

NEW MEXICO

Early Childhood

Education & Care Department

Florencer

Progress and Accountability Report

2024

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December 2024

Florecer

Spanish for **Flourish**

Synonyms: grow · thrive · prosper · do well · develop · bloom

1. (of a person, animal, or other living organism) grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way, especially as the result of a particularly favorable environment.

Our Commitment

Our commitment to New Mexicans is to create a cohesive, equitable, and responsive prenatal to five early childhood system that supports families, strengthens communities, and enhances child health, development, education, and wellbeing.

Vision:

All New Mexican 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.





Introduction

New Mexico leads the nation in building a universal, affordable, high-quality prenatal-to-age five system, unmatched in scale across the U.S. This includes the nation’s most expansive child care assistance program, universal PreK for three and four-year-olds, improved compensation and other supports for early childhood professionals, increased access to home visiting and early intervention, strengthened Tribal collaboration, and better alignment of programs and services across the state’s early childhood ecosystem.

In 2022, the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) leadership released Florecer, a five-year strategic plan (2022–2027) with clear, actionable goals for building a family-centered early childhood system. We are reporting our FY24 progress, showing achievements and areas for improvement.

Our increased service reach demonstrates our impact: In FY24, Child Care Assistance participation increased by ten percent, NM PreK enrollment rose by twenty-one percent, and participation grew by eight percent and six percent in the Home Visiting and Family Infant Toddler (FIT) programs, respectively. **These gains show significant strides toward achieving statewide prenatal-to-age five access.**

ECECD has also improved quality across the system. The department initiated a multi-year redesign of FOCUS, the state’s Quality Rating and Improvement System, reinforced partnerships with Head Start, and collected essential data to enhance services for workforce, parents, and providers. **As the first state to use the Early Development Instrument statewide, we now have crucial data on school readiness and early childhood program impacts.**

In FY24, ECECD, began piloting a free infant early childhood mental health consultation program and created the Early Childhood Healthcare Champion Awards to strengthen early childhood education and health alignment.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham’s commitment to young children and families fuels ECECD’s progress, positioning New Mexico at the forefront of early childhood development. Families, young children, and providers have experienced tangible impacts from these investments, and sustaining this momentum is essential to create lasting change for New Mexico families. **ECECD looks forward to advancing this work and building a bright future for all young children and families in New Mexico.**



Sincerely,

Elizabeth Groginsky
ECECD Cabinet Secretary



Strategic Plan Impact *by the Numbers*



Growth in New Mexico PreK


- Children served, FY23: **14,440**
- Children served, FY24: **17,530**

 **21% increase**



Growth in Infant Toddler Child Care


- Children served, FY23: **7,497**
- Children served, FY24: **8,354**

 **11% increase**



Growth in Child Care Assistance


- Children served, FY23: **25,839**
- Children served, FY24: **28,348**

 **10% increase**



Growth in Home Visiting


- Children served, FY23: **7,225**
- Children served, FY24: **7,764**

 **7% increase**



Growth in Family Infant Toddler (FIT)

- Children served, FY23: **14,865**
- Children served, FY24: **15,732**

 **6% increase**



Goal 1: School Readiness

Improved access to Child Care Assistance (CCA) program

The state increased access to children through the Child Care Assistance program. Family income eligibility remains at 400 percent of the federal poverty level, family co-payments were waived.

ECECD increased payment rates to child care providers for all types of child care providers. In FY24, the base rate increased as much as 28 percent. Infant rates increased between 21 and 26 percent in centers, group, and family homes, and school-age rates increased between 10 and 28 percent in centers, group, and family homes. ECECD also addressed quality rate differentials. For infants and toddlers in a 5-star center setting, the rate increase was nearly 25 percent.

Expanded Early Childhood Professionals Compensation Initiatives

ECECD began providing Head Start pay parity in January 2024, and continued its pay parity initiative for New Mexico PreK.

