



*"High quality pre-kindergarten programs help close the achievement gap for New Mexico kids and give them a step up in developing skills that are important to school success. Our challenge is that **all** children have an equal chance to succeed."*

— Governor Bill Richardson

New Mexico's Early Learning System[s]:

The transformation of seven major early education and care systems into a "system of systems"



December 15, 2009

State of New Mexico
Children, Youth and Families Department
Dorian Dodson, Cabinet Secretary

State of New Mexico
CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT

BILL RICHARDSON
GOVERNOR

DIANE DENISH
DEPUTY GOVERNOR



DORIAN DODSON
CABINET SECRETARY

BILL DUNBAR
DEPUTY CABINET SECRETARY

MARISOL ATKINS
DEPUTY CABINET SECRETARY

MEMORANDUM FOR DECISION

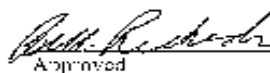
TO: Governor Bill Richardson
FROM: Dorian Dodson, Cabinet Secretary
DATE: July 10, 2009
SUBJECT: Early Childhood Education and Care Advisory Council

The 2008 federal reauthorization of Head Start requires the governor of each state to appoint an Early Childhood Education and Care State Advisory Council to improve the coordination and collaboration among Head Start agencies, pre-kindergarten programs, and other early childhood care and education programs. The Council may be an existing entity or an entirely new body. The governor is also instructed to appoint an individual responsible for coordinating the Council's activities as well as to appoint individuals to the Advisory Council (see Attachment 2).

It is my recommendation that the New Mexico Child Development Board within the CYFD be designated as New Mexico's Early Childhood Education and Care Advisory Council with an expanded membership when acting as the Advisory Council. And, that the Director of the Office of Child Development be designated as the individual responsible for coordinating the activities of the Council.

The Child Development Board was established by statute in 1989 with members appointed by Governors since then to coordinate the work that is being asked of the Early Education and Care Advisory Council. Furthermore, the statute that created CYFD in the early 1990s supports the functions expected of the Advisory Council.

The Child Development Board/Office of Child Development has been working diligently for twenty years to establish a comprehensive and coordinated system of early care and learning (see Attachment 1). I recommend they continue these efforts by building upon the foundational strengths that have been established.

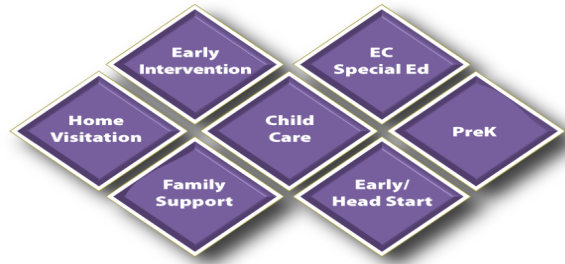
 7/13/09
Approved Date

Not Approved Date

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
P.O. DRAWER 5160 • SANTA FE, N.M. • 87102
PHONE: (505) 827-7592 • TOLL FREE: (800) 610-7611 • FAX: (505) 827-4955

Project Description

Overview



The 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) makes funding available for a three-year period to support the establishment and activities of an Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council. Governor Richardson has designated the New Mexico Child Development Board to act in this capacity and has appointed an expanded membership to ensure that the Advisory Council is as diverse and representative as possible.

Even though this is an initiative that is mandated by federal legislation and embedded within state government, the Early Learning Advisory Council firmly believes that the strengths of families and communities must be the platform from which all efforts are launched. Whether it is the local community, a community of learners, or a virtual community of practitioners, the platform of families and communities makes all work contextual and relationship-based. The commitment of the Advisory Council is that its work will be informed by and driven by the reality, the perceptions and the values of the families and communities of New Mexico. However, the extent to which communities are able to do this work is totally dependent upon the alignment of systems at the state level. So, after negotiating the establishment of common frameworks, it is expected that early learning programs will flourish - implemented in unique and appropriate ways based on the strengths of each community. Firmly establishing families and communities as the platform upon which the early learning system is launched will ensure that programs reflect the history, culture, language and traditions that must be preserved and strengthened rather than replaced.

