

November 4, 2021

# To Know Me is to Love Me

Anna Marie Garcia, M.Ed. – LANL Foundation



LANL  
FOUNDATION

*Investing in Learning & Human Potential*



## Grandparents/Kin Raising Children

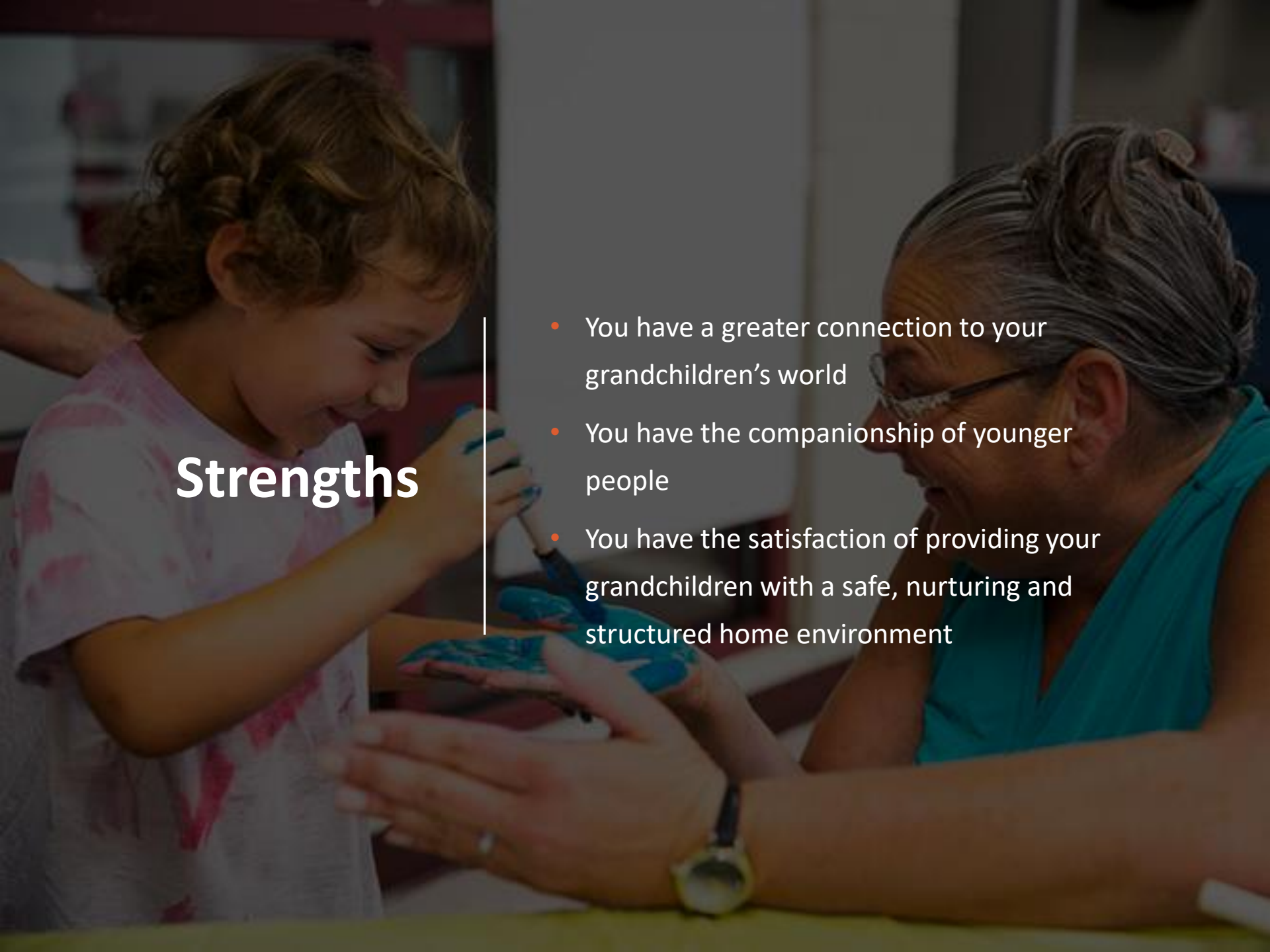
- When a grandfamily forms, every member must adapt to the new dynamic.
- As a caregiver of grandchildren, you may have stepped into this role unexpectedly, instantly becoming responsible for children and putting their needs before your own.
- While this is done out of love or concern for the child/ren, it often comes at the expense of the caregivers' health and wellness.
- Neglecting your own needs can impact your ability to care for and nurture the children in your care.



