



# Early Childhood Governance: An Analysis on National and Local Early Childhood Education Governance Structures

Spring 2016

**Early Childhood Governance**  
New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership



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## INTRODUCTION

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### The Importance of Early Childhood Care and Education

In response to a growing consensus that early childhood education programs offer a host of short- and long-term benefits, an increased demand for sustainable, efficient and accountable early childhood governance structures that align authority and oversight has emerged.

Child development research and neuroscience confirm the positive effects that high-quality early childhood care and education can have. Scientists know that 85% of the brain develops in the first three years of life<sup>i</sup>.

A recent national bipartisan poll conducted by the First Five Years Fund shows that Americans, regardless of political affiliation, believe that early childhood education is our nation's most important issue.

Most Americans agree that high-quality early childhood education can help our children begin life with the right skills to succeed in kindergarten. 74% of voters support a federal investment to states for early childhood education, even if it increases the deficit in the short-term, but pays for itself in the long-term.

More than a third of New Mexico's children live in poverty. Our state has a national KIDS COUNT ranking of 49, and more than half of working families in New Mexico earn less than \$20,000 annually. Early childhood care and education programs can offer significant benefits to state government and New Mexico's working families.

A quality early childhood educational experience reduces risk factors that can hinder

a child's ability to learn and succeed. Evidence-based early education programs yield a range of results, including reducing remediation and special education needs in public and higher education, juvenile rehabilitation, and dependency on social programs.

This research is intended to outline New Mexico's efforts to enhance state and local coordination of prenatal to age five early learning systems and inform recommendations for an effective and sustainable early learning system.

### What is Early Childhood Governance?

Early childhood governance refers to a state's organizational structure and its placement of authority and accountability for program, policy, financing, and implementation decisions for publicly funded early care and education for children from birth to age five.<sup>ii</sup>

Governance also comprises the traditions, institutions and processes that determine how power is exercised, how constituents are given voice and how decisions are made on issues of mutual concern to an array of stakeholders.<sup>iii</sup>

States have increasingly sought to develop new governance structures that consolidate authority and oversight of programs and services under one roof. Because current systems of early childhood governance are typically dispersed through multiple agencies and departments, an effective model of governance should create coherence, foster accountability and transparency and improve quality and accessibility.

### Early Childhood Governance

## Governance Structures

Experts overwhelmingly agree that the right governance model will differ from state to state. A change in governance is not a “silver bullet” to fix all early childhood education issues within a state, but rather the structure should be seen as a *strategy* that state leaders can use to achieve early childhood education and care goals and develop a sustainable ECE system.<sup>iv</sup>

### ECE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

**Coordination:** Places authority and accountability for early childhood programs and services across multiple public agencies. In 40 states, this is the existing governance system. A coordinated structure can be achieved in two ways:

1. *Peer agency coordination*
2. *Coordination through Governor’s Office*

**Consolidation:** Places authority and accountability for the early childhood system in one executive branch agency for development, implementation and oversight of multiple early childhood programs and services.

**Creation:** A new executive branch agency or entity within an agency that has the authority and accountability for the early childhood system is created.

### ECE Governance Values

**Coordination:** The governance model **should connect the different parts and programs of the early childhood system**

**Alignment:** Improved coherence on **data collection, quality standards, and outcome measurement**, to eliminate silos associated with the administration of **funding and oversight** of programs

**Sustainability:** The governance model should be able to **navigate political and administrative changes**

**Efficiency:** The model should **allocate resources wisely, reduce duplication of efforts, and provide a significant return on investment.**

**Accountability:** The governance model should **be accountable to the early childhood system** and its stakeholders in terms of **quality, equality, and outcomes.**

**Leadership:** Leadership exists at many levels including: **political, state, and local policy, state administrative, and grassroots.** It will take more than just one single type of leader to create successful systems-building over an extended period of time.

**Integration:** ECE services can be integrated successfully within a number of policy domains, and benefits can range from affordable access to high-quality programming, unified and an educated ECE workforce to enhancing and the learning of all children.

## Early Childhood Education Governance State Examples

Structure	State	Example
<b>Coordination</b>	<i>Nebraska</i>	The departments of education and of health and human services co-lead the state’s early intervention program and through a memorandum of understanding, share planning and administration of quality funds from the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF).
	<i>Illinois</i>	Governor established a Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development to coordinate the work of the state’s Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) and to support the efforts to improve and expand programs and services.
<b>Consolidation</b>	<i>California, Maryland and Michigan</i>	Consolidated childcare funds and state PreK into the state education agency (SEA).
	<i>Arkansas, North Carolina, Vermont</i>	Placed responsibility for child care and state PreK in the same agency but not the state education agency: the Arkansas Department of Human Services, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, and the Vermont Department for Children and Families.
	<i>New Mexico</i>	Places accountability for early childhood care and education across three state agencies: the Public Education Department (PED), the Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD), and the Department of Health (DOH). The Human Services Department (HSD) manages Medicaid and CHIP (Children’s Health Insurance Program) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
<b>Creation</b>	<i>Pennsylvania</i>	Created a hybrid structure, the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), into which the majority of ECE programs and services were consolidated. This office has dual reporting obligations to the Department of Public Welfare and the Department of Education.
	<i>Massachusetts</i>	Adopted legislation in 2005 that created the Department of Early Education and Care, which has authority over and accountability for early education and care and after school services.
	<i>Georgia</i>	Developed the Department of Early Care and Learning (Bright from the Start), which is responsible for the state’s early child care and early education.