In order to clearly convey the work of the Advisory Council, the following words in this application are used intentionally and strategically:

System: A federal-, tribal-, and/or state-funded service with a separate funding stream that is clearly defined and identifiable. A system has regulations, policies, and procedures that govern the administration of funds and operation of funded programs. Systems usually have a clearly designated federal and/or state entity responsible for their administration.

Silo: A graphic symbol of a system's isolation within a larger context of systems, where each operates independently of the others. These systems often serve the same children and the same families within a community. Silos typically result in duplication, fragmentation, and frustration for families as well as for personnel within the programs.

System[s]: Describes an aligned and coordinated early learning system that is comprised of multiple systems. In New Mexico, this organized continuum of services is often referred to as a "system of systems". The reader can read "system[s]" as "system of systems".

Program: A local/community organization providing services that are funded through one or more systems. Increasingly, programs braid funds to provide more comprehensive services funded by multiple systems. For example, a community program might be a Head Start grantee that also provides state-funded PreK services for children not eligible for Head Start. Many of these children might have special needs and receive early childhood special education services within

the context of the preschool program. For families that need a full-day program, this same program provides wrap-around child-care services. One could assume that some of these children would be eligible for child-care subsidy.

Early Learning System[s]: This term refers to a coordinated and aligned system of systems and embraces early education, care and family support. It acknowledges and relies upon the critical, foundational importance of other systems, like health, that are essential to children's well-being and ability to learn. The New Mexico Early Learning Advisory Council has prioritized the alignment of seven major systems as its Early Learning System{s}: Early/Head Start, home visiting, early intervention (IDEA Part C), child care, Family Support, New Mexico PreK, and early childhood special education (IDEA Part B).

Align: In New Mexico's early childhood education and care community, alignment describes a transformational process that is more than collaboration or cooperation. It symbolizes the will of practitioners and stakeholders to provide a continuum of comprehensive high quality services to a group or a community of children based on the holistic needs of children and their families. This often is made possible through the braiding and/or weaving of multiple funding sources.

New Mexico Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC): The Early Childhood Education and Care Advisory Council, as described in the *Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007*.

Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA): System-specific training typically funded and provided by a particular system for those working within it (e.g. training for child-care providers funded with state and federal child-care funds).

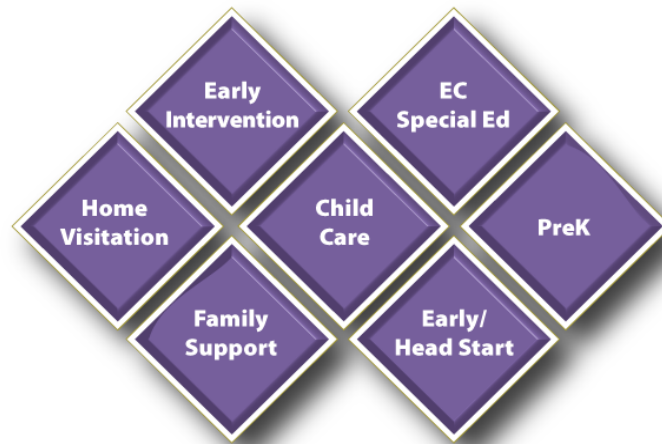
Professional Development/Preparation: Transcribed coursework in early childhood delivered by an institution of higher education leading to a degree and state-issued licensure or certification.

Early/Head Start: Early Head Start and Head Start are administered by the U.S. Administration for Children and Families. Although they can be referred to as two different systems, in this application we combine them as one system because they have a common federal funding source and provide a continuum of early learning and family support services for children pre-natal to kindergarten.

