

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

Gerald Ortiz y Pino, Senate District 12

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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?**

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If those funds are used to contract with non-profit organizations skilled in building family communication skills and improving relationships, the money will go a long way toward building stronger young families.

**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?**

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Improve family planning services; make comprehensive sex education available in all schools; put money (from TANF or state General Fund) into programs that help prepare young couples for parenthood; provide for home visitation programs to all new first-time parents to conduct assessments of their needs for support.

**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?**

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The #1 approach to reducing teen pregnancies, according to national studies, is (believe it or not) service learning. If young men and women are excited about learning how to help their communities, they are less likely to engage in the risky behaviors which

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produce teen pregnancies. I think expanding service learning and providing full information sex education to all our teens would be the best way to continue reducing the number of teen pregnancies in our state.

**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?**

I think YDI and some church-related organizations are sponsoring such programs. We need to help these efforts financially and with recognition of their value and importance...and we need more, many more.

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

I think the Coalition can make state of the art approaches, information and techniques available to all the programs which work with young families through conferences, workshops and even video conferencing. It is also a strong voice of advocacy for this issue, with policy makers, legislators and other public officials. An expanded PR campaign on behalf of its work would help immensely.

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

Just a strong "Thank You" to the Coalition for its persistence and energy on behalf of our state's young families.