



Utilizing Non-Traditional Voices to Promote the Importance of Home Visiting in New Mexico
Report Submitted to the New Mexico Early Childhood Funders Group on April 30, 2018
Grant Period: December 1, 2017 - March 31, 2018

Purpose

On November 14, 2017, the New Mexico Early Childhood Funders Group (NMECFG) awarded *Council for a Strong America (CSA) New Mexico* a grant of \$10,000 to engage and educate key policymakers on the importance of home visiting programs and the importance of increasing funding for this critical component to early childhood education.

Impact

The birth of a child presents new opportunities and challenges for families. The challenges are often exacerbated for families who face difficult circumstances—such as poverty, unemployment, or single parenthood—and those who have few positive parenting role models to look to for guidance. That’s why voluntary home visiting programs have been proven to be so powerful—they offer mentorship from a trained educator, from pregnancy into the first few years of a child’s life, using the simple logic that parenting works. Building on the work beginning in 2015, we now have nearly 100 unexpected messengers in New Mexico who understand that home visiting and early education programs work to give children a better start in life—and a greater chance for later success in school, career, and our society. Utilizing the voices of our unique membership organizations, composed of evangelical pastors, law enforcement leaders, business executives, and retired admirals and generals, we were pleased that CSA’s efforts, along with the work of NMECFG and our allies, helped result in a \$1.5 million increase in funding towards high-quality home visiting programs and services for New Mexico’s children and their families. This marked an 8.3% increase from the 2017 funding levels.

Deliverables

In order to achieve this win, CSA hit the ground running. Our main goal was to ensure that our members and staff were able to engage directly with key policymakers, at the right time in the legislative session, in order to be the most effective advocates for vulnerable New Mexican families. Through the previous support of the NMECFG in 2017, CSA staff was successful in growing the presence of our Shepherding the Next Generation organization within New Mexico. We were thrilled to build off that work by engaging and mobilizing these faith leaders who have developed a

successful community organizing model around home visiting. These leaders understand that many families don't have the ideal support they need. Every week, they see both the successes and failures of the early education and family support systems in their congregations, and they welcome the opportunity to use their voices to help provide better opportunities for children and families. As one of our members stated: "As citizens we have a moral obligation to offer guidance to these young parents, so they can raise their children in safe homes to help prepare them to deal with the many stressful situations that come with raising kids...Connecting mentors of all backgrounds, of all ways of life, with at-risk parents is the right thing to do for our families."

From December 2017 through January 2018, we collaborated with the NMECFG and our allies to identify which policymakers would be the best to engage and to develop the appropriate strategy to increase funding for home visiting. We were delighted to be invited to the Southern Baptist Convention's Legislative Dinner and Breakfast in Santa Fe on January 25-26, 2018. Our National Director of Shepherding the Next Generation, Tom Pearce attended, and alongside him, two CSA members joined—Sheriff Tony Mace from Cibola County (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids *New Mexico*) and



Dan Pearce, Director of Missions of both the Tukumcari Baptist Association and the Eastern Baptist Association (Shepherding the Next Generation *New Mexico*). Over the course of two days, CSA members and staff were able to meet and engage with ten policymakers¹:

- Lieutenant Governor John A. Sanchez (R)
 - *Rev. Pearce and Sheriff Mace thanked him for his service and asked him to convey support to the Governor for her increase for home visiting.*
- Senator John Arthur Smith (D)
 - *He was stated that he was pleased to support the recommendation to increase funding for home visiting by \$1.5 million. His only concern was what budget would be tapped for funding.*

¹ Although we were not able to secure a meeting with Representative Deborah Armstrong (D) due to her unavailability, we met with the House Health Policy Analyst, Nancy Wells, who works out of Rep. Armstrong's office.

- Representative Patricia Lundstrom (D)
 - *Indicated she was pleased to support the recommendation. Chairwoman Lundstrom and Sheriff Mace grew up in Grants, NM and knew each other, which added a personal touch to the meeting. Chairwoman Lundstrom also had us check in with her Finance advisor, who felt the Senate's concern about which budget would be tapped for funding had already been addressed.*
- Representative Harry Garcia (D)
 - *Indicated he was on board with the increase in funding for home visiting programs.*
- Representative Jimmie C. Hall (R)
 - *Representative Hall was supportive of an increase in funding for home visiting. He also wanted us to be very aware that he has protected this kind of funding in the past.*
- Speaker Brian Egolf (D)
 - *Speaker Egolf indicated his support towards the increase in funding for home visiting programs. Sheriff Mace knows Speaker Egolf and was able to initiate the meeting as a result of that connection, which also provided for a more personal and engaging meeting.*
- Senator Pat Woods (R)
 - *Senator Woods is Rev. Dan Peace's Senator. He was not on board with supporting the increase in funding for home visiting at the beginning of the meeting, but was nodding in agreement by the end.*
- Senator Gay G. Kernan (R)
 - *Senator Kernan was very supportive of the increase in investments for home visiting.*
- Senator George K. Munoz (D)
 - *Senator Munoz was supportive of the increase in investments. He is also a personal friend of Sheriff Mace.*
- Senator Candace Gould (R)
 - *Indicated she was pleased to support the recommendation. Senator Gould also felt the Senator Smith's concern about which budget would be tapped for funding had already been addressed.*