Ready Schools: The National Governor's Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices' *Final Report of the NGA Task Force on School Readiness* defines Ready Schools as:

- 1) Schools that support children's transition to kindergarten;
- 2) Schools that encourage continuity and alignment between early care and education programs and elementary schools; and
- 3) Schools that ensure high quality learning environments.

Need for Assistance



New Mexico is geographically and culturally diverse. It is a rural state with a population of 1.8 million, 40% of whom reside in Albuquerque,¹ New Mexico is characterized by its high poverty levels and is currently ranked 43rd in the nation in child wellbeing.² This ranking is based on multiple key indicators: low birth weight babies, infant mortality, child deaths, teen deaths, teen births, teens who are high school dropouts, teens not attending school and not working, children living in families where no parent has full-time year-round employment, children in poverty, and children in single parent families. New Mexico ranks among the bottom ten states on five of the ten key indicators of child wellbeing: teen birth rate (49th among the states), teen dropouts (47th) children without secure parental employment (44th), child poverty rate (47th), and children in single-parent families (48th).

Although New Mexico's racial, ethnic and cultural diversity is one of its greatest assets, it is also one of the greatest challenges for policy makers. Navigating the socio-cultural

¹ *Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000, New Mexico*. U.S. Census, 2002. <http://factfinder.census>,

² *Kids Count*, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2009. www.kidscount.org/datacenter/databook, Overall Ranking, Profiles by State.

landscape involves challenges that are extraordinarily complex, and requires solutions capable of accommodating each community's uniqueness.

In 2003, New Mexico became a state where the typical minority is the majority: 57% of young children in New Mexico are Hispanic, 25% are Anglo, 10% are American Indian, and 8+% are other (NCCP). Thirty-three percent of children in New Mexico speak a language other than English at home. Only two other states have more children who speak a language other than English at home.³ This presents a need for services that are both linguistically and culturally appropriate.

The percentage of Hispanic children in New Mexico is greater than any other ethnic group. Unfortunately, they are also those with the greatest drop out rate and represent the largest percentage of the state's prison population. In Albuquerque, the drop out rate for Hispanic children is 63%, twice that of Anglo students. Of the Hispanic students who entered ninth grade in 2004, only 37% successfully graduated in 2008.⁴

The tribes and pueblos of New Mexico represent another unique challenge rooted in the state's diversity. Native American children in New Mexico live in nineteen Pueblos, two Apache Tribes, and the Navajo Nation as well as off reservation throughout the state. The Pueblos, Tribes and Nations – each of which is a sovereign, self-governing entity – vary considerably from one another in language, government, judicial structure, custom, and tradition. Overall, Native Americans represent about 10% of New Mexico's population. However, a disproportionate percentage of Native American children face the challenges of poverty and

³ Kids Count, Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2008. www.kidscount.org/datacenter/databook, Overall Ranking, Profiles by State

⁴ New Mexico Public Education Department

school failure. According to the 2000 Census, 47% of Navajo children live in poverty compared to only 12% of Anglo children. According to the Indian Education Status Report for 2006-2007 prepared by the NM Public Education Department, although there have been gains, only 38% of Indian children are proficient in reading and only 27% are proficient in math at third grade. Proficiency levels are even lower for eleventh graders. And, despite efforts to decrease the number of student dropouts, the Native American dropout rate has increased over the span of three years for grades seven and eight.⁴

The opportunity afforded to New Mexico through ARRA Advisory Council funds will support the implementation of an existing vision for the state's early childhood system through the establishment of data-driven policy recommendations that will expand the state's capacity to address the needs of young children and their families. Recommendations regarding the strategic expansion of services, better coordination of existing services, targeted public awareness regarding services, and information regarding the quality of available services will allow policy makers to address critical needs.

⁴ *Indian Education Status Report of 2006-07*, New Mexico Public Education Department Office of Indian Education.

