



UNITED WAY OF NORTH CENTRAL NEW MEXICO

PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA RECOMMENDATIONS

LIVE UNITED



United Way of North
Central New Mexico

BACKGROUND

Why Public Policy?

As the largest non-governmental funder of health and human services in local communities throughout the United States, United Way stewards billions of dollars and millions of volunteer-hours each year. While our impact locally and collectively as a network is vast, United Way recognizes that government spending in our focus areas of health, education and financial stability far exceeds the capability of the nonprofit sector to raise funds.

United Way engages in public policy advocacy to leverage the knowledge and experience of our network to help inform policymakers' decisions regarding governance and funding of critical health and human services.

As a leader in the nonprofit community, United Way seeks to craft practical long-term solutions for people and communities. Through a nonpartisan, non-ideological approach to advocacy, we leverage our convening power to bring together untraditional allies – businesses, labor, nonprofits, government, and advocates – to fight for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in every community.



United Way of North Central New Mexico Public Policy Committee Timeline

Chaired by UWNCNM board member RJ Berry, the Public Policy Committee convened in June of 2021 and held regular monthly meetings thereafter. The primary purpose of the committee was to gain a deeper understanding of UWNCNM's work and to identify focus area(s) that United Way would center its advocacy efforts that would include engaging legislators at the local, state, and national level.

The Public Policy Committee established a timeline for key accomplishments, indicated below:

June – Complete the seating of the Public Policy Committee

July – Get grounded in UWNCNM's work (Mission: Families, Mission :Graduate, Tax Help New Mexico, 211, Family Advocacy Center)

August/October – Build UWNCNM's Public Policy Agenda

November – Create Draft of UWNCNM's Public Policy Agenda Recommendations

January – Present Recommendations to the UWNCNM Board for Approval



UWNCNM PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

1. RJ Berry – Chair
2. Leigh Caswell
3. Leean Kravitz
4. Meg Meister
5. Karen Moses
6. Dennis Plummer
7. Rodney Prunty
8. Vanessa Roanhorse
9. Lori Waldon



UNITED WAY OF NORTH CENTRAL NEW MEXICO COMMUNITY IMPACT FOCUS AREAS

Our cradle-to-career work is focused on Educational Attainment (Mission: Graduate) and Family Stability (Mission: Families). There are six Public Policy areas of focus that fall within this scope:

UWNCNM FOCUS AREAS	UNITED WAY WORLDWIDE PUBLIC POLICY ALIGNMENT
<p>Helping caregivers and service providers build skills through research-based professional development. Our Early Childhood Coordinator is promoting early brain development through the LENA Grow professional development program; offering early childcare providers access to professional development on Trauma Sensitive Practice; and supporting opportunities to share best practices, information, and networking opportunities for early childhood professionals.</p>	<p>Child Care and Early Childhood Education: Increasing federal investments in early childhood education to provide training, certification, and equitable compensation for early childhood education workers.</p>
<p>Engaging families to lead the effort in building resiliency. Tax Help NM is providing free tax prep for qualifying families to help ensure more families receive the Child Tax Credit and other funds they might not receive otherwise. Tax Help is also expanding to serve more New Mexicans with additional locations and services.</p>	<p>Income Supports: Expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Making the Child Tax Credit (CTC) fully available to the lowest income workers and families with children, and funding the Volunteer Tax Assistance (VITA) program at 30 million.</p>
<p>Providing better access to services and breaking down barriers. 211, our Information and Referral helpline has upgraded its system and our Community Resource Specialists are better able to help connect callers with the support they need.</p>	<p>Community Supports – 211: Investing 300 million per year in federal funds to fully operate 211 in every state at increased capacity, including data and technology infrastructure to create a national database of community needs, increasing investments in 211 disaster services, and promoting connectivity infrastructure with all telecommunication and voice over internet services for all consumers.</p>
<p>Increasing school attendance and engagement. We continue to support attendance and engagement through training and support for school-based Attendance Teams by hosting and facilitating conferences with experts and evidence-based strategies to keep students engaged during virtual and hybrid learning.</p>	<p>*No current specific UWW focus in this area.</p>
<p>Creating college and career exploration opportunities. The Valencia County Partnership for a Work Ready Community group has continued to meet and hold events for students, including a video contest that challenged students to learn about potential careers. Choose Your Own Future, a self-paced college and career readiness program for all ages, was developed and launched and is available at no-cost to any student, parent, or educator.</p>	<p>*No current specific UWW focus in this area.</p>
<p>Helping adults and young adults access and complete post-secondary education. An Education-Friendly Workplace toolkit has launched to engage employers as they learn how to support the educational attainment of adults and young adults in central New Mexico. Through community engagement and the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the “Finish Line Fund” was developed to address low-level institutional debt that results in bursar/cashier holds which was identified as a major barrier to student access and completion of post-secondary education.</p>	<p>*No current specific UWW focus in this area.</p>

PUBLIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion and Rationale for Focus

After extensive review and discussion about United Way of North Central New Mexico's six Public Policy areas, the committee determined that UWNCNM would be best suited to choose one or two Public Policy areas for focus in 2022. The rationale behind that decision was to start small, go deep with our focus, demonstrate success, and increase our attention to the remaining focus areas over the course of the next few years.

Ultimately, the committee identified one area of focus to shape UWNCNM's Public Policy Agenda and the three UWNCNM areas that align with UWW's policy agenda to serve as secondary areas of focus as a measure to support UWW's National/Federal efforts as needed (e.g., UWW Hill Days, Letter sign on, etc.). These efforts will be limited and episodic in scope.



UWNCNM Recommended Public Policy Agenda

Primary Area of Focus

1. Creating College and Career Exploration Opportunities.

UWNCNM's Work & Alignment:

- Valencia County Partnership for a Work Ready Community
- "Choose Your own Future"

Rationale: **25%** of New Mexicans have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to the national average of 29% and the leading state (Massachusetts) at 45%. As for careers, the percentages of New Mexicans 16 and over in the labor force is 57%, less than the national average of 62%. Similarly, NM has the second highest unemployment rate (**7.9%**) in the country, just behind Nevada (8.0%).

While this data highlights the need for higher levels of educational attainment - it also underscores the demand for expansive educational pathways in addition to traditional secondary education certificates (e.g., trades, coding, renewables, etc.).

Secondary (*UWW Aligned)

2. Helping caregivers and service providers build skills through research-based professional development. (LENA Grow Professional Development Program)
3. Engaging families to lead the effort in building resiliency. (Tax Help New Mexico)
4. Providing better access to services and breaking down barriers. (211)

Next Steps and Considerations

The committee will focus most of its efforts during the first quarter of 2022 reaching out to representatives from various educational serving/supporting institutions to learn more about their respective Public Policy efforts in order to define how UWNCNM can be most effective to drive our agenda (e.g., forming or joining coalitions to advance legislation during the 2023 NM Legislative session). A definitive action plan will be developed through this process. The public policy plan is projected to be presented to the UWNCNM board for approval in September of 2022.

UWNCNM will need to consider how its Public Policy efforts will be supported in the future. The committee should be able to execute certain Public Policy functions in the near term but will need additional support over time. This is of particular importance, due to the expansion into Santa Fe County.



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