# Strengths and Challenges

---

*“No matter how much you love your grandchildren, caring for them comes with challenges as well as rewards” – Unknown Author*



# Strengths

- You have a greater connection to your grandchildren's world
- You have the companionship of younger people
- You have the satisfaction of providing your grandchildren with a safe, nurturing and structured home environment

# Challenges

---

Legal

Financial

Physical and mental  
health

Social

Accessing services

Parenting role,  
foregoes traditional  
grandparent  
relationship

Leisure time is often  
given up

Options of traveling  
become more limited

Coping with your own  
grief (your child's  
situation) as well as  
your grandchildren's

You may feel stress,  
worry, anger,  
resentment, guilt and  
grief



# How do Children Learn?



*Curious*

*Hands On*

*Language Learners*

*Active*

*Eager to Please*

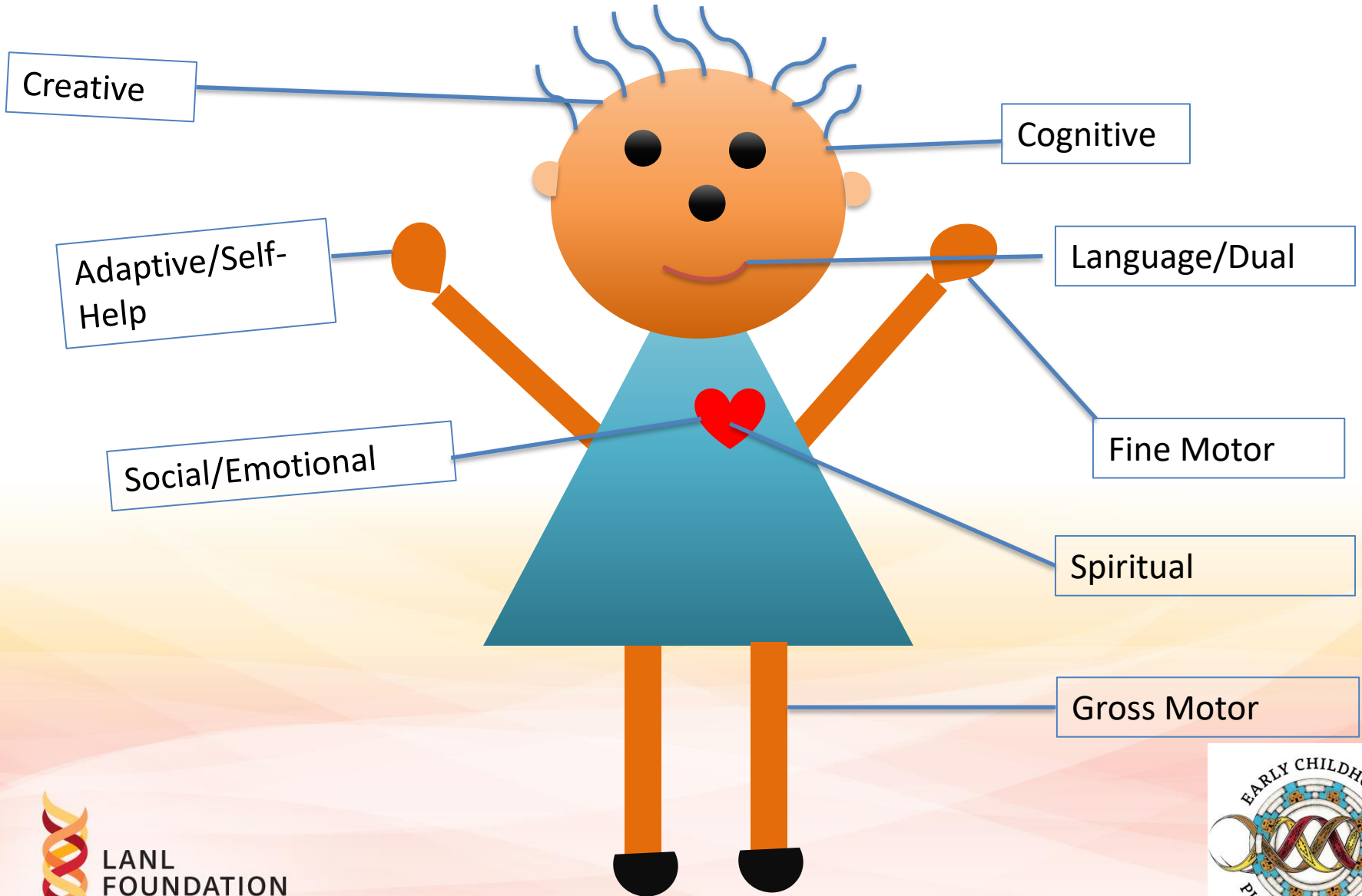
*Independent*



LANL  
FOUNDATION

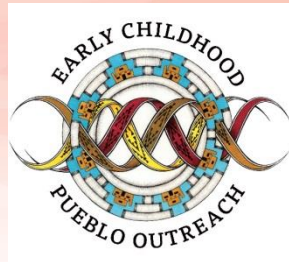
*Investing in Learning & Human Potential*

# Understanding All of Me



LANL  
FOUNDATION

*Investing in Learning & Human Potential*





# Importance of Social Emotional Learning

---

*“Laughter is good medicine. Find people to laugh with daily”  
– Unknown Author*





# Social-Emotional Learning

---

- Research shows that the early years set the stage for all future development
- Social and emotional well-being leads to school readiness.
- Social –Emotional well-being is promoted by positive early environments and nurturing relationships.
- Parents and other caregivers can positively or negatively affect brain development.

# Social-Emotional Development

- Family culture impacts early childhood development and parenting practices.
- Young children have a more secure attachment when they receive responsive & consistent care.
- The caregiver's emotional well-being impacts early childhood development.
- Caring, nurturing relationships support healthy social development.



