



POLICY & ADVOCACY UPDATE

2022 LEGISLATIVE SESSION



Image credit: NMCAN

“

I had a really good attorney who had time for me, explained my case to me, and advocated for me. I was lucky, but many of my peers didn't have the same experience. This bill will ensure everyone in foster care is well-represented.

- Young Person

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As a parent, I wish my lawyer had told me what was happening in my case and what to expect for meetings and hearings. It's an overwhelming process and I think if I had understood it, I could have been a better advocate for myself and my lawyer could have been a better advocate for me.

- Young Person

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Young People Support the Office of Family Representation

This year, NMCAN is supporting young people advocating for the creation of the Office of Family Representation and Advocacy, House Bill 46 (sponsored by Rep. Gail Chasey). This critical legislation will ensure that children, young people, and parents in abuse and neglect proceedings across the state receive high-quality legal representation.

High-quality legal representation is crucial to ensure that families successfully access the resources they need to stay together whenever possible, and find other means of permanency if necessary. Consistency in representation and advocacy leads to children and youth spending less time in foster care unnecessarily, minimizing the trauma and lasting damage of family separation. By utilizing best practices, instituting quality control, and providing extensive training to collaborative teams of attorneys, social workers, case managers, and peer advocates, the state should maximize the use of resources to support families and achieve the best outcomes for children and young people in New Mexico.

New Video Series



Are you interested in learning more about how the foster care legal process works? Check out our New Mexico Foster Care Explainer Series at nmcan.org/learn-more/resources.

Did You Know?

When parents enroll in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, they must disclose the date of conception and extensive information about the other parent. If they do not disclose this information, they are penalized for noncompliance. If they do disclose this information, the state keeps a significant portion of the child support money paid by the other parent.

For the last year, NMCAN and young parents have been collaborating with the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty to bring to light the issues families face in accessing TANF benefits and suggest solutions to make the program more functional for families. One of the proposed reforms is to end the practice of intercepting child support payments and tax refunds to families and children, which requires an increase in the New Mexico Child Support Enforcement Agency budget.

This much needed reform will get us one step closer to ensuring that families and children across the state get the resources they need to thrive.

Preparing for Legislative Session

Every year, NMCAN provides education and training to all young people who are interested in doing legislative advocacy. Through Communications 101, Legislative Advocacy 101, and Legislative Advocacy Prep Sessions, young people spend months preparing to communicate with and educate legislators about issues that are important to them. All of this education, training, and support is critical for young people to tell their stories and lead positive change in New Mexico.

If you are interested in following along, sign up for our e-newsletter or follow our blog at nmcan.org.



Congratulations, Arika!

We want to congratulate our very own Director of Policy and Advocacy Arika Sánchez for becoming the Co-Chair of the New Mexico Children's Court Improvement Commission (CCIC)! The purpose of CCIC is to improve the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families in NM Children's Court. CCIC is a key partner in advancing policy that supports young people and families by including them in the discussion, design, and implementation of policy.