Believing in New Mexico

Reflect with us on the transformative changes we've advanced together over the past year...

We believe in New Mexico and know you do too!

With gratitude,
The Team at the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty

2022-2023 Impact Report

WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES FOR RIGHTS, DIGNITY, AND JUSTICE!
Increasing Income Support for Families

TANF is an essential cash assistance program to help with times of financial hardship, but New Mexico has one of the most punitive and inaccessible programs in the country. In collaboration with Crossroads for Women and NM CAN, we connected moms with state officials to share their stories and advocate for better support for families. As a result, TANF benefits were raised by 15%—for the first time in decades.

"Those of us that are getting help and financial stability, we just want the best for our kids. I want to be a PTA mom for my kids when they go to school. I want to be involved. I want to do all of those things that I never had support with."

-Alyssa Davis, Parent Advocate

Protecting Access to Food and Healthcare Assistance

Families have been experiencing untenable delays in Medicaid and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) application processing. As a result of NM CLP’s advocacy, the NM Human Services Department agreed to restore full-day operating hours at local benefits offices statewide, increasing access to in-person technical assistance for all New Mexicans seeking support in applying for or renewing benefits. Helping the state identify and implement strategies that allow New Mexicans to quickly apply for or renew their benefits is more critical than ever now that the federal public health emergency has ended. We are committed to ensuring that all New Mexico residents can access these essential resources without delay.
Leading Education Reforms with Community Vision

Five years after the landmark Yazzie/Martinez ruling, we hosted more than a dozen community meetings to discuss the state of the case and identify actionable strategies to continue to transform public education. These informational sessions, hosted in partnership with the University of New Mexico’s Institute for American Indian Education, engaged parents, educators, students, and other stakeholders. This work is more important than ever as we ensure that the state develops a measurable plan to build an equitable public education system that reflects community and tribal priorities.

Increasing Student Access to Health and Social Services

We supported a successful campaign to obtain additional funding and resources for school-based health centers, which provide access to primary care and behavioral health services to children who need it.

Winning Critical New Investments in Tribally-Driven Solutions

NMCLP partnered with the Tribal Education Alliance to successfully pass legislation ensuring that Tribes can operate self-determined early childhood education programs. Additional legislation won funding for Technical Assistance Centers, designed to develop Native language curricula and culturally responsive learning materials and training for teachers and administrators. These Centers will complement and advance other efforts to strengthen partnerships between tribes and schools and implement the Tribal Remedy Framework, which was developed by tribal leaders and representatives.

>80% of New Mexico’s students are considered "at-risk"
Advancing healthcare for all New Mexicans

NMCLP and NM Together for Healthcare are successfully advancing a campaign for the state to design and study “Medicaid Forward.” This innovative program would make Medicaid available to all residents through an affordable, income-based healthcare plan. Many individuals and families in New Mexico still struggle to find quality, affordable healthcare coverage. Current data shows that Medicaid Forward is a promising and cost-effective way to save costs and improve coverage for employers and families. After further study, the state will present a plan for implementation by the Fall of 2024.

Learn more about Medicaid Forward here.

1 in 10 New Mexicans still do not have health insurance because of exorbitant costs. Far too many of our neighbors are sitting at their kitchen tables making hard choices between feeding their families, paying rent or filling an essential prescription. This does not have to be our reality.

-Dr. Wendy Johnson, La Familia Health

Protecting the Rights of Patients from Unfair Hospital Billing and Medical Debt

NMCLP defended patients against illegal collections brought against them by MountainView Regional Medical Center, a major healthcare provider in Las Cruces, in violation of the Patients’ Debt Collection Protection Act. As a result of NMCLP’s litigation, MountainView has agreed to stop filing new medical debt lawsuits or pursuing collections against low-income patients.
Enforcing Laws Against Wage Theft

Workers experiencing wage theft should be able to enforce their rights. However, the Department of Workforce Solutions was closing many wage theft cases without conducting investigations, leaving workers with few options. Through a lawsuit representing workers and workers’ rights organizations, NMCLP convinced the state to correct problems in its processing of wage claims and better train its staff to ensure workers receive the income they have earned.