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## BUILDING EFFECTIVE ECE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

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### Early Childhood Care Systems

Programs focused on young children are often housed in multiple state agencies and departments. The focus on governance structures focuses on a whole-system and whole-child approach by aligning high-quality early childhood programs and services for children birth to age five.

Early care and education services are provided by a wide range of programs with varying funding streams. Differences in family eligibility criteria and enrollment processes, programmatic and workforce requirements, and funding levels between the major program early childhood funding streams, require combining existing funding streams through “blending” and “braiding” funds to finance comprehensive, full-workday, full-year early learning programs.<sup>v</sup>

States also vary considerably in the methods and scope of early childhood care regulation, using processes that may be called licensing, registration, or certification. These terms can have different meanings from state to state.

The structure of state agencies that house ECE programs, and how well employees from various departments communicate with one another can have an impact on the success of the structure, mission, and the future of a state’s ECE programs and services.

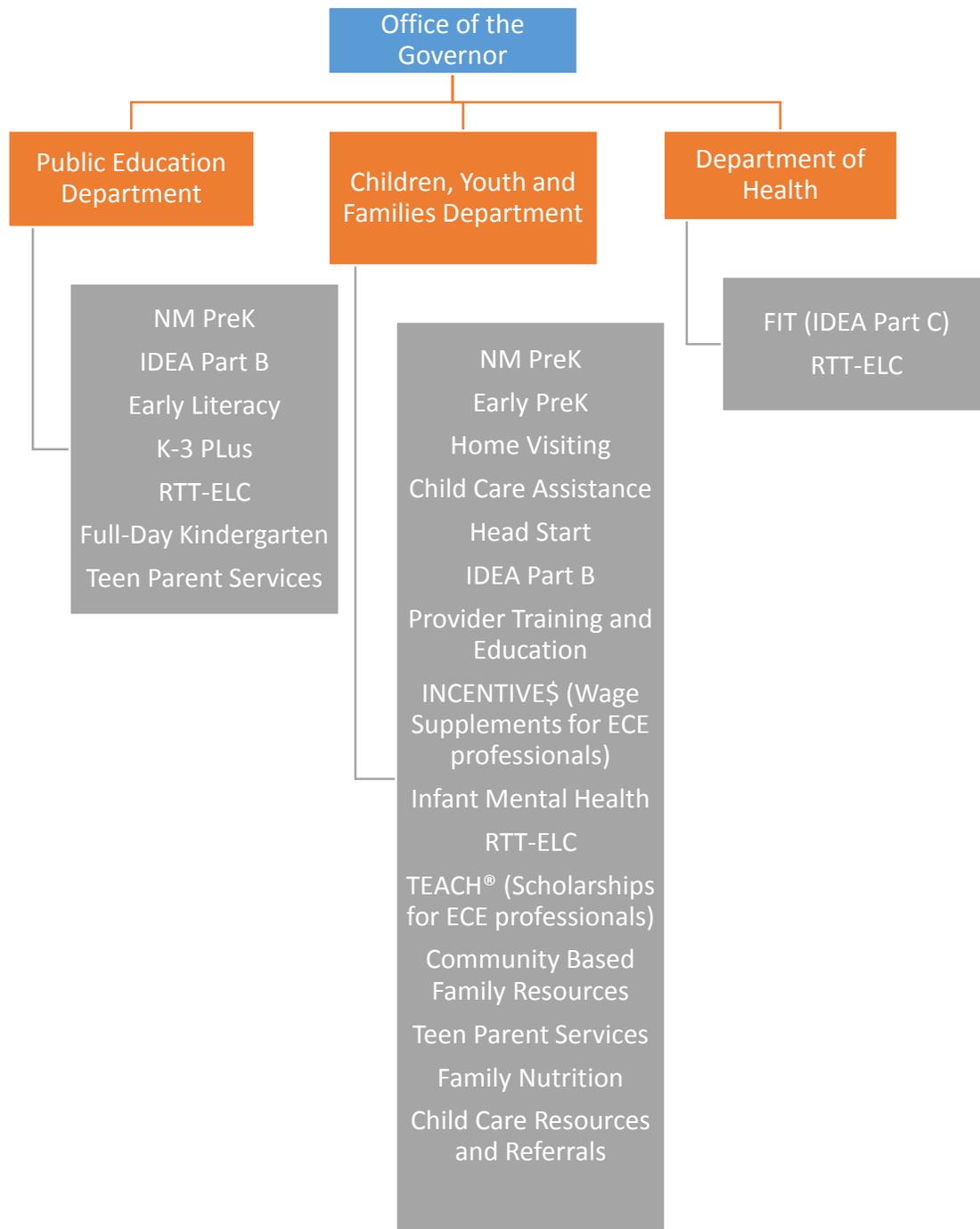
Each department has a distinct mission and set of values and strategies in which to accomplish their early childhood goals. Each state’s governance structure has its own system for how to manage funding streams, communication and data sharing, and its own unique outputs, benefits and outcomes. For this reason, many states are making the case for moving towards an aligned governance structure<sup>vi</sup>.

