

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

Eloise Gift, NM House District 68

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**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?**

The building of strong families; timely, proactive counseling for families; provision of reliable, support systems for families at risk; an increase in stable family relationships leading to the pursuit of intentionally productive lives.

**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?**

Improve public education to increase graduation rates and prepare students to pursue productive lives; support sex education at the middle school level; allow birth control counseling at an appropriate age. Seek the highest involvement of parents in the education of their children.

**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?**

Improve education that will lead to the motivation of teens to postpone parenting; seek to reduce poverty; teach birth control, family planning and life skills at an appropriate age.

**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?**

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I am not aware of the availability of such programs in my district except for programs labeled family or couples counseling through neighborhood churches

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

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Advocate for children and families with respect to education, job preparation and placement, childcare, family counseling; support nurturing of loving family relationships through seminars and workshops.

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

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The state needs to do all it can to recognize and support loving family relationships.