LANL  
FOUNDATION

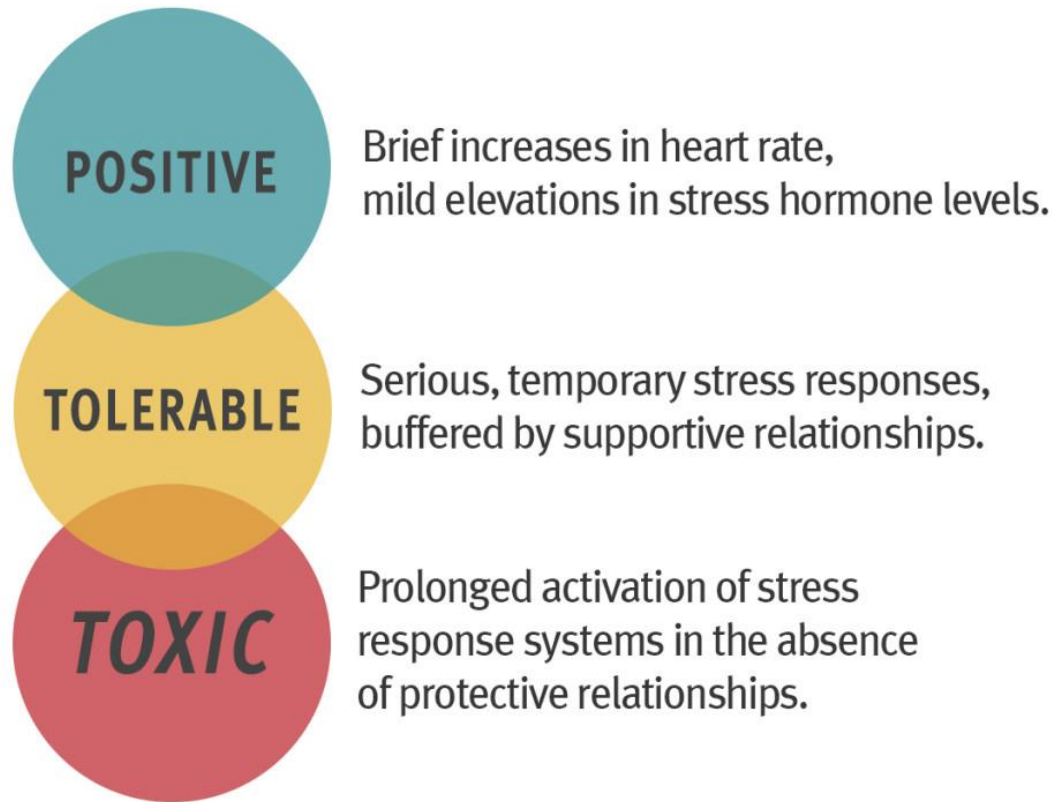
*Investing in Learning & Human Potential*



# Role of Stress

---

# Not all Stress is Created Equal



LANL  
FOUNDATION

*Investing in Learning & Human Potential*

# Toxic Stress

**Toxic stress** response can occur when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—without adequate adult support.



LANL  
FOUNDATION

*Investing in Learning & Human Potential*

# Toxic Stress

The younger the brain, the more damaging the effects of **toxic stress**. A prenatal and early childhood brain is growing, developing and absorbing so much of what it is exposed to in the environment. This makes it incredibly vulnerable to chemical influences, such as **stress** hormones, which can **cause** long-term changes.



# Toxic Stress





# Taking Care of Yourself



*"The care you give to yourself, is the care you give to your loved ones." - Unknown Author*

# Self Care Strategy



*To be able to care for those you love, you must first take care of yourself. By doing so you support the children in your care and by paying attention to your own physical and emotional health, you are better able to handle the challenges of your caregiving responsibilities.*

# Understand how stress affects your body, physically and mentally

1. Headaches

2. Low energy

3. Upset stomach (diarrhea, constipation, nausea)

4. Aches, pains and tense muscles

5. Insomnia

# Self Care Strategy

---



- Acknowledge your feelings and identify how stress feels to you
- Identify what events or situations cause you to feel stressed
- Lean on your grandchildren for help
- Educate yourself
- Connect with community resources
- Identify your support system

# Protecting Your Physical Health

---

Improving your physical well-being is one of the most important ways you can support your mental health.

- Exercise daily
- Eat well
- Get enough sleep
- Avoid “self medicating” with alcohol and drugs (they add to stress)
- Practice relaxation exercises
  - Deep breathing
  - Meditation/prayer
  - Progressive muscle relaxation





# Recharge Yourself

When you are a caregiver, it can be incredibly hard to find time for yourself, and even when you do, you may feel distracted by thinking about what you “SHOULD” be doing instead.