Early childhood professionals and experts agree that treating system governance as an integrated approach to management shows a relatively higher value given by the state to early childhood education and its professionals.

Governance is seen as an essential element of the early childhood system, because it can support and sustain the system over time. After determining a state’s early childhood education goals and what the functions of the structure are, the next step is to determine which model a state has the capacity for and will derive the most benefit from. *Form should always follow function*. A governance model will be most effective when the governance entity is seen as legitimate, reputable and capable.<sup>vii</sup>

### Early Childhood Governance

## Governance in New Mexico



Source: New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee

### Early Childhood Governance

New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership

# Early Childhood Care and Education in New Mexico



Source: UNM Center for Education Policy Research

## A Timeline of ECE History in NM

**1989:** The Office of Child Development (OCD) and a governor-appointed Child Development Board are created in statute.

**1992:** The Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD) is created in statute.

**1997:** CYFD implements the Tiered Quality Rating System (TQRIS) for all licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes.

**1999:** CYFD creates AIM HIGH (TQRIS) Essential Elements of Quality with five defined tiers of quality.

**2000:** Full-Day Kindergarten Program established and phased in over 5 years.

**2003:** The Public Education Department (PED) is established and headed by a Cabinet Secretary reporting to the Governor. The New Mexico Children's Cabinet is established (adopted into statute in 2005). Kindergarten Plus established.

**2004:** CYFD begins to fund TEACH® Scholarship Program.

**2005:** NM PreK Act passed, creating a voluntary state-funded PreK system.

**2009:** New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership formed, governed by an Advisory Council of public, private and philanthropic leaders.

**2010:** Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) established. INCENTIVES Early Childhood piloted in Santa Fe County.

**2011:** Early Childhood Care and Education Act passed, creating a foundation for an integrated learning system. FOCUS, the third generation TQRIS is created.

**2013:** Home Visiting Accountability Act passed, establishes statewide home visiting services using a standards-based program. NM receives a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC).

**2014:** NM PreK piloted to three year olds. FOCUS QRIS Pilot begins.

The governance structure currently adopted by the State of New Mexico is *coordinated governance*. This structure places accountability for early childhood care and education across three state agencies: the Public Education Department (PED), the Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD), and the Department of Health (DOH). The Human Services Department (HSD) manages Medicaid and CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

## Early Childhood Programs in New Mexico

### Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD)

CYFD was created in statute with the vision of bringing together diverse programs for children and families. The legislation directed CYFD to 1) develop priorities for state services and resources; 2) increase collaboration and coordination; 3) develop and maintain a database that would include client tracking for children and families' and 4) develop standards for accountability.

The following divisions are housed in CYFD:

- **Protective Services**
  - Adoptions
  - Foster Care
  - Child abuse and neglect
  - Domestic violence
  - Children's trust fund
- **Juvenile Justice Services**
  - Facilities
  - Probation and aftercare
  - Transition services
  - Special programs
- **Behavioral Health**
  - Licensing and Certification
- **Program Support**
- **Early Childhood Services**
  - NM PreK

- Early PreK
- Home Visiting
- Child Care Assistance
- Head Start
- IDEA Part B
- Provider Training and Education
- INCENTIVE\$
- Infant Mental Health
- Race to the Top
- Teach<sup>®</sup>
- Community Based Family Resources
- Teen Parent Services
- Family Nutrition
- Child Care Resources and Referral

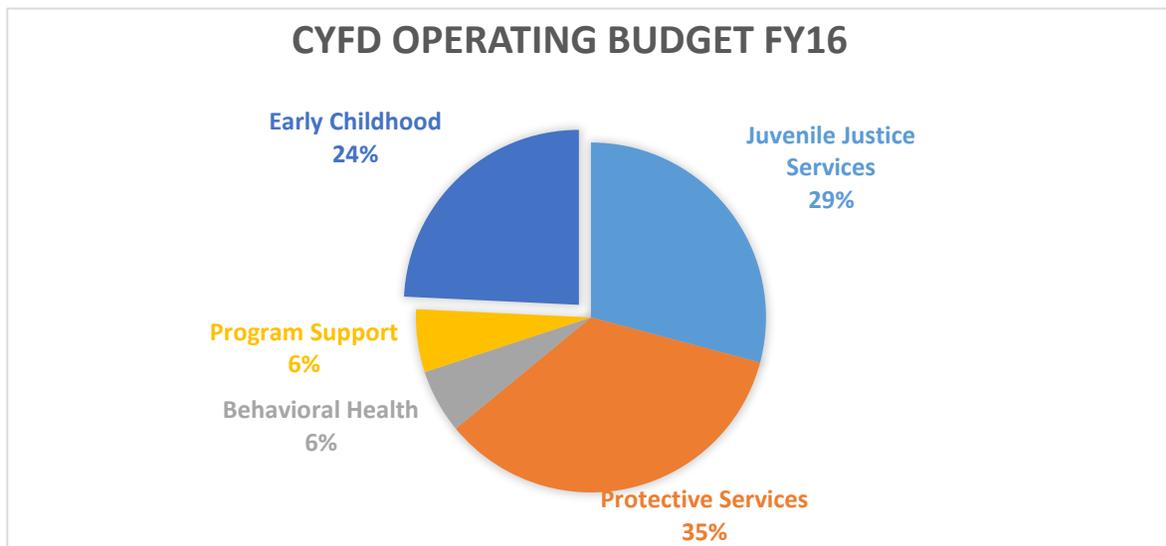
manages the following early childhood initiatives:

