

# LISTENING TO THE CAREGIVERS:

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCES OF GRANDPARENTS WHO RAISE GRANDCHILDREN IN NEW MEXICO

Grandparents raising grandchildren is a common form of caregiving, yet this group is often overlooked and unexamined in our society. Grandparents raising grandchildren describe several benefits, including sense of purpose and an opportunity to contribute to familial wellbeing. Similarly, grandchildren raised by their grandparents experience significant gains, including connection with extended family, and access to heritage, languages and culture.

Despite these important benefits, however, there are numerous challenges faced by grandparents raising grandchildren. These challenges have only been heightened since the COVID-19 pandemic hit New Mexico in March 2020. In some cases, grandparents are exclusively raising their grandchildren with minimal to no assistance from the children's parents. In other cases, grandparents are contributing to the care of their grandchildren, but parents remain heavily involved.

Partnership for Community Action (PCA)—a community-based organization dedicated to building strong, healthy communities throughout New Mexico by investing in people and families—conducted in-depth interviews with grandparents raising their grandchildren. The research focused on generating participatory recommendations to improve the experience of grandparents raising grandchildren, and many of the responses shared illuminated the presence of systemic barriers.

### COMMON CHALLENGES:

- Economic
- Technological
- Lack of emotional support
- Custody

*“The biggest challenge is now with online classes; he wants to play instead of being on the computer and I don't know computers. I'm barely learning. I'm dealing with a new generation and a different world.”*



In New Mexico, from 2011 to 2015, 10.9% of children were identified as being raised by a grandparent.<sup>1</sup>

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*“For me, it's a blessing to take care of my granddaughters”*

### COMMUNITY INFORMED RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Save a Place at the Table

Provide meaningful opportunities for grandparent caregivers to be involved in decision-making related to services and programs that meet their unique needs.

#### Draft a Legal Roadmap

Identify custody solutions that support both caregiver and child.

#### Help Make Ends Meet

Provide supplemental income for grandparents providing care for grandchildren based on number of children and amount of time dedicated to care.

#### Widen Awareness and Access

Engage trusted messengers to promote the resources currently available to this unique community.

#### Care for the Whole Caregiver

Make additional mental health, wellness, and parenting resources widely available for grandparents providing care for grandchildren, including community-based, culturally responsive engagement following popular education pedagogy.

<sup>1</sup> Hays Egan, Anne. Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in New Mexico: Understanding the Trend and Stemming the Tide." June 29, 2017. Retrieved from GRG-in-NM.pdf (conalma.org) on November 24, 2020.