

Amy E Glass: Welcome. This is an episode of the NM-ABC Podcast: Conversations about youth mental health in New Mexico.

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Amy E Glass: All right.

Amy E Glass: So, welcome to this episode of the NM-ABC podcast, Conversations About Youth Mental Health in New Mexico.

Amy E Glass: Today, we are talking with Senator Jerry Ortizipino, who has many years of experience with behavioral health services in our state, and a very unique, valuable perspective on youth mental health in New Mexico.

Amy E Glass: Senator, I am so glad that you could join us for this conversation. I first heard you speak at a commencement ceremony for a university where I was teaching many years ago, and since then, our paths have crossed a few times, and I'm honored that you're taking the time to be here today. Welcome!

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Thank you, I think it's a privilege to be on, so thanks, Amy.

Amy E Glass: All right, so we'll just jump right in. First of all, I know that you've been involved in New Mexico's services and politics for a very long time.

Amy E Glass: As a social worker way back, as a state senator, and many other roles. Could you share a little bit about your background and professional roles?

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Sure, I'd be glad to. Of course, I was born in Santa Fe and graduated from the University of New Mexico with a degree in Latin American Studies and.

Amy E Glass: Then realized, I have no idea what I'm going to do with this particular degree.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: So I stumbled into the field of social work, and began as a child welfare worker down in Las Cruces.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Then I went to graduate school in New Orleans at Tulane and got a master's degree, and

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: went to work as a child welfare worker in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: I got into community organizing at that point, and I worked for the State Office of Economic Opportunity as a liaison with the welfare system in the state.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And then, from then, I went to Taos and worked there, and I worked in... back in Santa Fe, teaching at the College of Santa Fe in a community mental health training program.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: training paraprofessionals, what we would now call navigators, or community health workers, or peer counselors, even. We had people from all those... all aspects of the current paraprofessional scene in our training program, funded by the National Institute of Mental Health.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Then I went back to the state and got into planning and administration.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: ultimately, wound up running what was called Title 20, which was, you know, if 18 is Medicare, 19 is Medicaid, Title 20 of the Social Security Act was social services.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And so, we thought when it was created,

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: that it was going to be, like, an entitlement program, much like the other two. The Reagan administration stopped that in its tracks and converted it to a block grant.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Which, has not really grown much over the years, so it's now a relatively minor

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Source of funding, but a lot of the services we funded then

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: persist to this day. That was how we got Ogaris, for example, off the ground, the network of group homes for kids here in this state. Most of the group homes were funded initially with Title 20 money. Later, they converted it to Medicaid money, which was so much more

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Available. There was a lot more of it, no limit.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And so,

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: that whole network of youth-oriented services that grew up around, preventing kids from getting into group homes, providing services in the group homes, and then helping them after their release. That was all funded with Title 20, and I was part of that development.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: ultimately wound up working myself as a social worker in a couple of residential programs, the Children's Psychiatric Hospital here in Albuquerque at the university, and then with what was at that time Vista Sandia. You know, in those days, I'm talking now about the late 80s, early 90s.

Amy E Glass: There was an incredible.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Network of inpatient resources, residential resources.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: There were at least

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: 15 or 20 residential treatment programs for troubled adolescents in the state, in Farmington, in Roswell, in Las Cruces, in Taos, in Santa Fe, in Albuquerque. The state had a network of those services.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: They all venge.

Amy E Glass: That's amazing. Some of them...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yeah, some of them were killed when the Martinez administration, you know, the Ogatis program went out of existence when Martinez pulled the plug on it.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: But that network of services is what's so sorely lacking now. We used to have it, we don't anymore. Not only that, we had a whole network of inpatient hospital services as well. And those couldn't... couldn't have been paid with Medicaid, because the limitations on Medicaid spending for inpatient psychiatric care

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: But we found ways to provide it, and then get them into residential treatment once they were stabilized.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: So the, the, hang on just a second.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: So the,

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Issue for me is, we know what we need, we've had it in the past.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: even... even before Martinez killed the network of residential treatment programs, we had other programs that are no longer in existence. Diversion programs. We had ways of reaching kids before they had to be

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: put into residential treatment, of helping their families. And we've moved away from all of that. It's so painful to see how impoverished our system has become

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: When we had it at one time.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Now, there were, you know, Medicaid is not the ideal funding source for a lot of these services, but it's... it's got the great virtue of being practically limitless.