- Learn to make time for yourself
- Refrain from worrying about “neglecting” others
- Any amount of (CONSISTENT) time is important and a meaningful reminder of who you are
- Don’t become consumed by your responsibilities.
- Find what you enjoy (friends, lunch, walks, crafts, reading, cooking, etc.)
- Try and avoid feeling guilt – it is unproductive
- Notice the positive moments in your day, and try and try and be grateful (try journaling or writing one thing a day that was good)
- Gather strength from others
  - Support groups, friends, family, professionals
  - ASK for help (paperwork, housework, etc
  - Connect with others at multiple levels
- Learn to say NO to things that are draining you

**Being a caregiver is not who you are, it is PART of what you do – BALANCE**



# Now What?

---

Explore your legal rights as a grandparent

Realize your grandchildren will have mixed feelings, as well

- Trauma, abuse/neglect, resentment at being separated from their parents

Focus on creating a stable, nurturing environment

Establish routines and schedules (this helps children feel safe)

Create special rituals

Encourage their input and give them choices and sense of control over their lives

Set consistent boundaries

Be consistent in offering your time and attention (consistent presence)

Encourage open and honest communication

Listen to your Grandchildren and their feelings (good and bad)

Assist them in identifying their emotions

It is ok to say I don't know

Avoid telling too much or too little

Encourage contact with parents (when possible)

# Breakout Rooms

---

Ask yourselves and share with group:



HOW DO I ASK FOR HELP ?



HOW DO I PRACTICE SELF  
CARE ?

# Northern New Mexico Grandparents/Kin Raising Children Community Resources

## Las Cumbres Community Services

404 Hunter Street, Española, NM 87532

(505) 753-4123 | Rio Arriba County - Jeanette Ortiz: [Jeanette.Ortiz@lccs-nm.org](mailto:Jeanette.Ortiz@lccs-nm.org)

Services: Support Group, Case Management, Family Navigation

## Barrios Unidos

7 John Hyson Drive, Chimayo, NM 87522

[\(505\) 351-1644](tel:5053511644) | Lupe Salazar: [lupe.salazar67@gmail.com](mailto:lupe.salazar67@gmail.com)

Services: Support Group, Workshops, Activities

## Family Strengths Network

3540 Orange St., Los Alamos, NM 87544

(505) 662-4515 | Lori Padilla: [pmlori62@gmail.com](mailto:pmlori62@gmail.com)

Services: Support Group

## New Mexico Legal Aid

505 Marquette Ave NW, Albuquerque, NM 87102

(505) 357-0939

Services: Free Legal Services and Screenings

## Big Brothers Big Sisters

1229 S St Francis Dr # C, Santa Fe, NM 87505

[505-699-6267](tel:5056996267) | David Sherman: [david.sherman@bbbsmountainregion.org](mailto:david.sherman@bbbsmountainregion.org)

Services: Mentorship Programs for Children

# **Northern New Mexico Grandparents/Kin Raising Children Community Resources**

## **Mesa to Mesa**

735 Vietnam Veteran's Road Española, NM, Beatrice Martinez Senior Center

[\(505\) 927-2105](tel:5059272105) | Inez Liebman: [inez@mesatomesa.org](mailto:inez@mesatomesa.org)

Services: Housing Repairs

## **Fostering Family**

404 Hunter Street, Española, NM 87532

(505) 753-4123 | Derek Rugsaken: [drugsaken@swfamily.com](mailto:drugsaken@swfamily.com)

Services: Statewide Caregiver Support Group, Case Management, Family Resource Navigation

## **Bridges to Opportunity Program - Growing Up NM**

(505) 819-5484 | Monica Archuleta, [monicaa@growingupnm.org](mailto:monicaa@growingupnm.org)

Services: Short-term Navigation, long-term coaching to families with children, prenatal to five

## **CARA (Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act) Program - CYFD**

Dr. Trisstin Maroney, [trisstin.maroney@state.nm.us](mailto:trisstin.maroney@state.nm.us)

Services: Resource navigation for substance-exposed newborns in New Mexico

## **Children's Medical Services**

2040 S. Pacheco, Santa Fe, NM 87505

505-476-8860 | Susan Merrill, [susan.merrill@state.nm.us](mailto:susan.merrill@state.nm.us)

Service: Care coordination for children with special health care needs

# Questions/Ideas

***Anna Marie Garcia, M.Ed.***

Vice President of Early Childhood Education  
LANL Foundation

[annamg@lanlfoundation.org](mailto:annamg@lanlfoundation.org)