating system, allowing families to make informed decisions based on the level of quality in child care settings.
- **To encourage child care programs to continually improve their quality of care:** The program promotes ongoing development by setting higher standards for care, encouraging programs to enhance their services through training, curriculum, and family engagement.
- **To recognize child care programs that provide high-quality care:** FOCUS acknowledges and rewards programs that go beyond minimum licensing requirements, offering a pathway for improvement and recognition through its STAR rating system.

These goals work together to create a better system of child care that benefits both children and families by raising the overall standards of early childhood education across the state.

### How can the FOCUS program help me?

The system ranges from One-STAR to Five-STAR, reflecting increasing levels of quality in child care programs. A One-STAR rating meets basic licensing requirements, while a Five-STAR rating indicates a program that exceeds these requirements by offering exceptional care and educational opportunities, including highly trained staff and comprehensive support for children's development.

*continued* →





**One-STAR:** Meets the minimum state licensing requirements for health and safety.

**Two-STAR:** Exceeds basic licensing by meeting higher standards in staff qualifications and learning environments.

**Three-STAR:** Demonstrates a higher level of program quality, including more staff training and improved learning environments.

**Four-STAR:** Offers a comprehensive program with advanced teacher training and curriculum that supports children's growth.

**Five-STAR:** Provides the highest quality care, incorporating best practices in early childhood education with highly trained staff and enriched learning environments.

**As a program's STAR level increases, their reimbursement from Child Care Assistance increases.**

Please note that the QRIS (Quality Rating and Improvement System) is undergoing a redesign as of Fall 2024. To learn more about the current redesign phase of [FOCUS](#), you can visit the [FOCUS Redesign](#) page at ECECD. The page provides details on the ongoing updates and improvements to the system.

## COMPREHENSIVE BACKGROUND CHECKS

ECECD requires all child care providers to undergo comprehensive background checks. This includes checks for criminal history, child abuse and neglect records, and sex offender registry status. The background checks are mandatory for all individuals who work directly with children, as well as those who have unsupervised access to children in licensed child care facilities, ensuring that children are in a safe environment.

- **Background checks must be renewed** periodically, usually at a minimum of every five years, to ensure ongoing safety in child care environments.
- **All individuals** in a child care facility, including staff, volunteers, and household members of in-home child care facilities homes, are subject to these checks.
- The background checks cover both **state and federal criminal databases**, which includes fingerprinting to identify any potential risks.
- ECECD has a **Comprehensive Background Check Process** that ensures that checks are completed thoroughly and efficiently, following national best practices to protect children.

This process is part of New Mexico's commitment to maintaining a high level of trust and security in child care settings.

## STEPS IN CHOOSING CHILD CARE

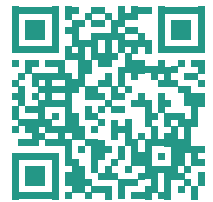
### Step 1: Decide on what kind of child care best meets your needs.

- Do you prefer home-based or center-based child care?
- Do you want a relative to take care of your child?
- For what hours and days do you need child care?
- What is the best fit for my child?

### Step 2: New Mexico Child Care Finder

Visit ECECD's New Mexico Child Care Finder to filter results that meet your family's needs. The Child Care Finder, allows parents and caregivers to search for one of the 1000+ child care programs statewide, filtering by proximity, age of child, quality rating, tuition, language, program type, and more. Need a customized referral with a Family Specialist? Please call NewMexicoKids Resource and Referral at 1 (800) 691-9067. The call will be personalized to your specific needs. It takes approximately 15 minutes to complete, and referrals will be given to you via e-mail or over the phone. Calls are returned Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**Scan Me**  
to access the New  
Mexico Child Care  
finder website.



[childcare.ececd.nm.gov/search](http://childcare.ececd.nm.gov/search)

### Step 3: Visit Child Care Centers and Ask Questions

Once you have received a list of child care options, spend some time interviewing each center director/caregiver. When interviewing child care centers or caregivers, here's a helpful approach to make sure you gather all the key details you need:

*continued →*





## INITIAL CALL - QUESTIONS TO ASK A CHILD CARE PROVIDER

### Key questions to ask:

- What are your operating hours and flexibility (e.g., part-time or full-time care)?
- What are your caregiver-to-child ratios?
- What are the costs, including any additional or incidental fees (e.g., late pickup, meals, field trips)?
- Do you accept Child Care Assistance reimbursement?
- What curriculum or learning programs do you offer (if applicable)?
- Are you registered or licensed? What is your STAR Level?
- What is the experience or qualifications of the caregivers?
- How long have the caregivers been working in the program?
- What training do the caregivers have?
- How are discipline and safety handled?
- Is there an opening, or is there a waiting list?
- Who will be watching my child throughout the day? Will anyone I haven't met be responsible for my child's care at any point?
- Can I have a calendar that shows the days when you are closed?
- Are meals and snacks provided, or should my child bring a lunch?
- What does a typical day look like for my child?
- Do caregivers follow a daily schedule with specific activities?
- What is your program's philosophy on child care and child development?
- Can I have a list of references—families whose children you've cared for?
- Do you have cameras or a video recording system that parents can access to observe their child's? interactions throughout the day?

