



Office of the Governor
MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM

NEW MEXICO
Early Childhood
Education & Care Department



Building

NEW MEXICO'S FUTURE

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build a **strong**
future for New
Mexico's **young**
children and their
families

2024

GOVERNOR LUJAN GRISHAM'S
EARLY CHILDHOOD
SUMMIT REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Since she took office in 2019, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has prioritized building a universal early childhood system. With the partnership of the New Mexico Legislature, the state leads the nation in early childhood education. Tens of thousands of families and children have benefitted from the hard work of policy makers, providers, advocates, researchers, and other leaders in the field. To build on this momentum, the Governor – in partnership with the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) – hosted a summit to bring together key partners for celebration and planning.

The Governor’s Early Childhood Summit provided an opportunity for leaders across New Mexico’s early childhood ecosystem to connect, learn, and work together toward shared goals for young children and families. Attendees included families, Tribal leaders, Governor’s Office staff, legislators and legislative staff, cabinet secretaries, ECECD staff, providers, business and philanthropic partners, local early childhood coalition coordinators, professional development and technical assistance partners, and national early childhood experts. The unique and diverse perspectives offered will help shape the development and deployment of a family centered prenatal to age five early childhood system in New Mexico.

This report offers a comprehensive summary of the Summit’s discussions and outcomes, including the day’s highlights, action planning and results, and a forward-looking view on the collaborative efforts needed to fulfill Governor Lujan Grisham’s vision for early childhood in New Mexico.



OVERVIEW OF THE DAY

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and ECECD Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky welcomed participants, setting a collaborative tone focused on the Governor’s vision for early childhood. Legislators then shared insights and perspectives to frame the panels and discussions ahead, offering valuable context for the day’s conversations.

BUSINESS AND WORKFORCE PERSPECTIVES PANEL

Department of Workforce Solutions Secretary Sarita Nair led the first panel discussion on business and workforce perspectives with key industry leaders.

- **Bridget Dixon**, Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce
- **Rebecca Estrada**, Northern Area Local Workforce Development Board
- **Kathy Keith**, Director of Los Alamos National Laboratory Community Partnerships Office
- **Debbie Moore**, President and CEO of Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce

This panel explored how business and workforce initiatives can support and strengthen New Mexico’s vision for a universal, family-centered early childhood system.



Debbie Moore
CEO and President,
Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce

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Oftentimes, people think that child care is a woman problem—or it’s something we don’t necessarily talk about—but it’s an economic development problem. If we want to retain our employees and if we want to grow and excel, then we need to be immersed in the child care challenges in our community, said panelist Debbie Moore, who serves as CEO and president of the Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce. I want to reiterate again how important it is to continue this conversation and to continue to educate our business community.
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NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES: BUILDING A FAMILY-CENTERED EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM PANEL

Secretary Groginsky moderated a keynote discussion with two leading national policy experts: Jack Shonkoff of Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child and Cynthia Osborne from Vanderbilt University's Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center. Their insights offered valuable perspectives on building a family-centered early childhood system, followed by an engaging Q&A session with the audience.



Jack Shonkoff
Harvard University's Center
on the Developing Child

A family-centered system is one where politics and policies focus on creating an environment that supports families in raising healthy children, Shonkoff said. The adults caring for children need resources to address their own challenges, and those working in early childhood programs must have their needs met and be able to set goals for their own lives. When we prioritize these needs, it directly benefits children. If we overlook this, we're not truly family-centered.



Dr. Cynthia Osborne
Founder and Executive Director of
Peabody College's Prenatal-to-3 Policy
Impact Center at Vanderbilt University

[In New Mexico,] you've done more than almost any other state by establishing [ECECD] and implementing a combination of policies that go beyond any single focus, which will broadly benefit families, said Osborne. You've taken a holistic approach and secured a funding mechanism that ensures sustainability for these policies. Now, your next challenge is this: With all the right pieces in place, how do you ensure families can access them? That's where the real work begins.

FAMILY PERSPECTIVES: BUILDING A FAMILY-CENTERED EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM PANEL

Children’s Cabinet Director Mariana Padilla moderated the final panel which gathered community members to share family perspectives. The discussion emphasized what New Mexicans need from a family-centered early childhood system, highlighting real experiences and priorities from families across the state.

PANELISTS:

- **Laura Barriga**, Family Leadership Council member from Albuquerque
- **Noelani Charley**, Young Parents Advisory Council member from Albuquerque
- **Angie Munguia**, Family Leadership Council member from Santa Fe
- **Victoria Roanhorse**, Family Leadership Council member from Albuquerque



Victoria Roanhorse

*Family Leadership Council member,
Albuquerque, NM*

When I found out I was expecting in 2018, I knew that I needed all the help that I could get. Because even though I have experience [as an educator], it does not necessarily mean I know how to be a mother. I reached out to home visiting. I signed up for health insurance and signed up for everything I could that would support me as a single parent, said panelist Victoria Roanhorse, a member of the ECECD Family Leadership Council.

