



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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Governor Richardson Announces Actions to Protect Children from Meth and Other Hazards

Governor's Keeping Kids Safe Agenda Part of "Year of the Child" Legislative Proposals

(Santa Fe, NM) -- Governor Bill Richardson today announced his Keeping Kids Safe agenda designed to protect New Mexico children from the dangers of methamphetamine, sex offenders and child abuse. The Governor spoke today at *The Innocent Victims of Meth in New Mexico, A Call to Action* Conference in Albuquerque.

"Meth is one of the fastest growing threats to our children, not because children are taking the drug, but because of the actions of parents who are addicted to meth or manufacturing it in their homes," said Governor Richardson. "Meth is the number-one drug problem in the nation. How well we attack the methamphetamine problem in New Mexico will have a direct and dramatic impact on our families, our communities, and on the economic success of our state."

Governor Richardson's anti-meth proposals include increasing the penalty for the sale of meth, or possession of meth with the intent to sell, to the same criminal level as heroin and cocaine, fixing the glitch in drug free school zone laws which excludes meth for an enhanced sentence, and creating a state wide registry of "meth affected properties" so that home buyers are not unknowingly endangering their families by residing in contaminated homes that were previously used as meth labs.

Governor Richardson's proposals build upon past actions against meth including restricting access to the critical ingredients for its manufacture, increasing the penalties for making meth, especially when children are present, and improving access to treatment.

"We have made progress -- this year we have seen a decline in the number of deaths from meth use," said Governor Richardson. "But we can do more and my agenda will ensure that we do everything we can to protect our children."

Governor Richardson's Keeping Kids Safe agenda announced today also includes:

- **Tougher Penalties for Sex Offenders** This includes creating a special designation for the most heinous sex crimes against children, life in prison without the possibility of parole, even for a first time offender, in special circumstances.
- **Working to Prevent Child Abuse** by expanding the Home Visiting Program administered through the Children, Youth, and Families Department. The Governor’s proposal will increase funding to the program by \$500,000 allowing it to expand to four additional counties in the Four Corners area and eastern New Mexico. This program gives new parents access to professionals who can provide advice and counseling on prenatal care for the mother, how to care for newborns, and post-natal healthcare for mothers and infants. Home visitors are also able to detect any developmental problems or issues with family violence early on so the family can get appropriate services right away.
- **Keeping Kids Out of Gangs** Governor Richardson will introduce two bills during the next legislative session in January designed to reduce the ability of gangs to function. They were introduced in this year’s session but ran out of time. The first will enhance the sentences of anyone convicted of crimes committed to further gang activity, such as murder, burglary, or assault, and the second will toughen penalties for recruiting minors into gangs.
- **Providing After School and Summer Programs** Governor Richardson’s budget will include \$1.2 million for after school and summer literacy programs. These programs give children constructive activities that will help keep them out of trouble when they’re not in school.

“This is just the beginning,” said Governor Richardson. “Only by working together to punish criminals, support families, and give our children reasonable options for after school activities can we truly keep our kids safe and continue to build the New Mexico of the future.”