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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Gonzales DATE TYPED 2/2/04 HB 228

SHORT TITLE Taos County Family Strengthening Services SB _____

ANALYST Johnson

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY04	FY05	FY04	FY05		
	\$184.0			Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

NM Commission on the Status of Women

Department of Health

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 228 appropriates \$184,000 from the general fund to the local government division of the department of finance and administration for expenditure in fiscal year 2005 to contract for family strengthening services and to help families in crisis in Taos County.

Significant Issues

The department of health provided the following:

Taos County has recently experienced severe problems with gang activity, youth violence and youth homicide. There were 4 youth homicides during the summer of 2003, and a youth suicide just this past weekend. According to the NM DOH 2002 Taos County Health Profile, homicide rates in Taos County were 11.9 per 100,000 compared to a rate of 9.5 for New Mexico overall.

Taos County has some services available to help families and communities in crisis. However, due to poverty, a lack of education, unemployment and sometimes a multitude of family problems that overwhelms a family's ability to function, available services are not always being accessed. While some needed services are not available in the County (or are not available in

enough quantity to provide for all those in need), the greatest lack is a method to deliver services to those most in need. It is likely that this funding would be administered through the Taos County District Attorney's Office Family Justice Center.

According to the NM Commission on the Status of Women, the Community Against Violence, already established in Taos, provides services to families that are victims of domestic violence.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$184.0 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2005 shall revert to the general fund.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The department of health provided the following:

Substance abuse contributes to the problems Taos County is experiencing. According to the Taos County Health Profile, the 2002 Taos County Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey showed that 30% of students reported their first drink of alcohol at age 11 or younger and 56% of these students said it would be "very easy" to get beer, wine and hard liquor if they wanted it. In 1997, Taos' rate of past year alcohol use (grades 9-12), equaled the New Mexico rate at approximately 70%. Taos' rates of reported drinking and driving (grades 9-12), 1997, was over 20%, a rate similar to the New Mexico rate. (Source: 1997 New Mexico Social Indicator Project Report 1995-1997, October 1999). The DOH Taos County 2002 County Health Profile lists Taos County alcohol-related deaths at 15.3 per 100,000 (the state rate is 17.5).

To address the recent youth violence, homicides and fragmented services, the community held several public forums. The forums resulted in the development of the Family Justice Center, a Taos County Gang Task Force, and increased collaboration with the CYFD Truancy initiative.

HB 228 could fund the county's Family Justice Center to provide "one stop shopping" services to address a host of crimes that impact on the family, such as child abuse, juvenile delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse, DWI, the sale of drugs, prostitution and gang activity. This would place all social and governmental services in Taos County under one roof. A family advocate would be able to work across traditional jurisdictional lines to achieve a result from the criminal justice system that would be in the best interest of the family and help them restore the health and welfare of the family and community. The appropriation proposed in this bill would help identify at risk youth, institute truancy prevention, and provide advocacy and family resources to assist the entire family. This initiative is based on a successful best practice model being used in San Diego, California.

If funded, the Center could monitor successes and motivate families and communities to achieve their goals. Criminal activity, substance abuse, unemployment, juvenile delinquency and poverty can be addressed in any combination with every service available brought to bear on the problem. Law enforcement, the District Attorneys Office, the Courts, probation officers, schools, and state agencies (such as Child Protective Services and Children, Youth and Families) will be encouraged to utilize the Center to address problems of families and communities more holistically rather than just addressing their problem in their isolated environment.

The Center could also address the needs of the larger community. Individual communities within Taos County may wish to form neighborhoods watch programs or create a plan to address specific problems of drug trafficking, graffiti, vandalism, and traffic or noise abatement. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, at <http://www.aecf.org/tarc/priority/family.php>, “family strengthening means ensuring that parents have the necessary opportunities, relationships, networks and supports to raise their children successfully, which includes involving parents as decisions-makers in how their communities meet family needs.”

According to the NM Commission on the Status of Women, the term “family strengthening” is vague and does not define the types of services to be provided to the community.

CJJ/lg:yr