- 86 Head Start educators were awarded a total of \$1.3M
- \$2.4M in total awards to 256 PreK lead teachers
- \$375,000 in wage supplement awards to 435 early childhood educator(s)

Supported Quality and Expansion for New Mexico PreK

ECECD administered the largest expansion of the New Mexico PreK program since the program was created in 2005. Major elements implemented include:

- Increased number of children served by over 3,000
- Improved compensation for all NM PreK teachers through an enhanced per-child rate for New Mexico PreK to a \$50,000 starting wage



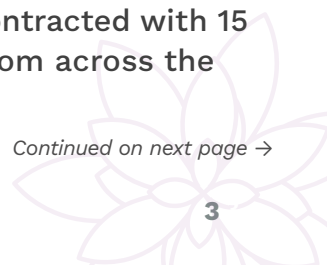
Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren signed the PreK expansion grant furthering the commitment to quality education for young Tribal learners.

- Increased instructional hours from 990 to 1,080 and added a program option of 1,380 instructional hours
- Issued grant awards to 84 school district programs and 195 community-based programs, family child care providers, Tribal governments, and Head Start recipients
- Created the largest ever partnership between New Mexico PreK and Pueblos, Tribes, and Nations by adding 554 slots to the Navajo Nation, To'Hajiilee Chapter of Navajo Nation, Mescalero Apache Tribe, and Pueblo of Nambé
- Expanded the number of coaches that support social and emotional development from 96 coaches in FY23 to 104 in FY24
- Quality teaching, as measured through the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), continued to show strength in emotional support and classroom organization, with continued room to grow in instructional support

Expanded the SEED Initiative

The Social Emotional Early Development (SEED) Initiative offers free infant early childhood mental health consultation (IECMHC) in early care and education settings by pairing mental health professionals with early childhood educators. In 2024, ECECD contracted with 15 mental health consultants from across the

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state and, implemented a Professional Development Institute to onboard SEED consultants. The consultants provided services to 25 early childhood programs and engaged with nearly 30 percent of the staff at each participating program.

Engaged Communities in the Redesign of FOCUS

ECECD invited community agencies and local early childhood coalitions to host focus groups to gather feedback from families and child care center owners to inform the redesign of the FOCUS Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). Based on insights from focus groups, research, and conversations with other states, ECECD developed a framework for the redesign Ratio and Group size, Quality Teacher Interactions, and Professional Qualifications and Compensation for Early Childhood Educators. This Framework was shared with the early childhood field and the Early Childhood Education and Care Advisory Council, and a survey was conducted to gather reactions. Extensive feedback gathered from the early childhood community was analyzed to inform and prepare for continued engagement and the development of policies, procedures, and revised standards.

Scan the code to view
the FOCUS Redesign
Survey Analysis Report.



Scan the code to View
the FOCUS chart.



FOCUS

Redesign Framework

to **improve** child care quality and school readiness

Professional Qualifications and Compensation



Nearly half of focus group participants cited the benefit of ECE-credited coursework and degrees for improving quality.

Increased compensation leads to lower staff turnover and improved staff satisfaction and well-being.

Programs with more proportions of teachers holding a bachelor's degree scored higher on a research-based measure of quality.

Teacher-Child Interactions



Quality teacher-child interactions enhance school readiness, language, literacy, social and emotional skills, peer relationships, and behavioral regulation while reducing staff stress levels, child suspensions, and expulsions.

Ratios and Group Size



Lower Child-to-Adult Ratios and Group Sizes:

- Improves teacher job satisfaction and retention.
- Supports higher-quality teacher-child interactions.

Ratios Hold Significant Importance for Parents.