Amy E Glass: Right. You know, we... we're now spending, as we found out in our, in our.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: planning program now. We're spending over a billion, almost a billion and a half dollars of Medicaid money on behavioral health services for adults and children now.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Billion and a half.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And I don't think it's getting spent well. It's not being well spent. Much of it goes out to the HMOs as monthly capitation.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: They get... because they're serving people with a mental illness, they'll get extra money added to their monthly payment.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Whether they use it or not, and what they use it for, is kind of lost in the shuffle. We're spending the money because it's going out the door of the state.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: But whether it's coming back in improved functioning, or in... Treatment, or...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: people being able to, return to, their families. None of that is really

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: how we measure the effectiveness, and we should be. Those are the things that... those are the real measures of an effective behavioral system, and... and we just...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: As long as we're spending the money, we say, well, we're doing it.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And we should be really taking a look at how we're spending it, and whether it's helping anybody.

Amy E Glass: It is so interesting to hear about all the services that used to be in place and serving youth in this state, and now we have zero residential programs, you know, no...

Amy E Glass: No places for... for youth to stabilize, to, you know, to work on their goals, and then move into a...

Amy E Glass: a community-based placement, it's a huge gap, and I'm so surprised to hear about that.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Well, I'll just give you two examples here in Albuquerque, besides Ogatis. Ogatis was, you know, the crown jewel, because it was so large. I think at one time they had 12 separate facilities. And now one of those, one of those has been turned over to, Serenity Mesa.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And they're operating a program there, a residential treatment program for kids who've had substance abuse programs... problems. And so, it... there's some little vestiges of the service system, but here's two other examples. One is All Faiths.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: All face, for 40 years in this community, was where emergency placements were made.

Amy E Glass: Yes. When a policeman picked up a kid wandering the streets, a 6-year-old wandering the street, a 3-year-old wandering the street.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Or a newborn whose mother couldn't take care of him and suddenly called up and turned the kid over.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: you didn't have to have foster families that would take the kid for a few days until you found another foster family who would take it for another week, until you found a third foster family, before you could find a fifth one who really had room and was the right one. That constant shuffling was so devastating. Instead, we had

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: All Face, and All Face was what was called a receiving home. And it was an institution, there's no doubt about it, but it was one that was run by a

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: A cadre of women, volunteers in large measure, but also paid staff.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: who staffed that place, and they could handle, I think at one point, it was up to 45 or 50 kids could be housed there.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Temporarily.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Nobody was saying, this is going to be your new home. They were saying, we have a safe, healthy place for you.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: come here and stay here for a few days, and we're going to try to get you back home. If we can't, we're going to find a relative. If we can't, we're going to find a good family where you can grow up.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Right. Not a... not a series of 18 families that try for a few days and give up.

Amy E Glass: With different schools at each one.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yeah. Now we had the vision that no kid should be placed in an institution, so we should only place them with families.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: I think that was a devastating mistake. Now, I'm... I'm kind of alone in that. Most people say, oh, no, we shouldn't have institutes. I think that was so much better than what we have now, because now they're staying in the offices.

Amy E Glass: I don't think that you are alone with that, Senator. There are lots of folks who think that institutions can be good services if they're done well and they fill a need.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: That's right. I mean, we did the same thing with adults, Amy. You remember, when we deinstitutionalized, because these mental hospitals were, you know, asylums and dungeons and horrible places

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And so we... we just turn them out on the streets.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: We didn't replace it with community services. So now they're... now they're sleeping in tents in public parks, or in doorways, or taking fentanyl to try to deal with the harshness of their situation.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: I just think we've made some horrible errors in the past, and now they're coming home to roost. Now we're trying to figure out

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Where do we house kids who have these problems? How do we house kids who haven't started having problems yet, but they will if we don't find a good place for them soon?