Goal & Objectives of the Project



Acknowledging 1) the critical importance of children's health and wellbeing to learning and success in school and 2) that there are other over-arching initiatives tracking the health, education and wellbeing of young children, the Early Learning Advisory Council will concentrate on the coordination and alignment of seven federal-, tribal-, and state-funded early childhood education systems (early intervention, home visiting, Early/Head Start, child care, family support, early childhood special education, and New Mexico PreK) and the alignment of those systems with the public school system (kindergarten through third grade).

The goal of the New Mexico Early Learning Advisory Council is that ***every child in New Mexico will have an equal opportunity for success in school, based upon equitable access to an aligned and high quality early learning system[s]***. To achieve this goal, we have set the following objectives:

- 1) Establish an integrated data system with two primary components that will allow us to correlate services being provided with results based accountability measures: a unique identifier system and a data warehouse.

2) Establish an aligned early learning system[s] with programs that are more efficiently and intentionally funded so that all families have consistent access to a seamless continuum of appropriate services, with assurance that children who are most at risk for school failure have equitable access to the highest quality programs.

3) Increase the participation of children (especially those who are at risk for school failure) in the highest quality programs.

4) Establish family support as a recognized early learning system and ensure that a continuum of family support services are equitably available to **all** families in New Mexico.

5) Align the early learning system[s] with the public education (k-3) system as the foundation for New Mexico's P-20 education system through the promotion of Ready Schools.

Approach



Plan of Action

New Mexico is well positioned to take on this ambitious agenda because of its long-standing commitment to early childhood systems development. A visionary plan has been in place since the early 1990s and the state has implemented whatever was possible through the cooperative use of whatever funding could be identified at any given time.

Full participation is a core value in New Mexico and we will use work groups, community focus groups and public hearings to inform and validate the work. Such involvement will influence action steps to be taken, as well as the policy recommendations that will be made. An important asset to New Mexico is its strong network of community programs and early childhood stakeholders' committed to advancing the early learning system as a whole. Leadership provided by the Early Learning Advisory Council will capture the interest and expertise that is already in place, provide guidance and policy recommendations to the Executive, and inform the work of the Early Childhood Collaborative. While the objectives, strategies and key activities are outlined to the best of our ability at this time, it is impossible to fully project how the process will unfold. In keeping with similar efforts in the past, early educators in New Mexico are committed to the integrity of a "bottom-up" system-building process while, at the same time, cognizant of state and federal regulations.

This approach is extremely important in New Mexico, as the diversity of the state and the unique history, culture and linguistic heritage of communities throughout the state means a cookie-cutter approach simply won't work. Public policy recommendations must be fully explored to ensure their appropriateness statewide and to support the establishment of an infrastructure that can accommodate the uniqueness of communities throughout the State.

Fundamental to the success of the Advisory Council, in year one:

- Bylaws will be established to assure that the Advisory Council functions effectively and efficiently as an expanded Child Development Board. The bylaws will specify the relationship of the Advisory Council to the Executive and the Children's Cabinet.
- The Early Learning Plan that was initiated in 2004 will be reviewed and updated, providing a common theoretical, philosophical, ethical and practical vision; articulating the key principles that will support the development of the early learning system[s]. An essential component of the Early Learning Plan will be Program Standards for children birth through third grade that describe what early childhood education programs in New Mexico should look like based on research and best practice. The completion of these Program Standards will be a priority of the Advisory Council so that there is a clear vision for program development at the community level and policy development at the state level.
- Results Based Accountability, a strategic planning methodology, will guide our efforts. Results based accountability is research based and has demonstrated its effectiveness in making macro systems change. The methodology is geared toward measurable outcomes, or the "ends". The approach will be most effective in focusing the work by

the partners across the early learning system[s]. Results Based Accountability uses a participatory process for defining indicators of success and measuring performance.

The Early Learning Advisory Council will track progress by utilizing the outcomes and indicators of success and make policy recommendations based on these findings.

