

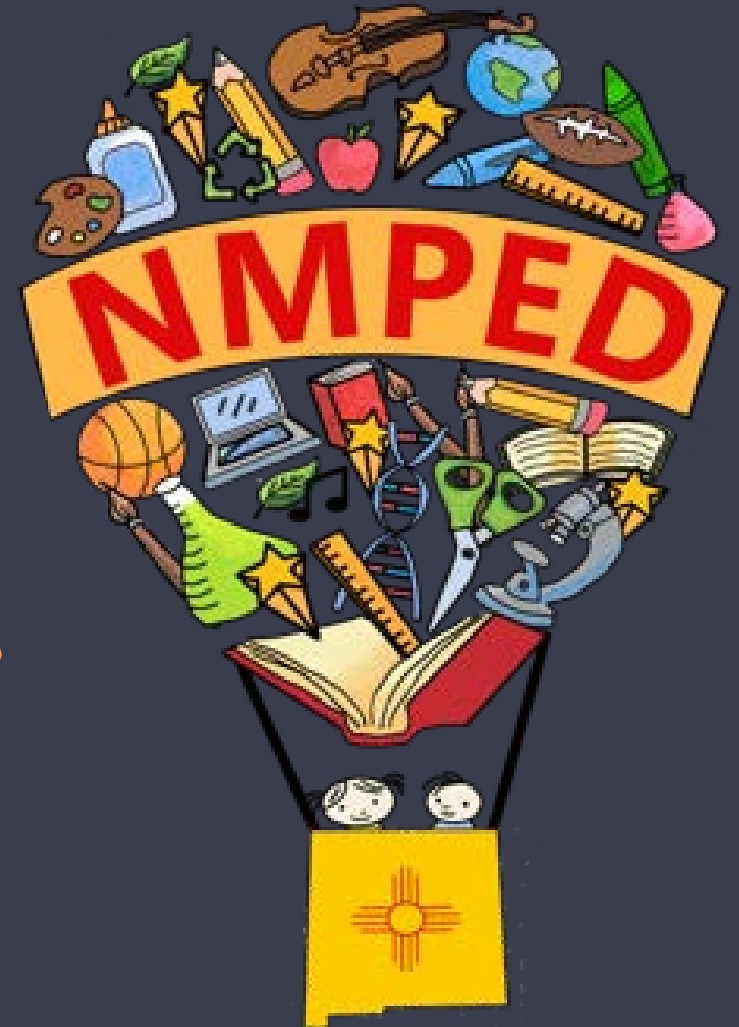
# HM 43: Student Wellness Rooms



Presentation to LESC November 15, 2022

Representative Pamela Herndon, Sean Thomas,  
Myra Lacy and Leslie Kelly on behalf of the HM 43 Task  
Force

*Investing for tomorrow, delivering today.*



# Task force members and meetings

**Meetings: \*July 26, 2022 Alamogordo**

**\*August 29<sup>th</sup> 2022 Santa Fe**

**\* September 26, 2022 Taos**

## **Members:**

- Representative Pamelya Herndon
- Leslie Kelly, NMPED - Task Force Co-Chair
- Sean Thomas Eldorado HS teacher -Task Force Co-Chair
- Myra Lacy Eldorado HS Student
- Cooper Beggs Eldorado HS Student
- Michael Noll – Penasco Schools
- Sona Saiz – Las Cruces Public Schools
- Vicki Price – Albuquerque Public Schools
- Anthony Conforti – NM Media Arts Charter
- Siena Sanderson – Taos Nurturing Center
- Rachel Weihe – Eldorado High School Administrator
- Gabriella Blakey – Albuquerque Public Schools
- Colbie Boyd – NM Media Arts Student
- Ana Cotton – NM Media Arts Student
- Ciarae Salazar – Taos High School Student
- Lisa Patch – Alamogordo Pubic Schools
- Charlene Pyskoty, Bernalillo County Commissioner
- Emy Martinez- DeHerrera – Taos High School Teacher
- Martha Burk- Gender Pay Equity Consultant
- Margarita Chavez – Director of Behavioral Health Services Bernalillo County
- Natalie Williamson – School Psychologist and Clinical Mental Health Counselor

# The History of HM 43

Ms. Myra Lacy – Eldorado High School Student

# New Mexico's Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey

**In 2019, compared to US high school students, New Mexico students:**

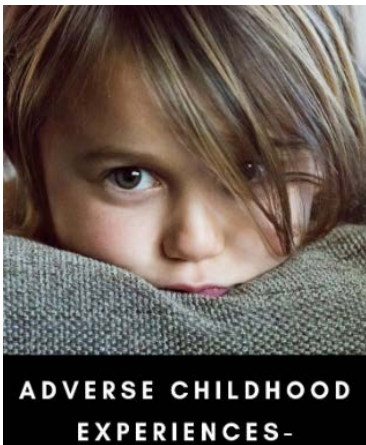
- Were more likely to get at least 8 hours of sleep on an average school night.
- Were less likely to engage in excessive computer and video screen use.
- Had higher rates of most drug and tobacco use.
- Were more likely to be early initiators of cigarette smoking, alcohol use, and marijuana use.
- Were more likely to feel sad or hopeless.