Goal 1: Stories

“We had a great kindergarten year last year and I believe that is because of PreK. I felt that she was ready for kindergarten—more than ready for kindergarten. She was able to do certain things that a first grader was doing. She developed an early love for reading, for art, for music, and I didn’t know how to introduce those at home” -
Francesca Abeita, education advocate and former PreK parent

“I was a Licensed Home Provider with capacity of 5 Children and in 2023 I was awarded The Supply Building Grant. I saw the possibility of increasing the capacity of my program. Thanks to it, I was able to afford the procedures and remodeling some areas of my home to meet requirements and increase capacity. In October 2024, my dream became a reality, and I got my Group Home License, increasing my capacity to 12 children. *Thanks to the Supply Building Grant, and the valuable support and help from ECECD I have better and more appropriate equipment, the quality of my program increased, and capacity for 12 children in my program.*”
- Alma M Ortiz Nana’s Play’s House





Historic convening of ECECD Head Start and Early Head Start Leadership - Tribal and Regional.

Goal 2: Family and Community Engagement

Held First-Ever ECECD and Head Start Collaboration Retreat

In partnership with the New Mexico Head Start Association, ECECD hosted a two-day retreat that was the first of its kind to gather leadership from the state, the Regional and Tribal Head Start and Early Head Start recipients, and local early childhood system building coalition coordinators. Khari Garvin, Director for the Office of Head Start at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, keynoted the event.

Early Childhood Day at the Roundhouse 2024

On January 18, 2024, the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) hosted its third annual Early Childhood Day at the Roundhouse in Santa Fe, themed “Leading the Nation, Building Our Future.” The event celebrated New Mexico’s leadership in early childhood education and the impact of quality programs on families and young children.

The event, free and open to the public, welcomed early childhood professionals, families, and community members, with a live-stream available on ECECD’s Facebook page.

Highlights:

- **Exhibitor Booths:** Over 20 early childhood stakeholders offered resources, games, and activities for families starting at 8 a.m.
- **Main Program:** Featured remarks by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and Secretary Groginsky, the 2024 Early Childhood Day proclamation, and the premiere of “Ask Alax, Episode 3.”
- **Entertainment:** Mariachi performances added a festive touch.



Third Annual Family Engagement Survey Shows Positive Impact

ECECD's third annual Family Engagement and Satisfaction Survey shows positive impact, which targeted parents and caregivers of children aged 0–5, capturing 3,202 responses across every county in the state.

Key findings indicate high awareness, with 80 percent of respondents familiar with ECECD programs, and increased program usage, particularly in child care services, which rose by 21 percent since 2022.

Families reported positive impact on well-being, with 89 percent noting benefits from participating in early childhood services.

Satisfaction levels also increased, driven by ECECD's efforts in quality improvement and community engagement. Barriers to access, such as cost, have decreased slightly from 2023. To view the full report visit nmececd.org/2021/12/17/report-and-plans/.



ECECD Moments Together family.

Initiated Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors on Facilitator Training

As of June 30, 2024, 33 certified parent facilitators have been trained through Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors an evidence-based program designed by and for Latino families with children ages 0-5. These facilitators are affiliated with local early childhood system building coalitions and ECECD's Family Leadership Council and now support families statewide. The mission of Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors is to honor and support parents as leaders of their families and their child's first and most influential teacher.

Since launching, 37 families, including 80 children, have graduated from Opening Doors. In a recent in-person cohort survey, participant families shared plans to apply their knowledge within their households and communities. Additionally, 75 percent of families expressed a desire to become facilitators, with another 25 percent open to the role, underscoring the program's success in empowering families and fostering community leadership.

Conducted Chapter House Outreach and Tribal Consultation

ECECD conducted Navajo Nation Chapter house outreach, reaching Baca, White Rock, Lake Valley, Thoreau, Shiprock, and Alamo Navajo chapters. Tribal consultations took place with Jicarilla Apache Nation Tribal Council, Pueblo of Acoma, Pueblo of Laguna, Pueblo of Picuris, Pueblo of San Ildefonso, and Pueblo of Santa Clara.





