



New Mexico Children,
Youth & Families Department

For Immediate Release

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New Mexico Acknowledged for Measures Improving Foster Care; CYFD Calls For Task Force Applicants

SANTA FE -- The state of New Mexico was among just 13 states acknowledged by a national foster care organization for passing new legislation or executive orders to improve foster-parenting policies. Lawmakers and the Children, Youth & Families Department were identified last week by CHAMPS (Children Need Amazing Parents), a national campaign to improve foster care, as having passed HJM 10, Child Protective Services Task Force. The goal of this new task force is to improve recruitment and retention of foster resource families.

Groundwork for the task force is currently underway, led by CYFD Secretary Brian Blalock. Blalock said of the honor, "We knew that HJM 10 was a move in the right direction for foster families across the state. This recognition from CHAMPS shows the fostering community is taking notice of these positive changes."

CHAMPS also acknowledged New Mexico lawmakers for their leadership in passing HM 20 and SM 4, declaring days in both the New Mexico House and Senate to honor foster parents and other advocates.

"Foster families in New Mexico and nationwide are truly heroes for stepping forward when children are in crisis," said Hope Cooper, CHAMPS Campaign Director. "Not only do they provide a safe and loving home to live in temporarily, they help many children and families heal and recover. We are grateful to New Mexico state leaders and child welfare advocates for working toward better policies to support foster families and children in care."

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham was also one of only four governors to mention foster care in her state of the state address at the beginning of the year.

Blalock said, "Governor Lujan Grisham made her priorities clear for all children in the state. As a department, we will continue to work to make New Mexico the safest place in the country to be a child."

The Child Protective Services Task Force is responsible for making recommendations to the Children, Youth & Families Department to improve the relationship between CYFD and foster families and to improve recruitment and retention of foster families.

Secretary Blalock announced the department is currently seeking applicants for members to join the task force.

Applications are due by June 21, 2019. The application and instructions to apply can be found at: https://cyfd.org/docs/Child_Protective_Services_Task_Force_Application_june2019.docx

The task force will also recommend measures to provide consistent policies and procedures across the state, recommend ways to reduce burdens on families in the care of a child in the custody of the state, as well as review and make recommendations to training, family reintegration policies, and study ways to avoid multiple placements in foster care.

Public members of the Child Protective Services Task Force are to include two foster parents, a guardian of a child, two kinship caregivers, a licensed medical physical health expert, a licensed behavioral health expert, and a family reintegration expert.

Other successes during the 2019 Legislative Session include passage of SB 28, requiring CYFD to give preference to relatives who may provide foster care. The Placement of Children in Protective Custody act also requires those relatives to start the licensure process to become foster parents within three days of taking custody of a child or children.

The Plan of Safe Care Act, HB 230, also becomes law this year. With the act, CYFD will now receive notification any time an infant tests positive for addictive substances and be able to assess the family's strengths and needs without requiring opening a formal abuse or neglect case.

"We see each of these laws as complimentary to each other, setting the stage for continued reform in CYFD," Blalock said. "We are also putting major efforts into improving relative foster care placement—making sure a child removed from the home stays with a relative whenever possible. Research shows staying with a family member instead of a non-relative foster family can reduce trauma on the children involved, which is always one of our highest priorities."

The first report of the Child Protective Services Task Force is due by October 2020.

Read the full policy update from CHAMPS here: <http://fosteringchamps.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Champs-State-Policy-Update-May-2019-Final.pdf>