*2021 Risk Comparisons – New Mexico and United States (HS grades 9-12)*  
<https://youthrisk.org/publications/connections/2021-yrrs-connections-factsheet-january>



# Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Children with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) face increased risk for social-emotional, physical and mental health issues, including abuse, neglect, poverty and other traumatic experiences encountered before the age of eighteen.
- With three ACEs, the risk for heart disease and depression goes through the roof. Six or more ACEs reduce life expectancy by twenty years.
- **The good news is that there are actions we ALL can take to turn these outcomes around. The antidote to ACEs: Build resilience.**



Percentage of Children 0-17 experiencing 2 or more ACEs: U.S. Value: 14.0%  
Healthiest State: New York: 9.8% Least-healthy State: **New Mexico: 24.7%**

*Source: National Survey of Children's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), 2020-2021*

# Wellness rooms/spaces in other states

- **St. George, Utah:** 39 local schools Elementary, Middle and High schools, have wellness rooms used for students to self-regulate. The rooms are used in concert with the district's social and emotional learning curriculum.
- **Logan, Utah:** The purpose of the Wellness Room is based on physiology and brain science (neuroscience). They teach: 1) to recognize how their stress response system works (nervous system) and 2) what coping skills they can use to self-regulate.
- **Carnegie Mellon University:** The Mindfulness Room is a dedicated, student-led and operated space to simply rest, breathe and relax with no agenda.





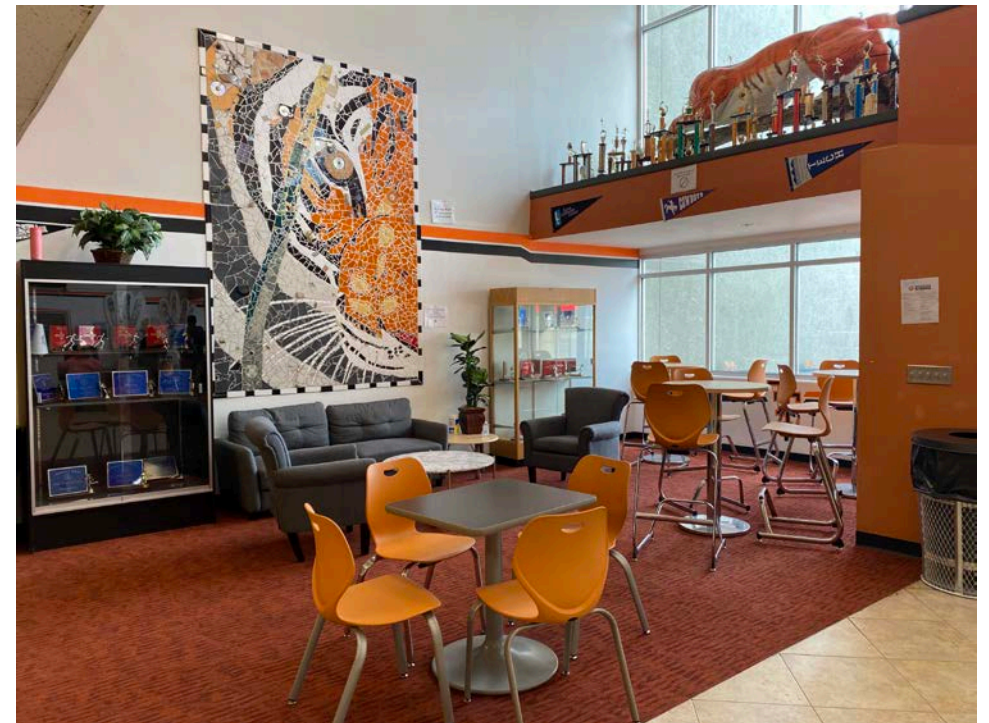
# Wellness rooms/spaces in other states (continued)



- **Northwestern University:** The Sensory Space is a waiting room area and Multi-Sensory Environment (MSE) where students are welcome to interact with stimuli to engage the tactile, visual, auditory, and proprioceptive senses simultaneously. Its purpose is to enhance wellness by way of gentle, positive multi-sensory stimulation for stress reduction and mindfulness.