- NM PreK
- Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge
- Early Literacy
- Full-day Kindergarten
- K-3 Plus
- IDEA Part B Preschool Special Education

### Department of Health (DOH)

The child focused program at the Department of Health is the Family Infant and Toddler (FIT) program, funded by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C. FIT provides interventions for developmentally delayed and disabled children (from birth to age three) and their families.

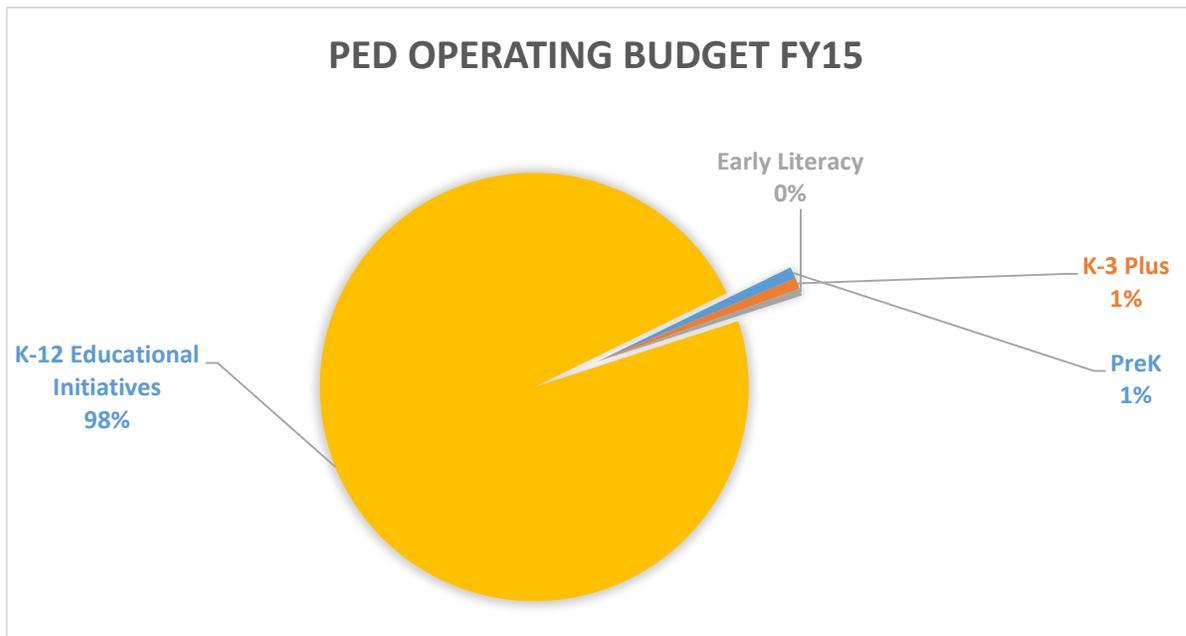
**Public Education Department (PED)** PED, which has State Education Agency (SEA) oversight,



Source: New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2015

Figure 4 PED Operating Budget FY16

### Early Childhood Governance



Source: New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2015

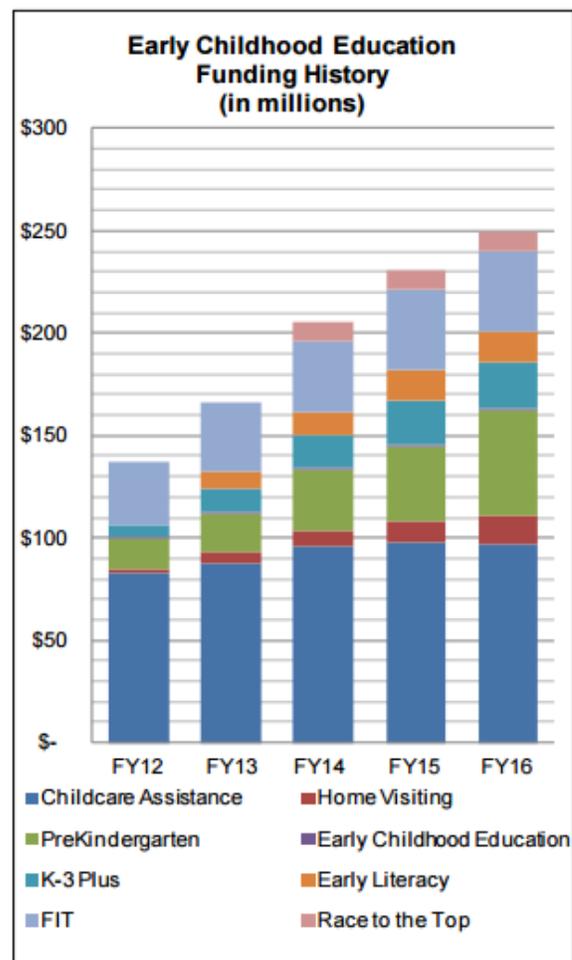
Figure 3 CYFD Operating Budget FY16

## FINANCING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

Early care and education services are provided by a wide range of programs with varying funding streams. The largest early childhood care and education programs in New Mexico are child care and New Mexico PreK.