- Native American and Hispanic Early Learning Subcommittees will be established by the Advisory Council. Gaining an understanding of underserved and at-risk populations within the state is a priority of the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council does not want to make the assumption that the unique needs of Indian or Hispanic children will adequately surface through the planning process and as such, specific focus will be placed on cultural and linguistic relevant strategies for ensuring educational success for Native and Hispanic children and their families.
- A Process That Engages Local Communities will be established to provide input and oversight for community organization and quality improvement efforts, and to provide local input to the statewide Advisory Council. New Mexico has in existence a variety of local councils that focus on physical health, behavioral health, and other services aimed at family and community well-being.. Efforts will be made to build upon existing community strengths and structures as community-based models are explored.

Objectives

The first-year activities, as well as on-going work, will all be focused on accomplishing the goal established by the Advisory Council that **every child in New Mexico will have an equal opportunity for success in school, based upon equitable access to an aligned and high quality early learning system[s]**. To achieve this goal, the following objectives have been established:

OBJECTIVE #1: Capacity Analysis/Needs Assessment

Establish an integrated data system with two primary components that will allow us to correlate services being provided with results based accountability measures.

This will be accomplished by establishing and implementing:

- A unique identifier system for each child entering a federal-, tribal-, or state-funded early learning program that is linked to the P-20 system. Coupled with strategies to achieve Objectives #2 and 3, a unique identifier will enable programs to:
 - Consistently monitor children's growth and development based on early learning guidelines used across systems, pro-actively engage parents, and assure seamless transition from program to program and into kindergarten. (This has already been established through the state-funded PreK program by giving pre-kindergarten children their unique public school ID number upon enrollment, regardless of whether the program is operated within or without the public school system.)
- A data warehouse that will intentionally and strategically collect, aggregate and analyze information necessary for an ongoing Capacity Analysis/Needs Assessment process, which will allow us to recommend necessary coordination and investment. The information within the data warehouse will enable us to analyze the early learning system[s] on four levels:
 - A comprehensive county-by-county mapping and analysis of child and family demographics (analyzed, in particular, on research-based risk indicators), including the programs children are attending.

- A comprehensive county-by-county mapping and analysis of the attributes, availability and quality of early education, care and family support programs, including the qualifications of program personnel and population of children being served. This analysis will include the appropriateness of programs as determined by the cultural and linguistic heritage of the children and families being served;
- A comprehensive county-by-county mapping and analysis of the availability and quality of state- and federally-funded training and technical assistance services;
- A statewide inventory of the availability and quality of early childhood education professional development/preparation programs available through state institutions of higher education: and
- An inventory of funding sources with the early learning system to analyze the matching of funding to need and to explore ways to weave funding and achieve efficiencies and increase the most effective use of funds.

These ambitious objectives and strategies are all consistent with the work of the P-20 Data Task Force, being led by the Governor's Office. The Advisory Council will work closely with the Task Force to ensure that efforts are coordinated and systems are integrated and compatible as they are established.

The work contained in this objective is essential to the function of the Advisory Council and is therefore our top priority. The focus of year one will be to build the data warehouse and a protocol for the capacity analysis. To gain full understanding of the task at hand, additional study may be required in particular focus areas. Maintenance of current data and an on-going

analysis of that information will become an important aspect of the Council's work. Ultimately, the purpose of the capacity analysis is to ensure that the children most at risk for school failure have equitable access to high quality early learning programs. Therefore, it is essential that demographic information about children and families be collected and correlated with program capacity and quality data.

Attention will be especially given to children who are at risk due to adverse childhood conditions. In a study conducted by Vincent Felitti⁵, seven categories of adverse experiences were identified and found to have life long consequences in engaging in high risk behavior, poor health status, and disease. The categories are: psychological abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, substance abuse in home, mental illness in parent, violence against mother, and incarceration of a parent.ⁱ Families who face these conditions are often isolated and their children do not access early childhood services. Demographic data regarding children and families will be analyzed based on these seven adverse conditions in order to determine risk. The Advisory Council is well positioned to obtain this data since CYFD is not only the lead agency for early care and education services, but also administers the state child welfare, juvenile justice, domestic violence, and behavioral health services.