QUESTIONS

## VISIT THE CENTERS

### Bring Your Child:

It's important to see how your child interacts with the caregivers and the environment.

### What to Observe:

- Cleanliness and safety of the environment.
- How staff interacts with children—are they engaged, warm, and nurturing?
- How children in the center seem—are they happy, occupied, and safe?
- Are there age-appropriate toys and activities?
- What is the overall atmosphere like—calm or chaotic?

### Follow-up Questions:

- What is your illness policy?
- How do you communicate with parents about the child's day (daily reports, apps, etc.)?
- Are meals/snacks provided, or do we bring them from home?

This process will help you choose the best match for your child and your family's needs. Once you've made your decision, talk to your child about the transition. If you feel confident, your child will sense your reassurance and feel more comfortable. Lastly, stay actively involved in your child's care to ensure a smooth and positive experience.







## CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Early Childhood Special Education program in New Mexico is focused on providing high-quality services and support for young children with developmental delays or disabilities. Two key programs are central to this effort under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):

- **Part B-619:** This program ensures that preschool children (ages 3-5) with disabilities receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). It promotes inclusion by educating children alongside their peers to the fullest extent possible, with additional supports such as speech therapy or occupational therapy.
- **Part C:** This component provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers (birth to age 3) who have or are at risk of developmental delays. It aims to address developmental concerns early on, while supporting families in understanding and meeting their child's needs. New Mexico delivers these services through the **Family Infant Toddler (FIT) program**.

In 2023, a transition of responsibility for preschool special education services from the Public Education Department to ECECD was initiated to streamline coordination and improve service delivery for children with disabilities.

For more details, visit the Early Childhood Special Education page on the ECECD website at [www.nmececd.org/early-childhood-special-education/](http://www.nmececd.org/early-childhood-special-education/).

### Considerations when looking for child care for a child with special needs:

- Are educators eager to learn about my child first, before focusing on their disability?
- If my child receives services from other agencies, is there an interest in partnering with them to better support both the child and the educators?
- Do educators foster an environment of acceptance and inclusion among the children?
- Are activities and routines adapted to ensure everyone can participate?
- If necessary, will the environment be modified to accommodate my child's specific needs?

These considerations can help ensure that your child's unique needs are met while promoting an inclusive and supportive environment.



## SPECIAL NEEDS RESOURCES

### Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Program

Are you concerned that your child isn't developing as expected? While all children grow and develop at their own pace, some may need a bit of extra support. Developmental delays are common in young children, but early identification and intervention can greatly improve outcomes.

The **Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Program** provides early intervention services to over 14,000 children from birth to age three who are at risk of, or experiencing, developmental delays. FIT supports both the child and their family in addressing these developmental needs. For more information, [nmececd.org/family-infant-toddler-fit-program/](http://nmececd.org/family-infant-toddler-fit-program/).

### Home Visiting

Home Visiting New Mexico's free home visiting program connects parents and caregivers with a friendly expert for regular, planned visits in the comfort of your home. Babies don't come with instructions, but home visitors guide you to the answers you need to be a happy and healthy family. You can trust them for guidance on a wide range of topics including safe sleep, injury prevention, nutrition, child care, breast feeding, and more.

For more information visit [nmececd.org/homevisiting/](http://nmececd.org/homevisiting/).

Ph: 1-833-675-1438 • E-mail: [ececd.homevisiting@ececd.nm.gov](mailto:ececd.homevisiting@ececd.nm.gov)

### New Mexico PreK

New Mexico PreK is a free program that equips three- and four-year-old children with the early literacy, math, and social-emotional skills they will need to enter Kindergarten ready to thrive. NM PreK is available in both school-based and community-based settings. For more information visit [nmececd.org/prek/](http://nmececd.org/prek/).