Increasing Wages for Agricultural Workers

When concerns were raised that the Chile Labor Incentive Program (CLIP) was only being used to support employers, and not to increase worker wages as intended, NMCLP investigated the issue and partnered with fellow members of the New Mexico Coalition of Agricultural Workers and Advocates in an advocacy campaign to address it. Our collective efforts convinced the New Mexico Department of Agriculture to require that employers pay the state minimum wage before receiving CLIP funds. Because of these updates, agricultural workers made as much as $19.50 per hour during the program’s operation.

Addressing Barriers to Unemployment Insurance

Systemic problems within New Mexico’s Unemployment Insurance (UI) program have prevented many workers from accessing critical financial benefits. NMCLP attorneys helped several individual workers resolve problems with the state’s processing of their UI claims. We also filed a lawsuit to address the improper handling of over 70,000 workers’ UI cases during the pandemic.
ECONOMIC EQUITY

>17% OF NEW MEXICO'S HOUSING IS MADE UP OF MOBILE HOMES

Stopping Exploitation of Mobile Home Residents

NMCLP is pursuing class action lawsuits to stop illegal evictions by mobile home park management companies. Mobile homes are one of the largest sources of affordable housing for New Mexicans, but tenants are vulnerable to being illegally evicted from parks and losing their homes as a result. NMCLP is advocating for mobile home residents' rights and successfully mediating disagreements with park landlords.

Ending Debt-Based Driver's License Suspensions

NMCLP worked with NM Voices for Children and the Fines and Fees Justice Center to end driver's license suspensions for missed court hearings and overdue fines and fees payments in traffic and criminal cases. Prior to the bill's passing, over 300,000 New Mexicans were unable to legally drive due to being trapped in a cycle of debt.

"Investors buy these [mobile home] parks solely to turn a profit. They increase rents, sometimes more than double, and then acquire the abandoned homes of people who could not afford to stay. As a result, people lose their homes-their most significant investment-and their communities/support systems."

- Los Alamos Daily Post

Updating New Mexico's Bankruptcy and Wage Garnishment Laws

NMCLP contributed expert analysis and advocacy to a successful campaign to modernize New Mexico's bankruptcy laws. This resulted in new legislation to increase the value of property protected from collections and require future adjustments for inflation, allowing more families to retain wages and assets to meet basic needs and recover from bankruptcy.
Raising Awareness with Know-your-Rights Information

NMCLP presented know-your-rights information at more than 100 community workshops and events, providing thousands of New Mexicans with information on a variety of topics, including public benefits programs, education, lending and debt collections issues, paid sick leave, and patients' rights. In addition to direct education to the community, NMCLP provides critical, timely information to over 5,000 website visitors each month, and over 10,000 social media followers and email subscribers.

>4,000 PEOPLE ACCESSED TRAINING & RESOURCES

Sharing Critical Resources with New Mexicans

NMCLP developed and distributed important new resource guides on pressing issues impacting our communities. These include a widely-accessed Financial Resource Guide that describes programs to help families access groceries, medical care, and child care assistance. We also worked with community partners to create an Affordable Accounts & Loans Guide that provides low-risk lending options as an alternative to high interest loans.

Expanding Access to Legal Representation

The civil legal services (CLS) system provides legal advice and representation for New Mexicans in low-income communities. However, this system is under-resourced in our state, with almost half of those who seek legal help turned away. NMCLP worked closely with New Mexico's network of CLS providers to raise awareness about the need to expand funding for these programs. This collective advocacy had a major impact—resulting in a 25% increase in funding by the legislature.
Support bold change for New Mexico’s families! Your gift to the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty funds our education, advocacy, and litigation.

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Thank you to our allies at Charles Stephen

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