“I try to bring up Home Visiting with all of my prenatal patients – ideally early on in their pregnancies. *Home Visitors meet our patients wherever they’re at, providing wraparound support tailored to their individual needs.*”– **Dr. Trista Hughes, family medicine physician and 2024 Healthcare Champion of the Year**

Watch the full video on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/Dbnp8ygvDEE?si=r-9cuBhlKGXxXcwMV>

Goal 2: Stories



Kewa children at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Kewa Child Care and Family Engagement Center in Santo Domingo Pueblo, New Mexico, June 2023

Goal 3: Government-to-Government

Awarded Tribal Community Facilities Funds

ECECD awarded \$3.314 million for early childhood facilities in Tribal communities to address their construction and renovation needs in Pueblo of Acoma, Pueblo of San Ildefonso, Pueblo of Laguna, Pueblo of Tesuque, Pueblo of Cochiti, Pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh, Pueblo of Santa Clara, Kewa Santo Domingo Pueblo, and Jicarilla Apache Nation.



New Mexico Early Childhood Tribal Advisory Coalition Advanced Its Goals

The New Mexico Early Childhood Tribal Advisory Coalition (NMECTAC) engaged with Tribal communities throughout 2024 to address their priorities and concerns. Key activities included providing input on the FOCUS redesign, advising on the development of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) state plan, and enhancing collaboration with the Early Childhood Education and Care Advisory Council through regular participation in its meetings.

NMECTAC meetings, held in Tribal communities, also guided best practices for ECECD’s Tribal Liaison program, contributing to improved training for Tribal Liaisons. The Coalition concluded the 2023-2024 year with a strategic planning session to set priorities for FY 2024-2025.

Secured Intergovernmental Agreements in Support of Tribal Early Childhood Education and Care

ECECD executed more than a dozen intergovernmental agreements that furthered the development of early childhood education and care for children 0-5 years old, expanded New Mexico PreK in Tribal communities, supported language immersion, facilitated deeper collaboration, and enhanced early intervention and special education support for Native American children and their families.

New Mexico PreK	To’Hajiilee Community School Board Of Education, Inc. The Navajo Nation Pueblo of Nambé
Early Intervention services Speech, occupational and play-based therapies	Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc. Pueblo of Sandia
Early Intervention and New Mexico PreK	Mescalero Apache Tribe
Development of a Diné language curriculum	Saad K’idilyé
Expansion of the Walatowa language immer- sion program	Pueblo of Jemez
Home visiting and support services	Pueblo of Laguna
TELi model collaboration	Pueblo of San Felipe

Language Immersion Program Expansion to PreK

ECECD funded the Pueblo of Jemez to advance their current language immersion program to include PreK and, eventually, to serve as a mentor for other Tribal communities in New Mexico. In FY24, the Pueblo of Jemez:

- Facilitated discussions on increasing immersive language instruction in child care and Tribal Head Start programs
- Facilitated discussion around identifying the Pueblo of Isleta's language priorities and goals
- Developed educational materials to share with parents, Tribal leaders, and the community that support oral literacy strategies
- Received recognition for their language education and immersion efforts in a case study published by the Commission on Native Children
- Hosted Tribal delegation visits on immersion instruction with Santa Ana Pueblo, Isleta Pueblo, Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and the Tohono O'odham

Goal 4: Ecosystem Alignment

Honored Health Care Champions

In recognition of outstanding advocacy on behalf of home visiting and early intervention services, ECECD honored the following health care professionals:

- **Kimberly Talachy – Doula**, honored for her dedicated service to families across Northern New Mexico
- **Dr. Trista Hughes** – Family Medicine with Obstetrics (FMOB) physician, recognized for her impactful work in Socorro.
- **Amber-Rose Hawkins** – Nurse practitioner, acknowledged for her service to families in Silver City.
- **Siboney Rodriguez** – Social worker and lactation consultant, commended for her contributions in Albuquerque.



Goal 3: Stories

“New Mexico Early Childhood Tribal Advisory Council’s (NMECTAC) focus on incorporating tribal perspectives has tremendously improved the effectiveness of early childhood programs across pueblos, tribes and nations. *It has allowed programs to grow their resources and at the same time build capacity and empower tribal members.*”
- Rosario Dick, Mescalero Apache Tribe Early Childhood Education Director



ECECD Health Care Champions of the year

Goal 4: Story

“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.*” - Bridget Dixson, CEO/president of Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce

Goal 5: Organizational Excellence

Early Childhood Education and Care Advisory Council Advised on Key ECECD Policy and Programs

The Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Advisory Council completed its second year as an active advisory body, working to inform and make recommendations to ECECD in support of a cohesive, equitable, and effective early childhood education and care system in New Mexico. The Council met regularly at locations across the state, addressing key initiatives and priorities.