### New Mexico Resource and Referral

- [NewMexicoKids.org](http://NewMexicoKids.org)
- (800) 691-9067
- Supports families in locating child care options

### UNM Center for Development and Disability

- [cdd.unm.edu](http://cdd.unm.edu)
- (800) 552-8195
- Provides resources and support for families and children with developmental disabilities

### Parents Reaching Out (PRO)

Provides support, information, and resources for families of children with special needs, helping parents become effective advocates for their child's education and development. [parentsreachingout.org](http://parentsreachingout.org).

### Education for Parents of Indian Children with Special Needs (EPICS)

These resources can help guide you through the process of finding child care and developmental support tailored to your family's needs. [epicsnm.org](http://epicsnm.org)

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents, families, and legal guardians know their child better than anyone, while caregivers' experience, training, and skills make them excellent resources for families. Therefore, it's essential for parents or legal guardians and caregivers to work together as partners in helping children grow and learn. Some tips for fostering successful parent involvement in the care and education of children include:

- Open Communication:** Maintain regular communication with caregivers to stay informed about your child's progress and any concerns.
- Active Participation:** Engage in child care activities or events, such as parent meetings or volunteer opportunities.
- Sharing Information:** Provide caregivers with insights into your child's needs, preferences, and routines to help them offer personalized care.
- Collaborative Decision-Making:** Work together to make decisions about your child's care, especially when addressing developmental or behavioral concerns.
- Consistency Between Home and Care:** Ensure alignment between home routines and the care setting for consistency in your child's daily experiences.
- Communicate with your child's caregiver about your child's background,** likes, dislikes, and any special needs to ensure personalized care.
- Schedule regular parent-caregiver meetings** to discuss your child's development and address any concerns.
- Spend extra time with your child during drop-off and pick-up** to ease transitions and strengthen your connection with both the caregiver and your child.
- Volunteer to participate in activities, such as:**
  - Storytelling and reading
  - Field trips
  - Music and song presentations
  - Helping with projects or tasks that can be done from home
  - Cooking activities
  - Sharing special cultural events
  - Clean-up days

Engaging in these ways fosters a collaborative relationship with your child's caregivers and creates a more enriching experience for your child.





## EARLY CHILDHOOD INFORMATION

### CHILD ABUSE

#### How to report concerns about care in a child care facility and suspected child abuse:

If you have a concern regarding the care that is being provided within a child care facility or home, please report your concerns to the ECECD Intake Hotline at 1-888-351-0037 or email us at: [ChildCare.Complaint@eeced.nm.gov](mailto:ChildCare.Complaint@eeced.nm.gov)

### RECOGNIZING CHILD ABUSE

#### Signs of Physical Abuse:

- Child has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Bruising on a baby who cannot yet walk or crawl.
- Child seems frightened, cowers, or cries when certain adults are around
- Displays sudden sadness, depression, aggression, or withdrawal
- Reports injury caused by an adult

#### Signs of Neglect:

- Child is frequently absent from school or child care
- Begs or steals food or money
- Lacks necessary medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Consistently dirty or has a noticeable odor
- Lacks appropriate clothing for the weather

#### Signs of Sexual Abuse:

- Child has difficulty walking or sitting
- Becomes suddenly modest or unwilling to participate in physical activities
- Displays inappropriate sexual knowledge or behavior
- Tries to run away or discloses instances of sexual abuse

#### Signs of Emotional Abuse:

- Exhibits extremes in behavior (e.g., overly demanding, passive, or aggressive)
- Displays behaviors that are either overly adult-like or infantile
- Shows delays in physical or emotional development
- Reports a lack of attachment or emotional connection