ACTION PLANNING ROUNDTABLES

The day concluded with action planning roundtables, where Summit attendees joined a series of action planning roundtable discussions, each with a designated notetaker. Participants applied insights from earlier panels on family needs, business perspectives, and the science of early childhood development. Guided by Secretary Groginsky, participants engaged in focused discussions to brainstorm and strategize around four core elements of the Governor’s vision for early childhood: 1) achieving universal access; 2) growing workforce capacity; 3) improving program quality; and 4) enhancing and expanding early care and education facilities. These collaborative roundtable discussions generated actionable ideas to advance New Mexico’s commitment to a unified, family-centered prenatal-to-five system.

SUMMARY OF ACTION PLANNING AND RESULTS

Three main themes emerged across roundtable discussions as priority areas for improving access and enhancing quality in New Mexico's early childhood services:

BUILDING THE WORKFORCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Opportunities were identified to strengthen New Mexico's early childhood workforce and facilities. Expanded career pathways and equitable pay emerged as key policy areas on which to focus. Participants suggested that early workforce recruitment starting in high school, and creating varied career pathway options, such as work-study opportunities and career lattices that recognize both experience and education. Participants advocated for multiple avenues to meeting education requirements, including on-the-job training, continuing education, paid leave for studies, and scholarships. Participants emphasized supporting existing pay parity programs, with added stakeholder input on the criteria and standards for pay equity.

Discussion on infrastructure focused on prioritizing facility development in high-need, especially rural, communities where family child care often serves as the most accessible option. Participants recommended legislation to ease local zoning restrictions, allowing the expansion of early childhood programs in residential neighborhoods.

Funding and policy strategies included opening access to capital outlay funds, providing tax incentives for educators and facility builders, and investing in local early childhood coalitions. These coalitions can sustain partnerships and ongoing conversations to ensure funding aligns with community needs.

IMPROVING OUTREACH AND ACCESSIBILITY

To boost family awareness and simplify access to early childhood services, participants recommended a **statewide marketing campaign** and partnerships with community organizations for effective referrals. Additionally, participants recommended distributing resource packets at hospitals or during pediatric visits to engage families early. Materials should be provided in all commonly spoken languages in New Mexico, using clear and accessible language.

Suggestions included creating community hubs to centralize early childhood, economic, and housing resources, along with implementing a "no-wrong-door" approach where staff are cross-trained to offer diverse service information. A **centralized application system** could streamline eligibility checks for multiple programs.

Participants highlighted **home visiting as a key access point**, enabling families to access support and utilize resources from their homes. By extending home visiting to all families and promoting it through public campaigns, New Mexico can establish this service as a valued support for every family.

ADAPTING SERVICES FOR DIVERSE POPULATIONS

Recognizing New Mexico's unique diversity, participants emphasized the importance of **tailoring early childhood services, for rural and Tribal communities**, and for those with developmental delays and disabilities. Discussions celebrated current successes, such as diverse educators and curricula that expose children to multiple cultures. Building on these achievements, participants recommended enhancing service delivery for diverse groups.

Professional development for early childhood educators in cultural competency, historical trauma, trauma-informed care, and mental and behavioral health, along with **strategies to support children with learning, developmental, and physical disabilities** were recommended. Further supports, such as reducing child-to-educator ratios and funding co-teaching, would enrich classroom experiences, provide personalized care, and reduce educator burnout.

Flexible policies, along with input from families and educators, are essential for **adapting services responsively**. Policies should support local communities' needs with insights gathered through focus groups, family feedback, and Tribal consultations. Policymakers should also utilize Tribal consultations to address the unique needs of communities across New Mexico.



HEAD, HEART, AND HANDS ACTIVITY

At the close of the Governor's Early Childhood Summit, participants engaged in the "Head, Heart, and Hands" activity to reflect on the day's discussions and commit to actionable steps.



HEAD

Key insights on how to, expand access, enhance infrastructure, and better support the early childhood workforce.



HEART

Stories from families in urban, rural, and Tribal communities deepened participants commitment to a family-centered system.



HANDS

Advocating for family-centered policies, expand outreach, and build partnerships to increase service accessibility across New Mexico.

This activity reinforced the Summit's impact, empowering participants to align their insights with action in support of the Governor's mission: a universal, affordable, high-quality prenatal-to-5 system that meets families' needs and supports a thriving future for all New Mexico children.





CLOSING

Our next steps are to harness the powerful vision of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, supported by the strategic investments of the New Mexico Legislature, the dedicated work of the ECECD, and the commitment of the 250 Summit attendees. The Summit affirmed our shared goals: to achieve universal access, expand workforce capacity, enhance early childhood program quality, and increase the number of early care and education facilities in New Mexico.

As we move into the next year, ECECD's priorities reflect the energy, insights, and unified vision from the Summit. ECECD's budget advances universal access through expanded capacity, improved child outcomes through high-quality services, and strategic investments in outcome-based measures. These investments will translate into greater support for the early childhood workforce, continued development of child care and PreK facilities, targeted quality improvements for children with developmental delays and disabilities, and progress toward funding that reflects the true cost of critical services provided through programs like Child Care Assistance, Home Visiting, New Mexico PreK, and Family Infant Toddler (FIT). Accountability improvements within NM PreK also remain a key focus.

The Summit highlighted the depth of New Mexico's commitment to its youngest residents and their families and affirmed our path forward. It is said, "Children learn from what they see." [i] The Summit did just that and the Summit affirms our commitment to taking these actions together in the year ahead.

[i] Howard Rainer, Taos Pueblo-Creek (2012)



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