



**RPNM: NEW MEXICO'S CHILD WELFARE DEPARTMENT
BLATANTLY VIOLATING THE LAW AND MUST BE HELD
ACCOUNTABLE**

*DEPARTMENT'S PRACTICE OF ENCRYPTING AND DELETING
PUBLIC INFORMATION ILLEGAL AND HURTING KIDS*

Albuquerque, April 29—The Republican Party of New Mexico is outraged to learn that the embattled Children, Youth & Families Department (CYFD) has been routinely encrypting and deleting important communications.

An investigative report revealed that top officials at CYFD had ordered employees to use a secure communications app that can automatically delete texts and chats. This is illegal and shows a total disregard for government transparency.

This is particularly horrifying at a Department that's been under the microscope for years for its questionable and dangerous practices, policies and decisions that have led to injured and abused children. This Department has been investigated and sued over the years, but legislative efforts to fix this broken CYFD system have seen a blind eye. Democrat-led lawmakers this past session refused to consider legislation to create an independent panel to oversee CYFD practices.

CYFD is its own watchdog, and to learn that leadership is deleting information is not only immoral but also illegal. This practice makes it impossible for reporters, attorneys and others to access vital--possibly life-saving—information about child abuse, foster family activity etc. through open records requests.

“What CYFD is doing is a clear violation of the law,” said Republican Party of New Mexico Chairman Steve Pearce. “These deleted communications are interfering with investigations, deprives New Mexicans from finding out about potential foster care dangers, but most importantly, this secret practice is hurting our children. There are so many instances of child abuse and injury stemming from CYFD actions or lack of action: **Victoria Martens, four Romanian children** and other cases. Hiding critical information like this is unethical and criminal.”

CYFD Secretary Brian Blalock has admitted that his Department used the communications app and deleted data.

Destroying such public records is a fourth degree felony.

“It’s unthinkable what’s happening here. The state is not only disposing critical information but scrapping public trust as well,” said Pearce.

RPNM supports a call this week by New Mexico House Republicans to investigate CYFD. New Mexico’s Attorney General says he is “highly concerned” by what’s happened and says he is looking into the matter.