

Public Square
by New Mexico PBS

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Thursday, October 29, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. on Ch. 5.1
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Around the country and in New Mexico there is a growing trend of grandparents becoming primary caregivers for their grandchildren. This happens when a parent becomes ill or dies. Sometimes parents are incarcerated. And it often happens when parents fall into addiction or struggle with mental health issues.

Grandparents can provide a stable home for children coming from these chaotic situations. But many are over the age of 60 and they're often unprepared for the challenges of being parents again, especially when their grandchildren may be dealing with trauma. They face financial burdens and legal difficulties. And they often neglect their own health needs to focus on their grandchildren.

What can New Mexico do to support these grandparents and ensure these children thrive?

In this episode, hear from grandparents, a young woman who was raised by her grandparents, and advocates who support these families. PUBLIC SQUARE also talks with Elizabeth McGrath of Pegasus Legal Services For Children, State Sen. Michael Padilla and Former State Sen. Mark Boitano.

Funding for the production of this Public Square program is provided by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation working to improve the lives of vulnerable children. This program is the result of a partnership with Mission: Graduate and funded locally by the United Way of Central New Mexico. And, this program is part of American Graduate, let's make it happen, a public media initiative made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Quotes From PUBLIC SQUARE Participants:

“When you become a grandparent raising a grandchild, you feel embarrassed, because you feel that you failed as a parent, because your child cannot be a parent to their child.”

– Connie Compton, Grandmother raising grandchildren

“You already raised yours and it already came out of your pocket, but it's coming out again because you're parenting for the second time.”

– Irene, Grandmother and widow raising grandson

“They feel isolated and they don't have the support they need from their community”

– Alicia Carter, MCH Family Outreach

“I think it's great for kids to be with their grandparents rather than foster care, but we need to do it in a smart way, so that the grandparents are supported, and the children get the supports they need.”

– Elizabeth McGrath, Pegasus Legal Services for Children

Learn more on the [Resources](#) page.

Community Panel:

Connie Compton

Grandparent Volunteer, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Community Alliance
www.sharenm.org/communityplatform/newmexico/directory/profile/id/2962553

Alicia Carter

Director of Methodist Children's Home, Family Outreach
<https://www.mch.org>

Irene

Grandparent & facilitator for South Valley grandparents group
www.ShareNM.org

Delfinia Romero

Family Education Services
Las Cumbres Community Services is – Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, Espanola, NM
<http://grglccs.com>

Delfinia Romero has a Masters degree in Education, Youth At Risk with an emphasis in early childhood from the College of Santa Fe. Her Bachelor's degree is in Human Development with a specialization in early childhood from Pacific Oaks in California. Delfinia is a licensed early childhood teacher through the State of New Mexico. She has worked at Las Cumbres Community Services for the past eighteen years. For the past five years Delfinia has worked as an instructor at Northern New Mexico College in the Early Childhood department. She will provide mentorship supports through the Las Cumbres Early Childhood Mental Health Training Institute.

Patty Shure

Las Cumbres Community Services, Director of Child & Family Services/Co-facilitator of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group
<http://grglccs.com>

Betsey

Grandmother Betsey
Volunteer Facilitator for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
State Teacher Trainer for National Alliance for Mentally Ill
Retired Teacher – Career Enrichment Center – Nursing Program
<http://www.sharenm.org/communityplatform/newmexico/directory/profile/id/2962553>

Sam Martinez

Grandfather

Madison Thomas

Granddaughter Raised by Grandparents

Leadership Panel:

Mark Boitano

State Senator, Retired; Co-Chair of Governor's Summit on Marriage, Parenting, and Family Strengthening

Mark Boitano resident, Boitano & Associates a real estate firm. He served as a State Senator in the N.M. Legislature from 1997-2012, when he decided not to seek re-election.

Liz McGrath

Executive Director of Pegasus Legal Services for Children
www.pegasuslaw.org

Liz McGrath graduated from Hampshire College, and UNM School of Law. Ms. McGrath has spent her career working on behalf of individual children and youth, and advocating for legislative and policy changes that benefit children, youth and their care givers. In 2003, Ms. McGrath founded Pegasus Legal Services for Children with co-director Tara Ford. Ms. McGrath has helped to develop Pegasus' programs to serve grandparents raising grandchildren, young parents, and homeless and runaway youth. Ms. McGrath was also instrumental in the conception,

drafting, and passage of the 2001 Kinship Guardianship Act. She has taught at UNM School of Law as an adjunct professor.

Senator Michael Padilla

Majority Whip

[@SenPadilla](#)

<http://votepadilla.com>

Michael Padilla^[2] (born June 13, 1972 in Albuquerque, New Mexico) is an American politician and a Democratic member of the New Mexico Senate representing District 14 since January 15, 2013.

Padilla grew up in Los Padillas, a rural farming community, that his family helped settle over 150 years ago, and is located inside of the district he represents. He served on numerous boards and commissions prior to becoming a senator, including Youth Development Incorporated, Special Olympics New Mexico, Junior Achievement of New Mexico, Association of Commerce and Industry of New Mexico, New Mexico Workforce Development, and several others.

Padilla founded Altivus CRM Solutions, a contact center and consulting firm, in 2000, and grew the company organically. The company specializes in building call centers and providing a number of operational consulting services affecting people, process, and technology. Padilla still serves as Chairman and CEO of the company.

Padilla's primary focuses as a legislator are early childhood education and intervention, jobs and economic growth, water management and conservation, and child safety and protective services.