

Brief history behind the *Agenda for New Mexico's Children* and New Mexico Children's Cabinet...

Lance Chilton, MD, FAAP and Larry Shandler, MD, FAAP, then president and vice-president of the New Mexico Pediatric Society respectively, along with contractor and now state Senator Jerry Ortiz y Pino, worked with fellow chapter members and other advocates to develop what they called the *Agenda for New Mexico's Children*. The work was done through a grant from New Mexico's McCune Foundation. Prior to the 2002 gubernatorial elections, the group created a list of nine attainable goals by which the progress of policy-makers on children's issues could be measured.



Senator Jerry Ortiz y Pino



Lance Chilton, MD

More than 80 New Mexico pediatricians, social workers, teachers, parents and other child advocates met in eleven of the state's cities and towns to develop a list of priorities to which all parties could agree and incorporate into the final version of the *Agenda*. The meetings created a long list of goals for New Mexico's children after which came the hard work, winnowing down the list to those thought by the majority to be most important. The list was presented to both gubernatorial candidates, who were asked to indicate support for these measures.

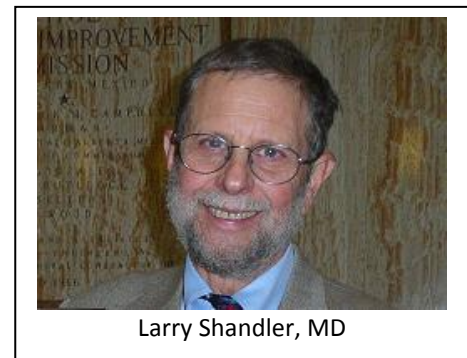
In partial response, the **Children's Cabinet** was established in New Mexico statute with bi-partisan support in 2003. The **Children's Cabinet** consists of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and the heads of the executive departments. In 2005, the Early Child Action Network (ECAN) was created as an advisory committee to make recommendations on how to improve the well being of New Mexico's youngest children, birth to five. The NMPS in partnership with ECAN meets twice a year to develop comprehensive, coordinated action plans related to **Children's Cabinet** -related outcomes.

The foremost mission of the **Children's Cabinet** is to ensure that state government at every level is meeting the health, education and growth needs of New Mexico's children. The **Children's Cabinet** is administratively attached to the Office of the Governor and coordinates cross-departmental efforts that include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Promoting and establishing comprehensive policies that impact children and youth;
- 2) Assessing and maximizing resource allocation;
- 3) Removing administrative barriers to obtaining departmental services and assistance;
- 4) Tracking NM indicators concerning child and youth well-being; and
- 5) Encouraging partnerships that elevate the conversations, expertise, research, and action regarding NM's children and youth.

By September 1 of each year, the **Children's Cabinet** must report and make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature "...including a Child and Youth Report Card that identifies the status and well-being of children and youth". In response to this requirement, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor releases the **New Mexico Children's Cabinet Report Card & Budget Report** each year.

Children's issues in NM have been placed front and center, due in large part to the *Agenda for New Mexico's Children*.



Larry Shandler, MD