#### Signs of Shaken Baby Syndrome:

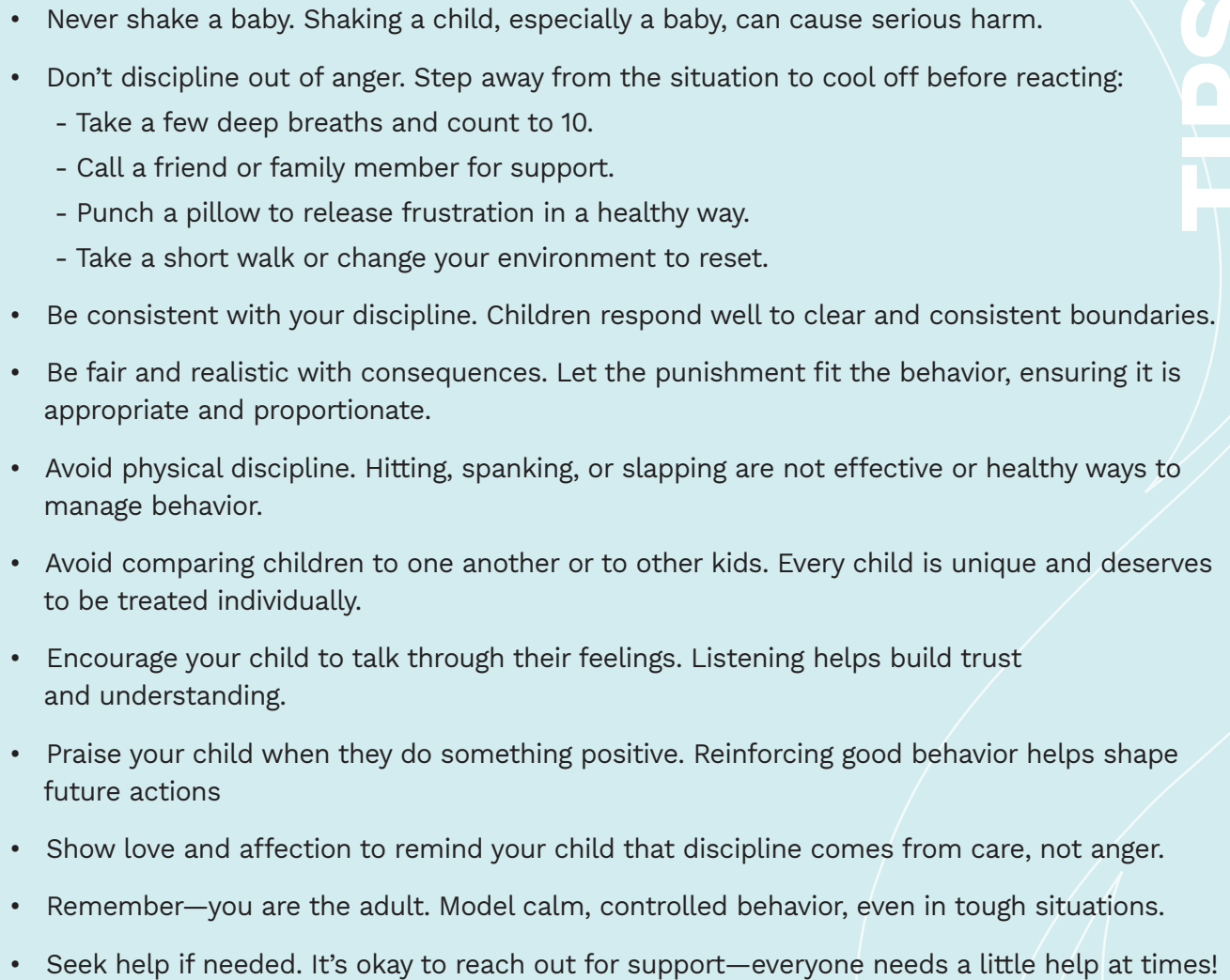
- Irritability or excessive crying
- Vomiting without explanation
- Poor feeding or refusal to eat
- Extreme tiredness, lethargy, or unconsciousness
- Seizures or convulsions
- Difficulty breathing

Recognizing these signs can help protect a child from harm and provide them with the necessary support and intervention. **If you suspect child abuse, it's important to report it to the appropriate authorities immediately.**



## TIPS FOR DEALING WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

It's natural to feel frustrated or angry when a child misbehaves. When these feelings arise, consider the following tips:

- 
- Never shake a baby. Shaking a child, especially a baby, can cause serious harm.
  - Don't discipline out of anger. Step away from the situation to cool off before reacting:
    - Take a few deep breaths and count to 10.
    - Call a friend or family member for support.
    - Punch a pillow to release frustration in a healthy way.
    - Take a short walk or change your environment to reset.
  - Be consistent with your discipline. Children respond well to clear and consistent boundaries.
  - Be fair and realistic with consequences. Let the punishment fit the behavior, ensuring it is appropriate and proportionate.
  - Avoid physical discipline. Hitting, spanking, or slapping are not effective or healthy ways to manage behavior.
  - Avoid comparing children to one another or to other kids. Every child is unique and deserves to be treated individually.
  - Encourage your child to talk through their feelings. Listening helps build trust and understanding.
  - Praise your child when they do something positive. Reinforcing good behavior helps shape future actions
  - Show love and affection to remind your child that discipline comes from care, not anger.
  - Remember—you are the adult. Model calm, controlled behavior, even in tough situations.
  - Seek help if needed. It's okay to reach out for support—everyone needs a little help at times!

These strategies can help you manage challenging behavior while fostering a positive, respectful relationship with your child.