This year, the Council focused on informing the new Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan, convening the Alternative Methodology Task Force to guide the NM Child Care Cost Model, and developing recommendations through its four subcommittees: Public-Private Partnership, Early Childhood Professionals, Program Quality and Accountability, and Data, Infrastructure, and Analysis. Subcommittee chairs presented recommendations for consideration by the full Advisory Council.

The Council also provided valuable input on ECECD initiatives and key projects, including updates and discussions to improve early childhood programs statewide.

Employee Organizational Culture Survey Shows Mission Alignment

ECECD's annual employee organizational culture survey shows an impressive **75 percent** participation rate. Employee feedback from these annual surveys assist ECECD in making significant improvements in its organizational culture.

Key findings from the latest survey include:

- **Meaningful Work:** 96 percent of employees find their work meaningful
- **Job Satisfaction:** 97 percent of employees are satisfied with their work
- **Mission Alignment:** 97 percent of employees feel inspired and aligned with the agency's mission.
- **Strategic Plan Alignment:** 97 percent of employees understand how their roles align with the strategic plan, Florecer.

These findings reflect ECECD's ongoing commitment to a supportive and purpose-driven workplace.



Language and Communication Access Plan (LCAP) Developed

ECECD drafted an agency-wide Language and Communications Access Plan to comply with federal and state language accessibility standards and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This plan is designed to ensure high-quality, appropriate language and communication services for both clients and staff. It provides clear guidance for employees on steps to take when an individual or affiliated agency requires language assistance, ensuring meaningful access to ECECD programs. The plan also outlines how to deliver services to individuals who are non-English speaking or have limited English proficiency, reinforcing ECECD’s commitment to inclusive and accessible communication.

Embracing Equity Sessions for ECECD Staff

Embracing Equity (EE) is a multi-session, cohort training that spans several weeks. ECECD provided the fundamentals version to all new employees. A booster training was also made available for longer-term ECECD staff. EE examines systemic and individual equity and identifies issues in early childhood education and care through New Mexico and local Native perspectives and history, combined with fundamentals of antiracist and anti bias practices and training.



Goal 5: Stories

“ECECD has made great strides in providing training and refresher courses on day-to-day procedures through our Friday Fun Guide sessions. This has really helped move us forward in knowledge and accountability; doing so has also heightened our contributions to the team.” - Sarah Grace, ECECD Professional Development and HR Quality Assurance Coordinator



Goal 6: Actionable Data

Published County Fact Sheets

ECECD developed county fact sheets outlining ECECD's impact in every county across the state for use with local constituencies and legislators.

You can view the fact sheets online at: nmececd.org/county-fact-sheets/

Partnered with the Public Education Department to collect Actionable School Readiness Data

ECECD, in partnership with the Center for Healthier Children, Families & Communities at UCLA and the NM Public Education Department, successfully initiated a groundbreaking statewide initiative to administer the Early Development Instrument (EDI) to kindergarten students.

Achieving a **98 percent** completion rate, New Mexico is the first state in the nation to implement the EDI at this scale in one year.

This initiative involved public school districts and charter schools across New Mexico, collecting valuable data to guide both statewide and local policy and system improvements. The EDI data will play a key role in shaping early childhood education strategies to support the development and well-being of young children in New Mexico.



Goal 6: Stories

“We have already started chatting about the importance of relationships and community and making sure folks have access not only to resources, but to connection with one another.

And so, [with the Early Development Instrument data], we're excited to zoom in on central New Mexico and on the areas where our coalition members are serving to better understand how we can support them.” - Jacquelyn Chasteen, member of the Coalition for Science Learning in Early Childhood



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