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: So that... that's the other example I would give is New Day.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And New Day is a wonderful facility now. It has been a wonderful facility for its existence, but it started as a shelter, not even a residential program, not a residential treatment program. It was a place where kids could come in off the street, they needed a place to stay, they'd stay there.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: We don't have that anymore. New Day has been, you know, they do outpatient counseling, they do wonderful work. I have no criticism for New Day, except that one of the things they used to do is no longer done, and that is an emergency shelter for teenagers who wander in off the streets. And yeah, these kids, by now, they're on the street.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: They're street savvy, they're tough kids, they may be addicted, they may be selling themselves, and so they have venereal disease, or they have emotional issues, they may be angry.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Brittle, vicious kids. They need a place, and they're never going to stop being angry, brittle, and vicious until we house them, and treat them with respect.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And that was what New Day was able to start, start him on that path.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: No, we don't have that.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: So we've lost lots of the services that we used to have, and if we still had, I think our problems would be much more manageable. They wouldn't disappear, you're not going to immediately solve family dysfunction by creating some new residential treatment services, but you can

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: At least get a handle on the situation, and maybe then provide services to that family without having to just give up on them immediately.

Amy E Glass: Yeah, and you know, in that historical context, I also have to bring up that now we are

Amy E Glass: taking, infants, right, in the hospital, and, separating them from their parent, and... and.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yet another disastrous, disastrous policy decision by a governor and a department that are both headed... the governor and the secretary have no background in this field, don't know what in the heck they're doing.

Amy E Glass: But, but boy, it's a harmful policy.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: But they're kind of flailing around. And that they... when they made that policy and announced it.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: They didn't have foster families. They hadn't even talked to the hospitals. What are they thinking? What are they expecting is going to... word is going to be out on the streets so fast.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: But if you're pregnant, and you've been using drugs, even if it's marijuana, or, you know, you're not really addicted yet, but you've been experimenting, don't go to the hospital to have your kid, they're going to take it away.

Amy E Glass: Yep, exactly.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Have the kid in the tent in the park, but don't go to the hospital, you're going to lose your baby. Yep. So, I'm not sure what the thinking is there. This is just ridiculous. And I know there's all these...

Amy E Glass: to treatment.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And did they even talk to UNM's Milagro program about this?

Amy E Glass: No.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: There was a... there was a successful example of how you deal with this issue. Did they consult with them? I don't think so, there's no evidence that they did. They just pulled something off the top of their head and said, now we're going to do this, and that's going to solve the problem, and it's going to make it 10 times worse.

Amy E Glass: Yep.

Amy E Glass: Yep, we're going to reduce the chances of a healthy attachment between that baby.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: The other day, the other day, at a hearing, I saw the tape later on at a hearing of the Legislative Health and Human Services Interim Committee.

Amy E Glass: They were making this presentation of what they're doing now.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And one of the Senate... one of the representatives, Representative Eleanor Chavez, who's a social worker, said, well, won't this be destructive to the bonding between the parent and the child? How will you ever establish the bonding?

Amy E Glass: Good question.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And the secretary's answer was, we want the bonding to be with the foster parent.

Amy E Glass: Oh...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: What? What are you thinking?

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Only somebody who has never

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: learned about what the importance of bonding to the biological parent would come up with a statement like that. And that's the woman running the department, that's the woman making policies for the department.

Amy E Glass: Whew!

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: It's just tragic. It's tragic.

Amy E Glass: It is. It is.

Amy E Glass: All right, okay, boy, that's a lot of important history.

