

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



The Need

New Mexico is at a critical stage. The awareness of the importance of the first few years of a child's life and the demand to expand early childhood care and education services and programs including home visiting, Early Head Start and Head Start, high quality child care and NM PreK for 3-and 4-year-olds has increased.

Early Childhood Education Governance

Early childhood governance refers to a state's organizational structure and its **placement of authority and accountability for making program, policy and financing decisions for early care and education for children from birth to age five.**

States can use their early childhood education governance structure to **achieve critical early childhood goals and make decisions around budgeting and managing resources.** This can also include the **management of data** and can improve **accountability, coordination, alignment, sustainability accountability, and efficiency** in early childhood programming and services.

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.

ECE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Coordination: Places authority and accountability for early childhood programs and services across multiple public agencies. This is the existing system in approximately 40 states. This can be done in two ways:

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

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

Creation: A state creates a new executive branch agency or entity within an agency that has the authority and accountability for the early childhood system.

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This analysis of New Mexico's current governance structure includes lessons learned from other states and recommendations.

This research includes interviews with key leaders inside and outside state government in Georgia, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Washington- all of which have made significant early childhood care and

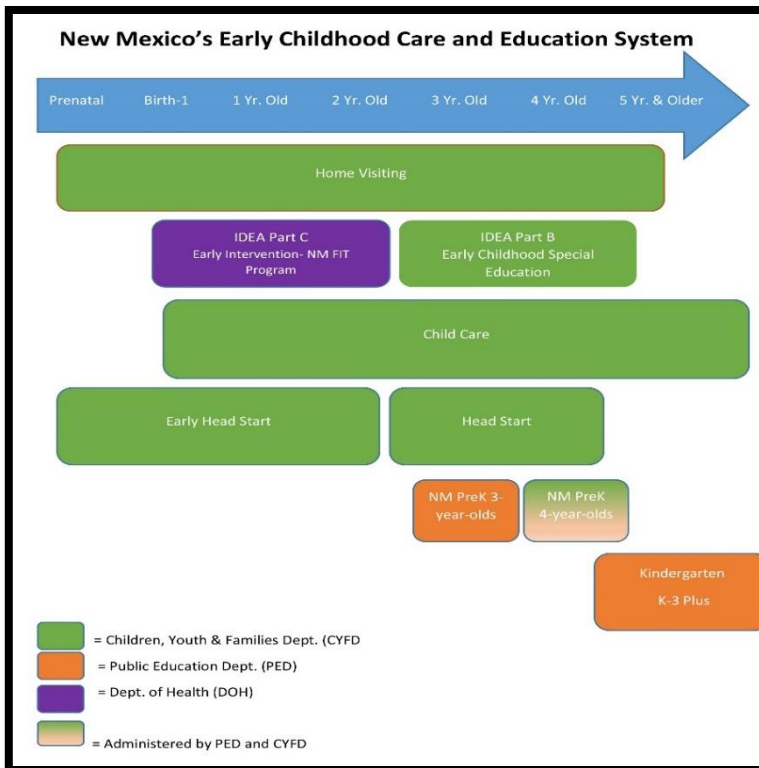
education governance changes by consolidating state agencies or creating a new agency or department.

Governance in New Mexico

New Mexico currently operates in a coordinated governance structure. This structure places accountability for early childhood care and education across three state agencies: the Public Education Department (PED), the Children Youth and Families

development of a child.

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.



1. Creating a Department of Early Learning to house all early childhood services
2. Research and state interviews point to an array of benefits for states moving to a **consolidation or creation model**
 - Encourage coherence among policies and services
 - Improved coordination and alignment
 - Identify clear accountability with governance authority
 - Reduce duplication of efforts and leads to greater efficiency
3. The creation of a new department focused solely on early childhood education and care **will 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.**

Recommendations

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

To learn more, please contact NMECDP:

Claire Dudley Chavez
Executive VP for Policy and Stakeholder Engagement
CDudley@nmeecd.org

Danila Crespin Zidovsky
Policy Analyst
DZidovsky@nmeecd.org