



New Mexico Children,  
Youth & Families Department

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **CYFD to Increase Child Care Assistance Minimum Qualifications**

SANTA FE -- The New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department on Wednesday announced it will enact new regulations to increase the Child Care Assistance Program's minimum qualifications for families to enter the program from 150 percent of the federal poverty level to 200 percent.

"Universal child care assistance in New Mexico is my unconditional goal," Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said. "So we will concern ourselves with coverage and access first and foremost. To settle for anything less would be a disservice to the families and children of this state. Our Children, Youth and Families Department has been working and will continue to work diligently to enroll every eligible family and child in this state and expand access to this and other essential programs."

"Providing high-quality child care is a cornerstone priority of CYFD and this state," said CYFD Secretary Brian Blalock. "To that end, we are going to push as far as we can go. We know that statistically, each family with access to high-quality child care is more likely to come out of poverty over time. Those parents and caretakers are also more able to work and attend school. Indeed, the Child Care Assistance Program is one of the most important in the CYFD system, and this increase reflects our practical commitment to our highest ideals."

The agency's Early Childhood Services Division is working with social services offices and launched an at-risk program for families who wouldn't otherwise qualify for child care assistance. A needs assessment is also underway to identify and eliminate any other gaps that families may face. CYFD is also working with community organizations, legislators, providers, early childhood educators and more to increase participation in the child care assistance program.

A hearing scheduled Monday in Santa Fe to solicit public comment on an earlier proposed increase to the program's minimum qualifications has been postponed. Notice of a subsequent rulemaking hearing will be issued at a later date.

“We will continue to work with advocates and the community on measures to improve our child care program,” Secretary Blalock said.

This increase follows a lawsuit filed last year against the Martinez administration, which stated the department improperly adjusted qualification levels for eligible families. As part of the settlement to that lawsuit, CYFD temporarily increased access to families that make up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. The department is now committing to maintaining that level.

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