



# Press Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **New Mexico makes major investment in a redesigned child care quality improvement and rating system**

### ***ECECD seeks input from families and key stakeholders on FOCUS redesign***

SANTA FE – Today, the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) opened a new survey to gather input from New Mexico families, child care centers, family child care homes, and child care teachers regarding a planned multi-year effort to update and redesign FOCUS, the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The redesign is part of an \$18 million investment that Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham secured during the 2024 legislative session to improve the quality of early education and care in New Mexico.

"The research is clear: investments in quality early learning environments will improve our state's educational and health outcomes," said **ECECD Cabinet Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky**. "That's why Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has made universal access to high-quality early care and education a top priority. We're calling on families, educators, and providers to help ECECD build a strong quality rating and improvement system that reflects their values. By making their voices heard through the FOCUS redesign survey, they will help inform ECECD's redesigned child care quality rating and improvement system."

A QRIS is a system for improving and communicating the level of quality in early childhood education and care settings. New Mexico's current QRIS, FOCUS, assigns quality ratings to child care providers based on a number of factors, including:

- Teacher/child ratios
- Professional qualifications and training of staff
- Family Engagement
- Inclusive Practices for Children with Developmental Delays or Disabilities

- Culture and Language Including the Support of Dual Language Learners
- Promoting Social Relationships
- Attention to Children's Health and Wellness (Including Early Intervention support)
- Developmental Screening
- Child Observation and Documentation for Assessment, Curriculum and Planning the Classroom Environment
- Continuous Quality Improvement

A QRIS helps strengthen early education and care programs, provides a roadmap for quality improvement, and helps families identify which programs will best meet their needs. Most states revise their QRIS every three to five years. **The last revision for New Mexico was in May 2015.**

In fall 2023, ECECD conducted community focus groups to gather input on the FOCUS redesign and is now soliciting additional input using a survey format. The survey will gather input from across the state on the proposed framework for the **redesign of FOCUS**. ECECD is also engaging with national experts to understand best practices across the country and lessons learned from other states.

"Tapping the knowledge and experience of the early childhood education and care community is crucial to this redesign process," said **Angela Garcia**, owner of the Toy Box Early Learning Centers and President of Full Circle Advocacy Group. "The amazing individuals doing this work can help us create a high-quality early childhood education system that is centered around the unique needs of each community and family."

To learn more about the ongoing efforts to redesign New Mexico's QRIS, visit ECECD's [FOCUS redesign website](#).

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