

1. Your name and district number:

Ellen Wedum, Senate District 34

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?

According to the HSD website, this is a cash benefit and the "benefit should be used to meet family needs such as housing, utilities, and clothing costs." Isn't there a more appropriate source of funds for the programs you list?

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?

I think the parents are the most influential teachers of the children. I would suggest a focus on parental programs, and some form of rewards and accountability, just as if parenting were a job. (Which it is, really.)

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?

You aren't going to like this, but I believe that as long as they know they can get financial assistance for getting pregnant, the problem will continue. There should be a requirement that they either get long-term birth control implants (for as long as they are on welfare) or get sterilized in order to receive assistance. The same should apply to the father.

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 don't know.

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

By providing me with information about needed legislation, or legislation that is upcoming in the legislature.

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

No Response