# Wellness rooms/spaces in New Mexico Taos High School

**Taos High School** has created wellness spaces all throughout the school to provide students a space to relax, recharge and regulate





# Wellness rooms/spaces in New Mexico Eldorado High School - Albuquerque

**Eldorado High School** has a dedicated space for their wellness room divided into four separate spaces to address student need.



# Wellness rooms/spaces in New Mexico Las Cruces Public Schools

**Las Cruces Public Schools** has wellness spaces in approximately 21% of their schools K-12, and another 28% of schools have reported that they are working on adopting wellness spaces in their buildings



# Task force findings



- This is not a new concept - started with sensory rooms for special education students.
- Nationwide effort to establish wellness rooms/spaces for students and staff.
- Wellness rooms help teach students emotional regulation and are supported by sound social and emotional practices and teaching school wide.
- Wellness rooms support early identification of health and mental health issues, and support attendance and achievement.
- Wellness rooms are best founded with student voice and leadership.
- Needs for schools are different and there should not be a “one size fits all” approach.

# Task force findings (continued)

- It does not necessarily need to be a room; wellness spaces work for some schools
- Using an existing space can be much more cost efficient.
- Professional development for teachers is needed. Students can and should help provide it.
- There is not a lot of existing data regarding Wellness Rooms, so data collection is important.





# Task force findings (continued)

- Staffing can be a challenge and there can be many different approaches:
  - Educational Assistants (E.A's) Certified Peer Support Workers (CPSW), Counseling and/or Social Work Interns, Retired Counselors or Therapists.
  - This does not necessarily require a licensed mental health person- students needing more support should be referred to school counselors/social workers and/or community behavioral health workers
- A referral process to wellness rooms is important- self refer and staff referral, and time limits, number of visits etc.
- Wellness rooms support all students and all students have equitable access to these supports – addressing findings in the Martinez and Yazzie Consolidated Lawsuit.





# Task force recommendations:

A pilot project be funded to support 10 wellness rooms in New Mexico high schools and middle schools.

- ✓ The task force would create an application process and selection process to select those pilot sites.
- ✓ Each pilot site would follow a data collection protocol looking at, but not limited to the following: number visits, reason for visit, pre/post visit check in, and referrals to other supports.
- ✓ Student voice and agency is a required part of the process.
- ✓ Each site would determine best space for their school community .
- ✓ Each site would determine best staffing option for their school community.
- ✓ Each site would receive \$80,000 as a pilot; up to \$40,000 for staffing and up to \$40,000 for creating the space- renovations, purchasing wellness room furniture, supplies and replacing of consumables. The total ask of \$800,000.

# Video of September 26,2022 Taos meeting



[HM 43 Teaser.mp4](#)

# Thank You

## Questions & Answers



# Addendum

## Myra Lacy, Eldorado High School Student, HM 43 Task Force Member Video:

- Hi, my name is Myra Lacy and I attend Eldorado High School in Albuquerque, NM.
- In the fall of 2019, I was a freshman that witnessed the pain that my peers felt as one of our classmates committed suicide. This was one of many of the people who died from suicide within a short period of time. My peers and I were super frustrated by the lack of preventative and post-ventional resources for students that were dealing with these losses and who needed more support because of their own mental health needs.
- As a result, the students of Eldorado High School reached out to Mr. Sean Thomas and Mr. Rick Sleeter to try and develop a plan to gain more mental health resources. Among the needs identified, we wanted a wellness room that would support students' ability to regulate their own emotions and help the school identify students who may be a risk to themselves. As we researched possible solutions, we saw that wellness rooms were being established all over the nation in secondary schools and colleges. Wellness Rooms can serve as a way for students to regulate their own emotions, improve attendance, stay on campus and in class, and can identify students who are struggling so the school can intervene and refer them to a more appropriate intervention and/or staff person.
- To do this, I attended the next school board meeting with 250 of my peers to make the district aware of the problems at our school and to ask for the district to invest in mental health resources for our school and the rest of the district. This work established continued meetings with district leadership to develop a wellness room at Eldorado that included student voice.
- At the same time, we started working with state legislators to create legislation around mental health that would ensure access to and funding for mental health resources. Rep. Pamela Herndon carried our voices forward to the state legislature. Through this work, Rep. Herndon requested that I take part of the House Memorial 43 task force to develop recommendations for how to create Wellness Rooms throughout the state.