**Child Care** - Child care programs nationwide are predominantly funded by the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). CCDBG is a federal program aimed at helping low-income families afford quality child care. In New Mexico, CCA is administered by CYFD, with funding primarily from the CCDBG, TANF Block Grant Funding, and state general funds. In FY17, CCA funding is \$96.6M. (\$30M of this funding stems from state appropriations).

**New Mexico PreK** – New Mexico PreK is financed primarily by legislative appropriation, although the program has also received funding through federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds during fiscal years



Source: Legislative Finance Committee

## Early Childhood Governance

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2015 and 2016. Between the program's inception in 2005 and today, NM PreK has seen an increase in state funding of more than 1,000 percent from \$5 million to \$51 million.

The federal government funds PreK through Head Start, Title I (Education for the Disadvantaged) Preschool Grants, and the Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities Program (Section 619 of Part B of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA B]). Head Start funds can be utilized in conjunction with NM PreK funds.

### National and Local Buy-in

While the benefits and cost savings of early childhood education are well documented, national investment remains insufficient. However, in New Mexico, investment in early childhood education has steadily increased due to support from the Legislature and the Executive.

The total funding for early childhood programs in FY16 increased to \$251.8 million, \$15.8 million or 6.7% over FY15 appropriations.

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## RESEARCH

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Phone interviews were conducted with key leaders in early childhood education in seven states; Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Washington. A sophisticated matrix was developed outlining states who have implemented significant governance changes. These states represent each of the three governance structures and have at least two characteristics in common with New Mexico including: 1.) high child poverty rate, 2.) elevated PreK enrollment, 3.) NIEER benchmark score above six, 4.) high minority population, 5.) receive consultation from the Ounce of Prevention Fund and/or are state partners with the Build Initiative, 6.) awardees of the Race To The Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTTT-ELC), and a 7.) similar urban to rural geographic population ratio. From those interviews and review of relevant literature, recommendations to key stakeholders about governance options were developed.

## STATE DATA

State and Agencies	Model	CCA	State Prek	Home Visiting	Licensing	Head Start	IDEA Part B	NIEER Rating
<b>New Mexico</b>	Coordination							8
Children, Youth and Families Dept.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Public Education Dept.			✓				✓	
Department of Health							IDEA Part C	
<b>Georgia</b>	Creation							10
Dept. of Early Care and Learning, Bright from the Start		✓	✓		✓	✓		
Dept of Ed, Divisions for Special Ed. Services and Supports							✓	
Dept. of Public Health								
Dept of Human Services				✓				
<b>North Carolina</b>	Consolidation							8
Dept. of Health and Human Services		✓	✓		✓			
State Board of Ed., Dept. of Public Instruction						✓	✓	
Dept. of Health and Human Services				✓				
<b>Oregon</b>	Consolidation							9
Early Learning Division (in Dept. of Ed.)			✓		✓	✓		
Dept. of Human Services		✓					✓	
Oregon Health Authority				✓				
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	Hybrid Consolidation and Creation							6.5
Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)		✓		✓	✓		✓	
Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality						✓		
Dept. of Ed, PreK Counts			✓					
<b>Washington</b>	Creation							9
Dept. of Early Learning		✓		✓	✓	✓		
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction			✓				✓	

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## DISCUSSION

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States interviewed agreed that the first step in a governance shift should be to answer the question *why* a change in structure is needed. Several interviewees recommended determining key issues and/or problems with the current structure, and then offering solutions for each. These issues can range from poor communication between agencies, departments operating in silos, and unmet ECE needs in rural communities.

Cons or barriers to change:

- The change process can be complex and slow
- Shuffling placement of programs and services does not automatically result in better coordination and alignment
- Programs have differing levels of funding and oversight (federal, state and local)
- Require shifts in the way providers are trained, supported and rewarded
- Changing how organizations and individuals within the system think and act involves challenges

Developing a **strategic marketing plan** in order to garner support from the community and to create sustainable systems change through changes in administration was mentioned several times in interviews and research.

**Dedicated leadership** was described as a critical factor in ensuring the successful launch of any change in governance. Facilitated conversations with the Governor and the administration in order to gauge level of support are important. Conversations should also include key stakeholders, practitioners, caseworkers, and advocacy groups. Every state interviewed had the support of the Executive prior to implementing any governance change.

A handful of states shared their frustrations with poor management choices delaying and in some cases unraveling years of work. Choosing the right director should be a thoughtful process, and factors such as management style and experience, reputation in the community as well as experience in ECE should be considered.

In North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Oregon, **strong staff leadership** helped to ensure that stakeholders and state personnel were committed to the new governance model.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

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Many states pointed at the strategic use of **public-private partnerships** in order to bring people together, spark innovation, and demand accountability to achieve greater results that neither government nor partnerships can do independently. Business champions can help build public support during tough financial and political times.