## TRANSITIONS

Making the transition to a new child care setting can be stressful for both children and their parents, families, and legal guardians. The following tips can help ease the process:

- Visit the child care environment with your child to help them become familiar with the new setting
- Talk to the caregiver about your child’s specific needs, interests, and preferences
- Check with the caregiver about necessary items or information needed for a smooth transition
- Develop a routine at home that is consistent with the child care setting’s schedule, including mealtimes, naps, and daily activities
- Give your child enough time to get ready before leaving for child care, ensuring a calm and smooth start to the day
- Ensure your child’s security needs are met by providing comfort items, attending to any special needs, and maintaining contact at pick-up time
- Let your caseworker know before changing child care providers (if applicable)
- Always say goodbye before leaving, even if it feels easier to slip out unnoticed. A proper goodbye builds trust and security
- Pick up your child on time as promised, reinforcing reliability and security for both your child and the caregiver
- Allow your child time to express their feelings about the change and reassure them throughout the transition

Continual parent involvement and communication are key to making transitions easier for both children and parents or legal guardians, fostering a supportive and secure environment.

## IMMUNIZATIONS

Children need immunizations (shots) to protect them from dangerous childhood diseases. These diseases can lead to serious complications or even be life-threatening. By ensuring your child is immunized on time (by age 2), you not only protect your child from disease but also help protect others at school or in child care settings. Immunizations are an essential part of keeping children and communities healthy.

For more information about immunizations, contact The New Mexico Immunization Hotline at (505) 827-2483 or 1-800-232-4636 or visit [nmhealth.org/about/phd/idb/imp/](https://nmhealth.org/about/phd/idb/imp/).

## RESOURCES

### New Mexico Early Childhood Education & Care Department

PO Drawer 5619 • Santa Fe, NM 87502-5619

Toll free: (800) 832-1321

[nmececd.org/](http://nmececd.org/)



@NewMexicoECECD

- For ECECD Home Visiting, PreK and Head Start please call (505) 827-7946 or 1-800-832-1321 or by email at [ececd-ecs-customerservice@ececd.nm.gov](mailto:ececd-ecs-customerservice@ececd.nm.gov).
- For Family Infant Toddler (FIT) program, please call 1-877-696-1472.
- For ECECD's Family Nutrition program, please call (505) 841-4856 (in Albuquerque) or (505) 827-9961 in (Santa Fe) or 1-800-832-1321 or by email at [ececd-ecs-customerservice@ececd.nm.gov](mailto:ececd-ecs-customerservice@ececd.nm.gov). To find a Summer Food meal site near you, call 1-800-EAT-COOL, or visit [SummerFoodNM.org](http://SummerFoodNM.org).
- For ECECD Child Care Assistance, contact your regional Child Care Assistance office (listed below), or call Early Childhood Services at 1-800-832-1321.

### Submit Child Care Assistance inquiries, comments, or concerns regarding an application, placement agreement, payment, or change to:

- [ECECD.CCA-South@ececd.nm.gov](mailto:ECECD.CCA-South@ececd.nm.gov) for counties: Doña Ana, Chaves, Guadalupe, Lea, Eddy, Otero, Sierra, De Baca, Curry, Grant, Luna, Lincoln, Hidalgo, Catron, Quay, Roosevelt
- [ECECD.CCA-North@ececd.nm.gov](mailto:ECECD.CCA-North@ececd.nm.gov) for counties: San Juan, McKinley, Rio Arriba, Taos, Sandoval, Santa Fe, San Miguel, Bernalillo, Colfax, Union, Cibola, Los Alamos, Mora, Harding, Valencia, Socorro, Torrance

### UNM Center for Development and Disability

- [cdd.unm.edu](http://cdd.unm.edu)
- (800) 552-8195
- Provides resources and support for families and children with developmental disabilities.

### Parents Reaching Out (PRO)

Provides support, information, and resources for families of children with special needs, helping parents become effective advocates for their child's education and development. [parentsreachingout.org](http://parentsreachingout.org).

**Am I Eligible?** Online application to help New Mexico families apply for services and/or be referred to various State/Federal/Early Childhood Programs. [eligibility.ececd.nm.gov](http://eligibility.ececd.nm.gov)

[Starting Your Child Care Search - Child Care Aware® of America](#)

[Look, Listen, and Ask: Choosing Quality Child Care Tip Sheets](#)

[ECECD's Child Care Assistance](#) webpage offers: Brochures, flyers, co-payment details, posters, and a cost model reimbursement rate flyer.







NEW MEXICO  
**Early Childhood**  
Education & Care Department

**New Mexico Early Childhood Education  
& Care Department**

<https://www.nmececd.org/>

PO Drawer 5619 • Santa Fe, NM 87502-5619

Toll free: (800) 832-1321