New Mexico Appleseed doesn’t just **treat** poverty, we are working to **cure** it.

New Mexico Appleseed is a nonpartisan, think tank and advocacy 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to ending poverty through systemic change.
Mission Statement

New Mexico Appleseed’s mission is to end poverty in New Mexico. We want to ensure that every child and family has the necessary support and opportunities to lift themselves out of poverty. We seek permanent and dramatic positive change.

Method

New Mexico Appleseed focuses on systemic solutions to the causes and consequences of poverty. We work from the tiniest communities to the state, tribal and federal governments to define problems and create solutions. New Mexico Appleseed’s work is thoughtful, innovative, and effective.
Wonderful Appleseed Family,

People often ask me how much it costs to help just one child out of poverty? If they donate $1,000, how many kids will that help? How many families? You get the picture.

Donors want to know what is their Return on Investment (ROI)? And the fact is, that donors should be asking what the ROI is with every donation they make. You want to know if your donation resulted in better outcomes for the people served. The more you donate to work that changes the systems that serve families in poverty, the bigger your ROI.

We are proud to report that a donation to New Mexico Appleseed’s ROI is phenomenal. Our work impacts hundreds of thousands of children in New Mexico, in sovereign tribal nations and all over the country. A few of Appleseed’s accomplishments include:

- **Wrote the first-in-the-nation law requiring high poverty elementary schools to serve breakfast after the bell to all children at no cost.** This program feeds nearly 116,000 children every morning and has been replicated all over the country.

- **Created a Navajo Nation economic development and food security program that received a $2.4 million dollar USDA innovation award.**

- **Spearheaded the creation of the Keeping Families Together program in New Mexico. KFT uses housing as a child maltreatment intervention. The program decreased child maltreatment claims, by 60–80% in 90 families over three years.**

- **Wrote the first-in-the-nation law ending “lunch shaming” of children, replicated by many states and districts all over the country.**

We can only continue to make this kind of impact with your generous donations. Please join me today in making sure New Mexico Appleseed can do this critical work.

We hope you enjoy our annual report and read what we are up to next.

**Thank you for all you do.**

— Jennifer Ramo, Executive Director, New Mexico Appleseed
New Mexico Appleseed makes changes at the systems level to ensure high impact and lasting change. We address the causes and consequences of poverty.

**Community-Focused**
- Listening through focus groups and interviews
- Seeking continuous feedback during and after policy-crafting process.

**Collaboration**
- Work with others in the state working on similar issues
- Seeking continuous feedback during and after policy-crafting process

**Rigorous Research**
- Conduct legal and policy deep-dive research
- Study economic impact and cost of doing nothing
- Regularly seek feedback from national experts

**Evaluation**
- Evaluate the results of Appleseed-led policies
- Promote evidence-based policymaking
The Problem: New Mexico can only treat the symptoms of poverty, and not the root causes.

Despite all best and well-intentioned efforts by government and philanthropy, too many New Mexico families are unable to escape the inter-generational effects of poverty. They are plagued by hunger, housing instability, child welfare involvement, behavioral health issues, poor educational outcomes, juvenile justice and foster care involvement, and incarceration.
Ample research shows that many symptoms of vulnerable families are causal and/or correlated. A child’s lack of stable housing is a risk factor for child neglect. Food insecurity is a risk factor for poor educational outcomes. The correlations are too many to list, but critical to recognize if you want to understand and address the needs of our most vulnerable families.

The symptoms of poverty and generational chaos are treated by multiple state agencies and nonprofits, but the data that would help illuminate the root causes are stuck in separate agencies. This denies agencies the ability to see the full constellation of problems and risk factors an individual may have. Service providers cannot see the root causes or treat them because of siloed data and systems.
New Mexico needs a tool to answer three very basic questions:
(1) Who needs services,
(2) What services are they getting, and
(3) Are any of those services working?

The Solution: The ChildHood Integrated Longitudinal Databank (CHILD) System

New Mexico Appleseed is spearheading legislation to establish the CHILD system, which will be a statewide integrated data system of longitudinal, record-level, anonymized data. The CHILD system provides for the ethical and privacy-protected use of data that will allow state agencies, the legislature and researchers to better describe and address the complex web of issues families face and a program evaluation tool to ensure public dollars are spent effectively.

With a low price tag of $1.9 million dollars, the state will save many times that in providing higher quality, evidence-based and cost-effective services to our most vulnerable families. CHILD will transform outcomes for children and families by giving governments and social service providers the tools they need to deploy resources more effectively.
The Problem: Unstably Housed Children are More Likely to Be Abused and/or Neglected

It is no coincidence that in New Mexico, 72% of mothers and 47% of fathers of children in CYFD custody are homeless or have inadequate housing, or that 76% of mothers and 50% of fathers have inadequate financial resources or are unemployed. 73% of substantiated reports made to CYFD fall into the category of “physical neglect,” a term that includes inadequate or unstable housing. Homelessness and inadequate housing may also contribute to physical abuse (roughly 25% of substantiated CYFD cases) by increasing parents’ stress and depleting their emotional resources.

In New Mexico, we have both high levels of family homelessness and the resulting high levels of child abuse and neglect. With over 16,000 homeless children in the state, New Mexico ranks among the ten worst states in the country for child homelessness. At the same time, New Mexico has up to 5,600 substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect per year and approximately 2,000 children in foster care.

Homeless families may be more likely than their stably housed counterparts to cycle back into CYFD. “Repeat maltreatment,” or repeated involvement with the child welfare system, is more likely to occur in families who are extremely poor, lack social supports, or have multiple needs or problems, such as homelessness or inadequate housing. Because CYFD does not have the tools to address family homelessness, children from homeless families may be at increased risk of cycling in and out of the child welfare system.

