

**1. Your name and district number:**

Andrew J Barreras, House District 7

**2. The overall goals of welfare reform are to move people from welfare to work, reduce the incidence of teen pregnancy and encourage healthy marriages and family formation. TANF allows funds to be spent for marriage and couple relationship education, responsible fatherhood programs, financial education, and parenting programs. What benefits do you see for allocating 1-2% of the TANF budget in New Mexico for services to strengthen families?**

There are great benefits from allocating funds to TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) in my opinion.

We must invest in families. We must care for our families. I believe that the family unit sets up how we interact with others for the rest of our lives. A strong family unit-even in the midst of a crisis-can be a source of comfort and strength and can influence how we will behave in all of our future relationships and friendships whether personal or professional.

**3. Research has consistently shown that the social, educational, health and economic outcomes of children in healthy, two-parent families are better than those living in single-parent households. New Mexico has among the highest rates in the nation for teen pregnancies, school drop-outs, juvenile crimes and women and children living in poverty. New Mexico spends \$225 million every year dealing with the outcomes of families in crisis. If you are elected, what would you do to strengthen families?**

Education is the answer in my view. We can no longer afford to assume that the school, the church, or perhaps even the parents can carry the responsibility for educating our youth on the pitfalls of risky behavior. We must ALL work together!

We need to continue to invest in education and stop debating whether we should address this or that...our children are suffering and the statistics

only climb when we do not talk to them. We cannot demand or threaten our way to our kids compliance with certain "acceptable" norms. We must speak to them with clear and loving communication and help arm them with a realistic approach and solutions so they can be equipped with information before they make a bad choice.

I would allocate funds for further studies on how to keep families together- assistance, intervention, (whether substance abuse, parenting skills, domestic violence etc.)-how to help New Mexico families help their children and teens-we need to be supportive not critical.

We must explore every avenue to build families and children up in order to curb behavior that will affect that child's ability to succeed, thrive, be productive and give back to our society.

**4. The percentage of children in poverty in New Mexico is 26% higher than the national average. There are many factors contributing to this phenomenon including the fact that 45% of infants in New Mexico are born to teen parents. If you are elected, how would you reduce the number of teen pregnancies in New Mexico?**

Many of the same thoughts in question 3 apply here. We as a society-a culture-a church and a family must be less judging and more understanding. I cannot emphasize enough the need for thorough, open and honest education-through communication.

Kids always respond to education when delivered in a thoughtful, respectful and open way to our kids-because only then will they know that we have their best interest at heart.

Study after study and statistic after statistic support communication and education as the way to curb teen pregnancy. Our kids need our care and support as much-if not more-when they are teens as when they were young children. Again, we must invest in education and programs that have worked and are working in other states across the nation.

**5. Studies show that couple relationship education (e.g., conflict resolution, communication skills, understanding of gender differences, etc.) results in happier and healthier marriages. What programs and services are available to couples and families in your district?**

(No response)

**6. How can the NM Coalition for Healthy Families help you strengthen families in New Mexico?**

I would like for your program to help us (as Legislators) to fully understand the impact of teen pregnancy and New Mexico's growing number of poverty single parent children. We need to know from you-the experts-how to invest wisely to strengthen our families, reduce the number of teen pregnancies and the programs that will help to facilitate these goals.

**7. Do you have any additional ideas or comments regarding New Mexico's families?**

I would just like to emphasize how strongly I believe in the family unit and in education and communication. I am more than willing to help any and all agencies on the "front-line" in aiding families in crisis and those most vulnerable in New Mexico. I would like to be a champion of the family unit.