Interviewees stresses that systems-building will not succeed without **leadership at the local level** among stakeholders, including service providers. Local partnerships are fundamental to building systems and public will.

**Community governance** structures were also highlighted. These structures can engage and educate diverse and powerful constituencies, generate support for needed policy and tell the story to local communities. They have the relationships necessary to enact sustainable change.

Each interviewee agreed that change was ideal for programming, accountability, communication and to streamline processes. System building is complex, but institutionalizing governance structures in

statute with mandated purposes, creates durable systems that are less dependent on individuals or administrations. While most states agreed that there were difficult moments, not one state expressed regret or was unable to offer success stories as a direct result of consolidation or creation.

NMECDP has long championed key components of a successful early care and education system: (1) setting clear expectations for quality, (2) embracing evaluation, and (3) aligning existing programs and funding.

The needs of children and their families are complex and diverse. When programs work in silos, they negatively affect the impact they can have on the development of a child.

The three key departments that play an integral role in early childhood development, care and education are DOH, CYFD, and PED. These three departments provide a range of services for children from birth to age five. Many early childhood programs currently operate independently of one another and, while all have similar goals, they are not aligned in a meaningful way.

There is a need for better communication, coordination, and for a comprehensive vision to align these efforts. There is also a need for stronger evaluation, the development of public-private partnership, and increase funding for key programming to expand services.

**NMECDP recommends creating a new department focused solely on early childhood education and care in order to reduce overlap and duplication of services.** It will provide better efficiency in the delivery of services to New Mexico's children. All early childhood education and care programs and services would be housed under one roof, and will improve communication, transparency, consensus building and align accountability with governance authority.

## *Why a change?*

Recently, concerns have arisen related to CYFD's performance on key indicators such as the rate of repeat child maltreatment and reading proficiency of low-income children.

The housing of critical early childhood care and education services and programming alongside with crisis-response child welfare programming poses a fundamental issue surrounding the vision of the department. CYFD caseworkers are inundated with heavy caseloads and the agency has been scrutinized for high vacancy rates.

Early childhood care and education programs and services act on a continuum of care. The impact of intensive home visiting is lost if subsequent child care is of low quality.

Early childhood education and care services and programs have been created and implemented as a second thought or in direct response to a social issue. Therefore, the random placement of ECE programs does not reflect the proactive educational purpose of these key programs. Housing ECE programs in a child welfare department, which consistently reacts to crises and juvenile justice cases, jeopardizes the potential of the early childhood education system.

Currently, PED has shown no inclination to provide NM PreK to three-year-olds. The Early Learning and Care Department should not be placed in PED.

DOH, PED and CYFD all have different data systems. It is critical to develop one early childhood data system along with a unique identifier that stays with a child throughout their academic career. The current structure demands a continued maintenance of separate entities for different programs and services.

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## CONCLUSION

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### A MOVE TOWARDS THE FUTURE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD GOVERNANCE

A myriad of benefits exist under a consolidated governance ECE structure:

- Effective **data** collection systems
- **Improved Accountability**
- Improved **communication** and feedback loops to a host of stakeholders including policy makers, educators, and early childhood professionals
- Improved **coordination** of resources and materials
- Increased opportunities for **advancement, professional development and ECE workforce**
- Improvement of **quality** and alignment of **standards**
- Improved **alignment** of all ECE programs, services, and Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs)
- **Reduced** duplication of services

#### Key Steps

1. Determine the desired outcomes for data collection, standards development, quality assurance, and outcome measurement
2. Create functions of governance (Coordination, coherence, sustainability, efficiency, and accountability)
3. Formalize a plan to influence leadership, federal policy and regulations, councils and cabinets, and bureaucracy

4. Collaborate with stakeholders and leaders throughout all agencies and programs to garner support. Setting achievable goals, establishing higher standards and policy.
5. Identify reputable early childhood experts.
6. Create an operational map.
7. Develop multi-year strategic map (tied to funding).
8. Design Organizational Chart.

#### Outcomes:

- Coordination and alignment improved
- Better communication between different programs and services
- Standards and quality development
- Collaboration and energy around a common purpose
- Align qualifications, licensing and fingerprinting
- Higher-level positions within early childhood field
- Creation of a common professional development platform and a shared monitoring and technical assistance platform

High quality early childhood care and education is vital to ensuring all New Mexican children can enter kindergarten ready to learn and succeed. When children have access to quality early care, they enter kindergarten with the right skills to succeed academically and socially, giving them the best possible start at life.

Children are also less likely to become dependent on welfare or engage in risky health behaviors. Quality early childhood care and early intervention can have a profound impact on the trajectory of a child's life and the society that they will inevitably participate in.

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## APPENDIX I: STATE PROFILES

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States profiles include history of governance and coordination structures and processes, followed by lessons learned and key takeaways. The research draws upon interviews with leaders in each state, along with extensive research.

### Georgia<sup>viii</sup>

#### **Model: Creation**

Georgia's Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for the states early child care and education. It was created by the state legislature in 2004 under Republican Governor Sonny Perdue. Georgia is one of only three states in the country with a stand-alone agency dedicated to the early care and education of children and families. The department is managed by a commissioner who is appointed by the Governor. The commissioner sits on the Alliance of Education Agency Heads, Georgia's P-20 Council and the Georgia's Children's Cabinet.

