



JANUARY 2023

# WINTER UPDATE



## 2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION PRIORITIES

*Young people's voices are essential for building equitable systems. We are partnering with them on the following priorities at this year's 60-day legislative session.*

### **Reducing Unnecessary Family Separation**

We should rely on the expertise of the court, not law enforcement, to assess the safety of a child and decide whether to take them into temporary custody. Currently over 40 percent of children are placed in foster care for less than 30 days, and over 90 percent of those short-stays are for less than eight days, causing unnecessary trauma.

### **Improve TANF Accessibility for Families**

Only 40 percent of eligible families are enrolled in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. In order to improve program access, New Mexico must end family sanctions, restore exemptions to the work requirement, increase the cash grant, and stop retaining child support.

### **Improve Kinship Guardianship**

Kinship guardianship allows for a close family member or other qualifying person to care for a child when the parents are unable or unwilling to care for them. In these situations, we want to ensure parents have access to legal counsel prior to signing and throughout the life of voluntary placement agreements to ensure that the agreements are not coercive.

### **Expand Direct Representation**

New Mexico should expand direct representation for youth in foster care to age six (currently available to those ages 14 and older). This means the attorney of the child represents the child's expressed interests and is bound by duties of professional conduct including confidentiality, diligence, competence, loyalty, communication, and provision of independent advice.

**Learn more at [nmcan.org/2023policy](https://nmcan.org/2023policy).**



## Join us for our open house!

**Thursday, February 23, 2023**  
**211 12th Street NW**  
**3:30-5:30 pm**

NMCAN bought a building and we want to celebrate this incredible achievement with you! We will stay in downtown Albuquerque, and our new home will ensure that young people will always have a safe space among a welcoming community.

Our office will remain a space for young people to hang out, grow their networks, learn new skills, and ultimately lead change in their own lives and in their communities.

**RSVP** by visiting [nmcan.org/openhouse](https://nmcan.org/openhouse) or calling 505-217-0220.  
*RSVP by February 17, 2023.*

**Thank you to our partners!**





## JOIN US: 2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION PREVIEW WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Friday, January 27, 2023

12:00-12:45 pm

via Zoom

RSVP for Zoom link: [nmcan.org/2023preview](https://nmcan.org/2023preview)

Want to hear about what's to come at this year's legislative session? Attend this online meeting and hear from young people who will be advocating for our priorities.

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## WATCH OUR TANF VIDEOS

Five mothers share how unnecessary and punitive rules in the TANF/NM Works program have stopped them and other low-income families with children from getting the help they need. We are working to change this at the 2023 legislative session. The videos were created in partnership with the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty and Crossroads For Women.

Watch them at [nmcan.org/TANF](https://nmcan.org/TANF)



I want to be a PTA mom for my kids when they go to school. I wanna be involved. I wanna be with them. I wanna be a shoulder to cry on. I wanna do all those things that I never had support with. -Alyssa



## ICYMI: FY22 ANNUAL REPORT

Did you see NMCAN's achievements from the past year? Here are a few highlights.

- 128 young people are a part of the NMCAN community—engaging in community building activities, leadership development, financial literacy learning and coaching, parenting groups, and advocacy efforts. This included a retreat in which young people reconnected after several years of isolation, reflected on the impact of COVID-19 on their lives, and learned how to maintain their wellness.
- 28 young people participated in 124 community meetings to share their experiences and advocate how to better support them and their families.
- 19 partner panels and community trainings were led by young people, including the NM's annual child welfare conference. Young people led a breakout session titled, "Why the History of the Child Welfare System Matters to Young People." The discussion reviewed the history of the foster care system and federal legislation that continues to impact family surveillance and separation today.
- Young people educated our community about the need for quality legal representation, which resulted in the creation of The Office of Family Representation and Advocacy (scheduled to open in 2023).
- Two young people applied for and were appointed to the Office of Family Representation and Advocacy Oversight Commission by the NM Supreme Court.