Amy E Glass: And I know that currently you are a member of the Behavioral Health Executive Committee that's working on the State Behavioral Health Reorganization that came out of Senate Bill 3 this past year.

Amy E Glass: And as I understand it, funding for all behavioral health services is now going to be channeled through the administrative office of the courts.

Amy E Glass: So what you perspective.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Okay, and .

Amy E Glass: Go ahead.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yeah, not quite. I mean, that's... that's... that was what some of the press said, and that was what the, the, some legislators said.

Amy E Glass: Okay.



Jerry Ortiz y Pino: But the... but the billion and a half that's spent through Medicaid.

Amy E Glass: Right.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: is still going to be spent through Medicaid.

Amy E Glass: Now, we may... I mean, and how do they spend it?

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: they say, you... you... you're enrolled in Presbyterian's HMO, so we'll send your money to them, and then they'll spend it.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: You're enrolled in... now, how much our planning is going to affect Medicaid is the big... that's the \$64,000 question. Got it. Because we're talking about less than \$50 or \$60 million a year that we're going to have some direct authority over.

Amy E Glass: Compared to about a billion.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: compared to a billion and a half that goes out through the Medicaid door. Now, there's some other money around that we can try to make recommendations ought to be incorporated into our plan.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: For example, they're the big block grants, so we have the behavioral health block grant, and the alcohol and drug treatment block grant, those block grants, which go to the people, the same people that control Medicaid.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Now, and they use it for non-Medicaid eligible people.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: But the services look just like the Medicaid services. They could be much more versatile, much more diverse, much more... they could reach people that

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: that have needs that the Medicaid plan wouldn't reach.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: You know, one of the things we've been talking with them about is how impoverished the

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: The... or the paucity of services for people with brain injuries are in this state.

Amy E Glass: They can be eligible for Medicaid and be eligible for Medicaid services, but not very many of those services.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: are geared to people with brain injuries. They need different kinds of services. And so, you know, if we could broaden Medicaid to include them, that'd be fine. Or if you could use the block grant to serve them, that would be another way of skinning that cat.

Amy E Glass: But...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: you know.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: It's not clear yet whether our plan, and keep in mind it's just a plan, we're not making the decisions about who gets the money, but we're creating the plan for what services ought to be available out there.

Amy E Glass: Now, how much Medicaid is going to.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Be willing.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: to take away from their current practice of being an insurance agency for four HMOs.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And instead, become a public health...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: actor, somebody actually creating services and providing services where the need is greatest, not where that HMO happens to have a network of care.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: That's... that's... that's one of the issues we have to deal with.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: So, what you say is probably true, that we will be making a plan for all behavioral health services.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: But I'm still skeptical about how much of the Medicaid, and even the non-Medicaid money flowing through the healthcare authority, the Medicaid authority, how much of that is going to be subject to our plan.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: They may say, thank you very much, we want to make sure we coordinate, we want to make sure we complement, we want to make sure, we want to make sure, but whether we submit to changing... and there's a couple of classic examples of that.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Right now, there's a hidden incentive for the HMOs to say no.

Amy E Glass: Correct, yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: They... they get the money.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And if they don't provide the service, it's still sitting in their bank account at the end of the year.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: If they say, yes, we will permit you to go to that residential program, or yes to that medication-assisted treatment program, or yes to whatever.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Then they have to spend the money to pay for it.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: So the hidden incentive is not to spend the money, but to not spend the money.

Amy E Glass: Right. And that's the whole...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: you know, the whole nature of behavioral health in managed care, I think, is upside down. In physical health, they have an incentive to pay the money up front, because you're just going to save yourself a lot of money in the future.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Say yes to that.

Amy E Glass: That's true with...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Behavioral health, but yeah. Well, except that in behavioral health, who will pay the bill for that imprisonment, or that person...

Amy E Glass: Princeton, right?

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: didn't get...

Amy E Glass: It's a different.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: different system. Some other system is going to pay the bill.