The Solution: Expanding Access to Permanent Supportive Housing

In 2014, New Mexico Appleseed spearheaded legislation to establish a state-wide supportive housing pilot, Keeping Families Together, for 60 families that (1) had a substantiated case of child maltreatment, (2) substance abuse or mental health issue, and (3) were unstably housed or homeless. Supportive housing is permanent housing with services and is a promising model in terms of its effectiveness.

The New Mexico pilot with ended in 2018 with promising initial results in reducing incidences of child maltreatment and keeping families housed between 64-100%. It was renewed by the state for three more years.

New Mexico Appleseed is working to expand the pilot to 150 families not only to help those families, but to test the hypothesis that stable and supportive housing improves educational, health and child wellbeing. We are in the exploratory phase with the City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County to find the funding to expand this important program.

PERCENTAGE OF KFT FAMILIES WITH NO CYFD REFERRALS AFTER HOUSING

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Understanding Homelessness in an Educational Setting

The Problem: Inadequate housing can be a major factor in poor educational outcomes, but children’s housing statuses are poorly documented and, therefore, not fully understood as a risk factor.

Appleseed’s hypothesis is that there are far more children experiencing housing instability and homelessness than are documented. Given the well-documented correlations between housing and poor educational and child wellbeing outcomes, Appleseed is diving deeper to try to identify more children and better understand their needs.

Under federal law, children who are bouncing from house to house, living in a shelter, in a home without electricity or heat are recognized as at risk for educational failures and are given certain benefits and protections. The problem is that the only way children are recognized as homeless in school is when they present themselves as such to the school. If children are embarrassed or do not think of themselves of homeless, they receive no services or protection and are not part of a larger picture of how large the homeless problem is in school or how the homelessness affects their school performance.

The Solution: The first step to addressing the homelessness problem in schools is to better understand it. How widespread is the problem? How well documented is it? How are schools identifying and serving students once identified?

We have been hard at work over the last year and a half doing deep-dive legal research about the rights of students under federal law and the best practices to serve them. We have sought national expertise, while connecting with homelessness liaisons around the state, including in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Carlsbad, Farmington, Las Cruces, Artesia, Deming, Gallup, Española, Bernalillo and Aztec to shape our strategic plan. Focus groups and interviews are the first step to gather qualitative data on the barriers schools face identifying children as homeless and the barriers those children face in every day life.

The results of our work will be:

- Increase the numbers of children identified by their school as homeless.
- Ensure those children are receiving the federally required supports and waivers.
- Work with those families, homelessness providers and government to create a set of policies to better support those children in and out of school.
Leveraging Resources to End Child Hunger

The Problem: New Mexico is second worst in the nation for childhood food insecurity.

Even though New Mexico Appleseed continues to make great strides in ensuring as many children can access USDA school, weekend and summer meals as possible, there is much to do. Children and families are still going hungry.

- **Breakfast After the Bell:** Despite clear statutory language that children must get fed breakfast after the start of the school day, some districts and schools still make it difficult. Albuquerque Public Schools fed 4,000 fewer children breakfast and lost $1 million in federal funding because they sent hungry children out of the classroom to eat, instead of offering it to all children.

- **Summer Feeding:** New Mexico saw a decline in overall summer meal participation for the summer of 2017. There are not enough easy ways to access food during the hot summer. Often meal sites will be open in June, but closed in July and August.

- **Afterschool Meals/Weekend Meals:** Afterschool meals are a tool for ensuring that all children in New Mexico receive nutritious meals in the evening. When afterschool and weekend program funding is cut, it makes it hard for children to access the meals that often come with those programs. This USDA feeding program means that children could access at least one meal per day, every day. Communities need to learn about these programs to implement them.

The Solution: NM Appleseed keeps up the pressure on schools, districts and the state to feed children.

Appleseed plays both collaborative partner and, when necessary, watchdog to make sure that children have the food they need to grow and thrive. As a thought leader on anti-hunger strategies, we have made international news with our hunger work. We address hunger issues through research, engaging communities, and creating high-impact policies.

Our One Meal A Day campaign works in communities all over the state, bringing together community leaders and trying to fill in gaps in the calendar to make sure that on every day, children have access to at least one free, healthy meal, and on many days, two or three meals. Through this work, we have fed more children and brought millions of federal dollars into the state. Breakfast, lunch, afterschool meals and summer feeding program have blossomed because of our advocacy. When we notice participation drops, we work with state agencies, tribal governments, cities, counties and/or nonprofits to understand the causes of the drops.

**Our goals this next year include:**

- **Restore and expand access to breakfast at school for thousands of children:** Appleseed once again will be going to the New Mexico legislature to close the loopholes that send children away from their classmates to eat and expand free breakfast after the start of the school day to middle and high school.

- **Summer Feeding:** New Mexico Appleseed was tapped by CYFD to lead a state-wide task force on summer feeding. We hope to increase the number of sites serving and, more importantly, the number of days they serve. Our goal is to restore New Mexico’s summer feeding numbers to their previous state.

- **Afterschool Meals/Weekend Meals:** We will continue to work with Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Las Cruces, Taos, and communities all over the state to get a 3rd meal to children during the school week and a single meal, each day on the weekends.
Don’t just treat poverty, cure it! Join New Mexico Appleseed today to help end poverty not just in our state, but around the country. Your generous donation is critical to lifting families out of poverty. Donate today! Please fill out the form below and mail it with your contribution to 600 Central Ave, SE, Suite 200, Albuquerque, NM 87102 or donate online.

My gift of $__________________ will be contributed by  □ Enclosed Check    □ United Way Designation
                                                  □ Online at www.nmappleseed.org    □ Please invoice me

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