Additionally, on February 23, 2018, our New Mexico Program Lead Abby Ware attended an event where current Governor Susana Martinez (R) was present. Abby spoke with Governor Martinez about our members in New Mexico and the work they did regarding home visiting during the legislative session. The Governor indicated her pleasure on the work our members do and noted that their efforts have not gone unnoticed.

Complementary to our direct meetings with the aforementioned policymakers, fourteen of our Fight Crime: Invest in Kids *New Mexico* members sent a sign-on letter to the New Mexico General Assembly, advocating that investments high-quality, home visiting programs, such as New Mexico's Nurse-Family Partnership and Parents as Teachers, can reduce child abuse and neglect and decrease the chances that a child will become involved in crime later in life. Our Mission: Readiness admirals and generals also championed for improved investments in home visiting. Major General (Ret.) Melvyn S. Montano, Brigadier General (Ret.) Douglas J. Murray, and Brigadier General (Ret.) Regner C. Rider sent a sign-on letter to Speaker of the House Brian Egolf. In this letter, they shared compelling and unique messaging on why evidence-based, voluntary home visiting programs have not only been shown to generate long-term benefits, such as a reduction in the number of children who need special education and children with behavioral problems, but they are also a matter of national security. Our members understand that investments in early childhood help ensure youth become contributing members of society.

During the session, we engaged in targeted media outreach, which resulted in the publication of an op-ed in the *Albuquerque Journal*. The [piece](#) by ReadyNation member Del Archuleta, Owner and President of Molzen Corbin and former Chair of New Mexico Mutual and the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, focused on the positive impact of high-quality home visiting programs on children during the prenatal-to-three period and encouraged lawmakers to back the \$1.5 million increase the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee proposed in its budget recommendation.

Although, not all of our efforts were successful, we were always prepared. For example, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids member Sheriff Robert Garcia drafted and submitted a [letter to the editor](#) to the *Albuquerque Journal* that was not published. The letter to the editor was in support of Archuleta's op-ed and talked about a 13-year-old boy who was killed in a child abuse case that Sheriff Garcia handled. In addition, we had a potential opportunity to be invited to present testimony to the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee. We were able to secure one of our

leading ReadyNation members, Patrick Dee, Managing Director of US Bank, who would have been an excellent candidate to provide testimony. He is not only well versed on the importance of substantive investments in home visiting, but has testified on many early education issues in the past. Despite our efforts, as the the session drew closer we did not receive an invitation from the Senate Finance Committee, so we opted to focus on the other opportunities effectively mobilize our members.

Following the successful passage of legislation that increased the amount of funding for home visiting in New Mexico, the National Director of Mission: Readiness sent a “thank-you” letter to the Chairs of the Appropriations Committee and Representative Stephanie Garcia Richard for their support of home visiting this year.

During the grant period, we also successfully recruited five new members to various organizations within the CSA *New Mexico* umbrella, and are looking forward to continuing to build and educate our membership groups, while strengthening relationships with allies and state policymakers.

Collaboration

We worked mainly through the New Mexico Early Childhood Funders Group, and joined them and allies for a meeting early in 2018.

Project Budget

All funds provided by the New Mexico Early Childhood Funders Group were fully expended per the budget. Pleased see the attached document for information.

Materials

Please see the attached documents for the following materials:

- Letter to the New Mexico General Assembly by 14 Fight Crime: Invest in Kids members
- Letter to Speaker Egolf by three Mission: Readiness members
- Thank you letter to Representative Stephanie Garcia Richard by Mission: Readiness National Director Jamie Lockhart

Press Coverage

- [Home Visiting Programs Can Build The Future](#)
- [Sheriff Garcia's Unpublished Letter to the Editor](#)

Next Steps

CSA *New Mexico* is currently conducting a nonpartisan gubernatorial education campaign. We are offering the unique perspectives of our New Mexico law enforcement leaders, business leaders, and retired military leader members around the importance of critical investments that prepare New Mexico's children and youth for productive citizenship. Such critical investments range from high-quality early childhood programs to rigorous K-12 education standards that prepare youth for postsecondary learning, the military, and/or the civilian workforce. Our efforts will help inform the candidates' education platforms and develop relationships with gubernatorial candidates and potentially the newly-elected Governor.

We are grateful to the New Mexico Early Childhood Funders Group for your continued support and are even more galvanized for the next legislative session.