#### **Lessons learned:**

- Having all ECE services under one department has improved Georgia's ability to monitor quality of services and fiscal standards across all programs.
- Georgia has been able to create well-developed data systems that are housed in the same department and with the same professionals, as opposed to employing numerous technicians and duplicating efforts.
- DECAL is able to create and champion ECE policies that affect a wide range of programs because programming is

aligned cohesively. All services come through one department, and as a result are better positioned for state-level grants.

- DECAL has made a commitment to a distinct research unit and also funds a large in-house research department.

#### **Takeaways:**

- Messaging must be a priority when creating a state's strategic plan. In order to change the structure, the department must earn support from families and stakeholders across socio-economic backgrounds. For example, the middle class often times has limited access to high quality care because they are unable to afford expensive private programs. Often times the preschool in a middle-class community is half- day, and is not ideal for a dual-income family with a full-day work schedule.
- Using data, evaluation, and reporting should be used as a strategy. Successes are shared with partners, communities, and the media as an integral tactic to remind the public that ECE is a smart investment.

### North Carolina<sup>ix</sup>

#### **Model: Consolidation**

The North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC, also known as Smart Start) was created through legislation in 1993 under the leadership of Democratic Governor Jim Hunt. The state launched the first comprehensive early childhood initiative in the nation that included both a state level administrative nonprofit agency and local coalitions and nonprofit agencies that were responsible for children from birth to kindergarten. Smart Start is perhaps the most well-known element of North Carolina's early learning system, which has

### Early Childhood Governance

been sustained through the terms of three governors.

Governor Mike Easley created the More at Four Pre-Kindergarten program. The Office of School Readiness (OSR) was created in 2005 in the Governor's office to oversee and coordinate all of the state's public pre-kindergarten programs (More at Four, Head Start, Title I preschool/Even Start, and Early Intervention Part B), which were previously administered through three separate agencies.

NCPC's Current Programs:

- Infant Toddler Program provides services and resources for young children (birth-3) with disabilities
- Office of Early Learning (OEL) of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) administers state and federally funded programs for young children including Preschool Exceptional Children, Title I Preschool and the Head Start State Collaboration Office
- Exceptional Children Division provides services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to NC children and youth ages 3 – 21 who have disabilities
- Developmental Day Center Program (DDC), funded through the State Board of Education, assists in providing special education and related services to eligible children with disabilities who are placed in accredited development day centers by local education agencies
- Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) regulates child care in the state and collaborates to promote enhanced service delivery of care and education across the state; it also administers the states PreK program, NC PreK for the state's most at risk four year olds

- NC Partnership for Children, Inc. (NCPC) provides statewide oversight of the Smart Start initiative

The North Carolina Early Learning Network, funded by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI), provides early learning communities with professional development and technical assistance to support preschool children with disabilities and their families through the vision of DPI's Office of Early Learning:

The Early Learning Network promotes the development and successful participation of North Carolina's preschool-age exceptional children in a broad range of activities and contexts, including their homes, early learning programs, and communities.

#### **Lessons learned:**

- If a state is contemplating a governance structure change, they should begin by holding working meetings with key stakeholders led by a neutral facilitator. The Early Learning Council will be responsible for making recommendations to be considered by the Governor, business leaders and/or legislative leaders. These meetings have the potential for a great feedback loop inside the Department and should be the first step in moving towards a new ECE structure.
- Measures success through a coordinated, strong QRIS program.
- The T.E.A.C.H. and Wage\$ programs originated in North Carolina and are now implemented across the nation

#### **Takeaways:**

- States should work diligently and purposefully with Head Start.

- Governor Hunt campaigned on early childhood education, and was passionate about his plans for Smart Start. It is in a state's best interest to have strong leadership from the top to enact significant change into the early childhood system.

## Oregon<sup>x</sup>

### **Model: Consolidation**

In 2013, the Oregon Legislature passed HB 3234, under Democratic Governor John Kitzhaber. The legislation created a new Early Learning Division within the Department of Education, consolidating the administration of key early childhood programs such as Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten, Healthy Start, and child-care licensing under a new Office of Child Care. The new Division is the lead agency for CCDF, but ERDC, the state's child care subsidy program, will continue to be administered by the Dept. of Human Services.

The statute authorized the Early Learning Council to create sixteen regional and community-based early learning hubs in order to make supports more available, accessible, and effective for children and families, particularly those who are underrepresented in services. The early learning hubs have three specific goals: (1) create an early childhood system that is aligned, coordinated, and family-centered; (2) ensure that children arrive at school ready to succeed; and (3) ensure that Oregon's young children live in families that are healthy, stable, and attached.

#### **Lessons learned:**

- Leadership must be patient with staff during the transition. One strategy ODE utilized was to have staff create and

write the department's vision statement.

- Hire leaders that will work diligently with staff and not accept the status quo.
- Currently, there is a wide range of public, private and non-profit programs, and organizations focused on early childhood care and education in Oregon. Although some of the programs and services are delivering good results, results must be consistently tracked.