The data analysis will be modeled after the impressive ongoing work already being done in two other states: Pennsylvania's *Risk and Reach report* and Chicago's *Mapping Today's Capacity for Tomorrow's Investment* study.

⁵ Vincent Felitti, MD, *Adverse Childhood Experiences*. 1998. Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program, San Diego. www.acestudy.org.

As we move into an implementation phase, the data will be essential in the Results Based Accountability analysis. The data will help to refine and will drive the work of the Advisory Council as it unfolds over the three year planning period. We anticipate that the establishment of this data collection and analysis process will support efforts to be funded through the Early Learning Challenge Fund.

OBJECTIVE #2: Alignment of the Early Learning System[s]

Establish an aligned early learning system[s] with programs that are more efficiently and intentionally funded so that all families have consistent access to a seamless continuum of appropriate services, with assurance that children who are most at risk for school failure have equitable access to the highest quality programs.

This will be accomplished through:

- Building upon the strengths and unique features of each system;
- Focusing on the diversity and strengths of the families and communities in the state;
- Aligning curricula, assessment, reporting, program and learning standards;
- Further establishing, aligning and implementing program quality rating criteria and a corresponding quality improvement infrastructure;
- Aligning Early Learning Guidelines; and
- Aligning professional development and T/TA.

Assessment and Reporting Methods: One of the greatest barriers to the alignment and coordination of services at the local level is that each of the early learning systems has well-defined program standards and expectations for curriculum, observing and documenting children's learning, and reporting. Historically, there has not been a commitment at the state

level (supported at the federal level) to facilitate the practical braiding of funding streams within a community, a program, or even a classroom. There is tremendous motivation in New Mexico's early learning community to work on this aspect of alignment, and significant work has already been done. For, as community programs are increasingly responsive to the comprehensive needs of families, they are asking for support and guidance in the braiding and weaving of multiple funding sources.

Quality Rating and Program Improvement: The establishment, alignment and recommendations for the implementation of program quality rating criteria and a corresponding quality improvement infrastructure will be a priority. This will be done in anticipation of the need to determine the level of quality of all early learning programs, in much the same way that the Quality Rating System now rates the quality of all licensed child-care programs. This effort will be directly correlated with the Program Standards and build upon the strengths of the child-care quality improvement and rating system already in place. This determination of program quality – and strategies for supporting quality improvement - is essential to assuring that the children with greatest risk for school failure have access to the highest quality programs. This is particularly challenging taking into account the diversity of the state. Therefore, particular attention will be paid to ensuring that the quality rating system acknowledges and is respectful of faith-based, cultural and linguistic strengths within the state.

Early Learning Guidelines: This year, New Mexico's Early Learning Guidelines will be field tested in all seven early learning systems as well as in kindergarten programs throughout the state. The purpose will be to test the extent to which the guidelines facilitate alignment – within the program (e.g. in planning curriculum and reporting progress made by children

funded through multiple sources) – and within the community (e.g. in transitioning children from program to program). During the first year, supplemental materials that are needed will be identified, such as parent materials that enable parents to support and follow their children’s growth, development and learning.

In subsequent years, practitioners will be trained in the use of the Guidelines, for just as the quality program criteria will be used to track the continuous quality improvements made in programs, the early learning guidelines will enable practitioners and parents to track the continuous growth, development and learning of children. A consistent statewide system – used in all early learning systems - will not only support parent partnerships and enhance the learning of children, but will significantly reduce the burden on program personnel.

Professional Development and Training & Technical Assistance: Through the capacity analysis and implementation of the quality rating system, data will become available regarding program quality, including teacher qualifications by program and by geographic area. Data provided through strategic and intentional analysis of all the data will help to identify where future resources should be allocated. A comprehensive picture will become clear regarding needs for training, technical assistance and professional development – especially taking into account the specific cultural and linguistic attributes of the targeted communities where children are most in need of high quality early learning programs. This is certainly an area that will easily link to the P-20 data initiative.

