

State of New Mexico

CHILDREN, YOUTH and FAMILIES DEPARTMENT

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
GOVERNOR

HOWIE MORALES
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



BRIAN BLALOCK
CABINET SECRETARY

TERRY LOCKE
DEPUTY CABINET SECRETARY

CYFD Launches Fostering Connections, Extending Foster Care For Young Adults

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Charlie Moore-Pabst, Acting Public Information Officer
505-470-3248

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Children, Youth & Families Department on Wednesday launched the state's first Extended Foster Care program, Fostering Connections, which extends the age of support and services available to young adults involved with CYFD from the age of 18 to 21. Some of the extended supports available to young adults include guaranteed housing, guaranteed connection to community based behavioral health supports, job assistance, food access, and money for college.

Fostering Connections was first passed in the 2019 legislative Session with clean up legislation in the 2020 Session. It opts in to the increased supports and funding made possible by a 2008 federal law by the same name. These valuable services were made possible by the leadership of Governor Michelle Lujan-Grisham, the bi-partisan sponsorship of Senator Michael Padilla and Senator Candace Gould, and many, many young people who spoke in support of the legislation. Both bills passed unanimously in the New Mexico House and Senate.

"Becoming an adult is one of the most difficult things a young person can go through, and it's so much harder for young people who have been in foster care or in other out-of-home placements," said CYFD Cabinet Secretary Brian Blalock. "We know that these young people's peers are remaining home and receiving financial and other types of support from their parents well into their 20's. Children who have been in out-of-home placements deserve ongoing supports as they age into adulthood as well."

The first year of implementation of Fostering Connections will focus on youth who turn 18 in 2021, extend to 19 in 2022, and eventually cover young adults up to the age of 21 in 2023. The graduated introduction will allow for continuous quality improvement of the services provided and how those services are offered or administered.

"Some of our most vulnerable children in New Mexico are those that age out of foster care at age 18," said Senator Michael Padilla. "As a former foster child myself, I was proud to sponsor the legislation that provides extended foster care to the age of 21, which will provide critical support to these now young adults."

The law allows for voluntary participation, so no young adult is required to receive services. Eligible youth are also allowed to exit and re-enter receiving services anytime through their eligibility period.

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