Amy E Glass: Hmm.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And a lot of times, it's the public still paying the bill, but the HMO didn't have to.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: the jail, or the state hospital, or the local, you know, holding tank where they wind up while they detox. Somebody else is paying that bill. Medicaid won't pay for that.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: So, the incentive is a perverse one in behavioral health, and I've been saying that for a long time, and, you know, maybe you'll listen, maybe nobody else has so far.

Amy E Glass: Well, you are, you are not alone in a lot of these views. I just don't know how you get the right people at the right table, you know, who have actual decision-making ability to make some shifts in.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Well, here's...

Amy E Glass: systems.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Here's another example that we're gonna have to deal with.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And it came up at our very first meeting, our very first meeting of this steering committee for the Senate Bill 3 group.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: People... Show up for treatment at a behavioral health provider.

Amy E Glass: Okay?

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And they say, oh, good, are you... are you on Medicaid? Yes, I'm on Medicaid, and let's see your card, and your card... oh, I'm sorry, that's a Blue Cross card.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Every time the Medicaid agencies would come before the healthcare authority would come before the interim committee, we'd say to them, when are you going to stop leaving it up to each of your three, and now it's four?

Amy E Glass: Right.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: HMOs, MCOs, to decide who they'll... they'll... which providers they'll reimburse.

Amy E Glass: Everybody should be in that same network. Why do we have four separate little networks.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: When there's huge overlap among them, but you're putting people jump through hoops, you're making people jump through a lot of hoops to get into your network, and all we need is one network, statewide. And they said, 3 years ago, they said, you're right, and when the new contracts come out, we'll make sure that happens.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And the new contracts came out, And they didn't.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And so we said at the very first meeting, wait a second, is that still going on? Because people brought that up at the meeting? And we said, yes, still going on. We hope to attend to it.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Why? I mean, that's such a simple solution.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: There are about 5 or 6 things that are currently going on that you could just say.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Insto presto, it's done. Finished.

Amy E Glass: Right.

Amy E Glass: Just make it automatic. Yep.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yeah, but each of those then makes it impossible to fully utilize the way it should be utilized, that billion and a half dollars in Medicaid that's going out the door.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Amy E Glass: So there, boy, it would benefit to have a lot more conversation about those dollars.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Absolutely.

Amy E Glass: And there are so many wonderful people within the MCO systems, but they often are not the ones who have any kind of decision-making.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: they don't have the decision, and it really is the state that should say to them, when they sign the contract, you can't... you... we don't want you to do that anymore. Now you have to accept... if you want this... and every one of them wanted... there were two other MCOs that were bidding on that.

Amy E Glass: They didn't get it. Everybody wants in on this golden goose.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: A moose that lays a golden egg. Everybody wants in.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: You can't lose. There's no way to lose money on a managed care contract through Medicaid. That's what they've all learned.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: So, if that's the case, you should put some stipulations on them. You cannot be so exclus... especially when their exclusivity often means that some communities go completely unserved.

Amy E Glass: Yes. I mean, people who had that experience, they show up in...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: in Socorro or Truth or Consequences, looking for a counselor, somebody to counsel their teenage kid who's having trouble, you know, getting up and going to school. Is he depressed? Is he... does he need a drug? Are people bullying him? What's going on? We just need a counselor to evaluate him and tell him, and they go to their,

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: directory of managed care services that they're enrolled in, and it has two names. And they call them up, and the first one died two years ago, and the second one has left the state because of the Medicaid malpractice, you know, because of malpractice.

Amy E Glass: True. Yep.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: There's nobody.

Amy E Glass: But if... but there's 3 others in town.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: who don't happen to be part of that network, but they're part of other Medicaid networks, and oh God, why are we doing this to ourselves?

Amy E Glass: Yeah, yeah, we've, we've been doing regional summits, to get people together across, across, different disciplines and families and young people and, you know, getting everyone in the same room. And the thing we hear over and over is really that, like.