It is in the area of professional preparation that New Mexico has experienced the most alignment. The Early Childhood Higher Education Task Force, a standing committee of the Child Development Board, will continue the work they have been committed to for the past fifteen

years. All higher education institutions have implemented a fully articulated common course of study for those working in all early learning systems – testimony to the fact that alignment is possible. Common Core/Universal Curriculum will be established and new early learning career pathways will be implemented. T.E.A.C.H. will continue to be phased in to the extent that funding grows. And, efforts to establish a wage incentive program will continue to retain a diverse and highly qualified workforce.

Efforts of the Bridging and Expanding Training and Technical Assistance Task Force will be honored and they will play a significant role by becoming a Task Force of the Advisory Council, working to align the T/TA systems throughout the state.

It is anticipated that these efforts will yield public policy recommendations alongside a framework for pooling funds, joint training curricula and coordinated provision of training and technical assistance in order to reduce administrative costs and duplication of services.

OBJECTIVE #3: Increased Participation

Increase the participation of children (especially those who are at risk for school failure) in the highest quality programs.

This will be achieved through:

- Establishing a diversified strategic communication plan that is appropriately reflective of the different populations being targeted. For, key to increasing participation is: 1) increasing awareness of the importance of early education, and 2) improving awareness of early childhood programs that are available. Currently, public awareness campaigns occur on a piecemeal basis throughout the seven systems of early learning and are usually about a specific aspect of a particular system (e.g. child find). A strategic

communication plan to increase public awareness of the importance of early childhood development and early education will be designed and implemented that assures the delivery of messages that are linguistically and culturally appropriate. Additionally, innovative strategies will be established to assure universal awareness of programs that exists. The communication plan will include branding, comprehensive media coverage, materials for families, and mechanisms for recognizing and acknowledging families for positive parenting. In order to fully utilize resources and link with other efforts, the Advisory Council will link these efforts with those of the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership, funded by the Kellogg Foundation.

OBJECTIVE #4: Establish a System of Family Support

Establish family support as a recognized early learning system, and ensure that a continuum of family support services are equitably available to ALL families in New Mexico.

Family support has always been a core value of those working with young children in New Mexico and tremendous progress has been made in this area. It is essential that these efforts be coordinated and aligned in order for New Mexico to move this work forward.

This will be achieved through:

- Development of a clear, concise and inclusive definition of family support;
- Identification of family support services that should be universally available;
- Development of a plan to intentionally and strategically ensure that all families in New Mexico have equitable access to the family support system.

OBJECTIVE #5: Ready Schools

Align the early learning system[s] with the public education (k-3) system as the foundation for New Mexico's P-20 education system through the promotion of Ready Schools.

This will be achieved through:

- Partnering with the Public Education Department to identify and promote Ready Schools;
- Alignment of standards, curriculum and professional development between early learning (birth to kindergarten) systems and the public school system; and
- Promoting transition initiatives between early learning systems and the public school system.

New Mexico is a leader in the establishment of a research-based model of transitioning children from community early care and education programs to kindergarten. The *Joining Hands* model was established nearly ten years ago by the New Mexico Head Start Collaboration Office as a collaborative effort of Head Start grantees, public schools and other early care and education stakeholders from throughout the state. In 2005, the Kellogg Foundation funded the implementation of *Joining Hands* in six diverse communities as part of the SPARK Project. Research conducted as a part of the implementation process found that children whose teachers participated in the Joining Hands transition process were more successful in kindergarten.

The National Governor's Association has done considerable work gathering research and best practices regarding Ready Schools. The Advisory Group will work collaboratively with representatives from the Public Education Department and others to explore this body of

information and to determine how this information can most appropriately be shared and implemented in New Mexico.