#### **Takeaways:**

- When Oregon began discussing a governance shift, they had the support of key stakeholders and the Governor.
- Oregon also has a strong Early Childhood Advisory Council who has been imperative in helping to drive positive changes for the departments.
- Staffing is very important.

## Pennsylvania<sup>xi</sup>

### **Model: Hybrid Consolidation and Creation**

In January 2007, Democratic Governor Edward Rendell created Office of Child Development and Early Learning through an administrative process by centralizing the early learning and child development programs, which were previously governed by both the State Education Agency and the Department of Public Welfare. The office is responsible for the financing, planning, implementation and monitoring of child care, Head Start, PreK, home visiting, and IDEA Part B and C.

#### **Lessons learned:**

- Pennsylvania has a robust structure for quality improvement. Keystone Stars, PA's QRIS system was established in 2002. Investment has been made in a

full system of delivery supporting quality and professional development.

- Pennsylvania shows that while both people and structure are important, individuals and relationships have been the primary drivers. Without the Governor and key staff, the department would not have been created.

#### Takeaways:

- PA did not have a history of small government agencies being successful.
- To enact sweeping organizational change, many moving parts must be active at once. This requires the clear articulation of a broad vision as well as a roadmap for change at the departmental and program levels.
- Continuous relationship-building is needed with partners within the health agency and the Department of Public Welfare.
- Since the creation of the OCDEL was accomplished administratively, there was no need for legislative approval and they didn't spend political capital going to the legislature.
- Focus on quality during the planning phase.

## Washington<sup>xii</sup>

### Model: Creation

In 2006, Washington State passed legislation to create the Department of Early Learning (DEL) under Democratic Governor Christine Gregoire. DEL allowed the state to move all of its early childhood services under one department. The departments merged the Division of Child Care and Early Learning (formerly part of the Department of Social and Health Services), the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (which was part of the Department of Community Trade and Economic Development),

and the Early Reading First program (formerly part of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction).

Additionally, the legislation created Thrive Washington, a public-private partnership for early childhood services. Thrive facilitates the Washington Early Learning Partnership, which serves as a governing body for early learning service coordination and policy setting. The organization represents the private sector and is governed by a board of directors consisting of funding partners and business representatives. Steering committees were established to provide programmatic oversight and fundraising.

#### Takeaways:

- A new governance structure does not necessarily solve all problems, *relationships* are still vital and important.
- Early learning is not a program, it is an age range. Leaders need to think about the transition from early learning to K-12.
- The change in governance made the silos in WA state government apparent.
- DEL and Thrive partnered to create the catalyst for WA's QRIS.

#### Lessons Learned:

- Find legislative champions. The most unlikely supporters will have a connection to early childhood through their families. Other examples include: law enforcement, faith community or unlikely childcare clients or employers who need childcare for their employees.
- Adequate funding to support development and implementation is important.
- Allow advocates to help push the message. Moms Rising hosted a "PreK

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1K” that was wildly successful and garnered enormous media attention.

- The pros of the governance structure included: better communication, standards alignment (licensing, QRIS) for state PreK and visibility that early childhood education would never have received if not for DEL.
- The advocacy community must be ready for a state to change their early childhood education governance

structure. The advocates are the foot soldiers who are going to move the message.

- DEL’s current vision is to expanding access and demanding quality. In order to do that effectively, the department needs data.
- Everyone benefits when Head Start is invited to the table. Approach them as a valuable partner.

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## NOTES

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<sup>i</sup> Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu).

<sup>ii</sup> Regenstein, E., Lipper, K (2013). A Framework for Choosing a State-Level Early Childhood Governance System.

<sup>iii</sup> Infants & Young Children Learning, Child Trends Data Bank, <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/?q=node/41> (accessed Sept. 18, 2012).

<sup>iv</sup> Kagan, S.L., & Kauerz, K. (2008). Governing American early care and education: shifting from government to governance and from form to function. In Feeney, S. (Ed.), *Continuing issues in early childhood education* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Columbus, OH: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

<sup>v</sup> Wallen, M., & Hubbard, A. (2013). *Blending and braiding early childhood program funding streams toolkit*. Chicago, IL: Ounce of Prevention Fund.

<sup>vi</sup> *Continuing Issues in Early Childhood Education*, 3rd Edition, By Stephanie Feeney, Alice Galper, Carol Seefeldt

<sup>vii</sup> Goffin, S.G., Martella, J. & Coffman, J. (2011). *Vision to Practice: Setting a New Course for Early Childhood Governance*. Washington, DC: Goffin Strategy Group.

<sup>viii</sup> Interview with Susan Adams, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Oct. 28, 2015

<sup>ix</sup> Interview with Karen Ponder, Consultant, North Carolina, Oct. 28, 2015

<sup>x</sup> Interview with Megan Irwin, Oregon Early Learning Division, Oct. 27, 2015

<sup>xi</sup> Interview with Harriet Dichter, Pennsylvania, Nov. 12, 2015

<sup>xii</sup> Interview with Ross Hunter, Department of Early Learning Washington, Dec. 2, 2015, Interview with Jennifer Jennings-Shaffer, Children's Alliance, Washington, Dec. 3, 2015, Interview with Sam Whiting, Thrive Washington, Dec. 3, 2015