Amy E Glass: the services, any directory of services is outdated, you know, within 3 to 6 months. It's completely outdated, right? And there's no one updating it regularly, so people don't even know what is available or isn't.

Amy E Glass: It's hard...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yeah, it'd be...

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yeah. Wouldn't it be great if there was some invention.

Amy E Glass: That would permit...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Data to be entered Every day.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Someday they'll come up with that. Someday we'll have...

Amy E Glass: Okay.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Alright.

Amy E Glass: So, you know.

Amy E Glass: what are some of the areas of progress? You know, we're talking about all these gaps and, you know, kind of lack of common sense policies in some of the system, but what are some of the areas of progress in New Mexico over the past, maybe, you know, 5 years or so, that you think are promising and hopeful?

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Well, there are some enormous

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: hopeful signs. Yeah. We still are discombobulated in how we incorporate everything in, but there's some real benefits to build on. One of them is

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Money.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: We've got lots of money.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Not just the state money, which is coming in in amounts Never before dreamt of.

Amy E Glass: The state has adequate resources.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: to build... rebuild the system that we've lost. Now, we... and... and one of the things that SB1 did, part of the package, SB1, SB2, SB3, SB1 created a fund.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: that someday, they think, will be a billion dollars. It's not a billion dollars now, it's called the billion dollar fund, but there's not that much money in it yet. In fact, anything that SB3 doesn't spend will go into that

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Into that fund to help beef it up, but there's a little bit of money in there, and eventually, if it reaches the billion-dollar target, it'll generate probably \$50 million a year for behavioral health services in the state that we don't have now. Regularly, forever.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And if you add more, then it'll get bigger. So that... that's...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: That's something really good. But also, the legislature has been pretty actively funding things. We've increased the reimbursement rates for Medicaid so that they now are beyond the Medicare rates, which is not saying a whole lot, but we used to be a percentage of Medicare, now we're beyond it.

Amy E Glass: Right.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: We have lots of new initiatives going on, funded with state money.

Amy E Glass: Something as simple as the.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: not simple, I mean, something as important as... But as... as...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Frequently unrecognized as the school-based health centers, where the majority of behavioral health for kids in the state are provided through those school-based health centers.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: you know, everybody, when we started them, said, oh, that's going to be for giving out birth control. No, it's for... basically for dealing with depression and anger and isolation, anxiety, and all the things that lead to suicide.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Kids are really troubled these days, that's where they can get help.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And we need to expand those so that every kid has access to those. But that's all state funding going into that. That's an important step forward. So just more money is a big, big help from the state.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Now, we may lose some federal money.

Amy E Glass: At the same time, and that... because we have a... I was wondering if that was gonna come up?

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yeah, because we have a... a... a real blundering

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: federal administration right now that doesn't know exactly what it's doing, just wants to cut, cut, cut, cut, cut. We may have to use state money to fill in some gaps, but there is enough to do that.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: That may detract from our ability to grow, but we can... we can make up some of the difference.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: The second big thing that's going on right now that I think is remarkable and that we need to incorporate into our planning and build on is the recognition by local and county government that they have a role in this. That this is an important public service, because we've always, in the past.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Always in the past, that's been a state responsibility. Somebody... not the local government. Why are you coming to me for help with your addiction? I don't do that stuff.

Amy E Glass: Right.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: No, but I have a jail, and the jail is taking up 50... in some counties, 60% of our total tax revenue goes to maintain the jail.

Amy E Glass: Because we have such a big drug problem, and such a big mental health problem. Right. And so they're beginning to realize we've got to get upstream on this.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: and deal with the problems before they land in our jails, where we have to pay for... those are our responsibility, and once they're in jail, we gotta pay the bills. So let's... let's figure out how to do this better.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Same thing goes for housing.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: You know, all of a sudden, local governments are saying, we need to put some money into housing.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And that's a big factor in many of our behavioral health problems, providing adequate housing and supported housing, so that there's something beyond just a roof over their head, they're getting connected with other services while they're in there.



Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yeah, now,

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: So, connected with that is the... the whole... the third thing that I would say is a hopeful sign. The recognition, the growing recognition that we should be diverting people out of the courts. That the courts are not

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Courts, jail, prisons. Police, courts, jail, prison is not the system best suited to dealing with behavioral health problems.

Amy E Glass: Wait, you've got to start with school suspension or expulsion, and then police, courts, yeah, okay.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Even better, yes, exactly. So, you know, if you can... if you... if you keep kids from ever having a problem in the first place, that's the idea. But if they have a problem, and you can keep them from having to land in suspension better, keep them... maybe they get suspended, but you keep them from getting into courts better. Each step you can...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: it becomes harder, but better, to get them diverted.

Amy E Glass: Moving towards the court system to, which... which has a Particular lens, right?

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Well, yeah, but... but, you know, keep in mind that this steering committee is made up of the courts and the behavioral health

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: services system. So you have 3 people from the administrative... 3 people appointed by the administrative office of the courts, and 3 people from the healthcare authority.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: the secretary of that department, the head of Medicaid of that department, which spends a billion and a half, and then the head of behavioral health services of that department. So that's where the thought is, you bring them together. And we have modified that original

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: sequential intercept model to make it much less court-oriented.

Amy E Glass: Oh, good.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Broaden it so that it... that now we're looking at how do we keep

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: services, even for people who aren't... who haven't done anything that would land them in court, but who still need help. And how do we do that? Both kids and adults. And tribes. Now, the tribes are a separate issue and a difficult issue, because

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: First of all, each tribe is sovereign.

Amy E Glass: So you've got 21...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: 22, actually, Fort Sill. 22 sovereign tribal entities who each make up their own decisions about what services they will have, and they also have separate funding.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: From the federal government, or from their local enterprises, which largely are casinos at this point, but they also have some other enterprises.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: tourism and so on. And so they have streams of revenue that are available to them that aren't available to everybody else.

Amy E Glass: Oh, those are being.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Go ahead.

Amy E Glass: Oh, but yes.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yeah. Well, the casinos, I think, will flourish under this administration.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: We may see an increased activity at the casino, those people. How do I get out of here? Yeah. But nonetheless, so... but the other issue with the tribes is

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Some of them are tiny.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: 500 members of the Sandia Pueblo, 400 members of Picaris Pueblo. Some of them are enormous. The Navajo Nation probably has

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Although they cross two states, three states, they're in Utah also.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Probably have 250,000 members across 3 states, maybe 100,000 of them in New Mexico.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Or more than 100, I don't know how many in New Mexico. I used to know, but they've changed.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: I think it's probably about 120,000 in New Mexico now. Well.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: How do you treat them as... as...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: similar entities when there's huge disparities between them. And their locations are such, That it may be that

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: You need to have them incorporated into the same region.

Amy E Glass: As other services, just because geographically.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Sandia and Santa Ana, There's led.

Amy E Glass: Sure.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: All of those are located right here.

Amy E Glass: from Mexico.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: But they... they wouldn't necessarily go there for services. They would go to their own tribal entities for services. And how can you equitably allocate money

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: to 700,000 people in Albuquerque and 500 people in Sandia, if they're in the same region, Sandia will get, like, you know, \$3 per person, you know, under that system. So the whole thing is going to be complex.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: But we are committed to somehow incorporating the needs of tribal communities, as well as youth and adults into this plan.

Amy E Glass: Okay, so you're feeling optimistic.

Amy E Glass: Yes. I'm feeling like we have an important charge.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And I like the steps that have been taken so far. So yes, optimistic to that extent. I think we're heading in a good direction.

Amy E Glass: That is nice to hear.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yeah.

Amy E Glass: Okay. And, and I, I do want to ask you, just on a, on a personal level, you know, our, our program,

Amy E Glass: at NM-ABC tries to support our workforce shortages in behavioral health services by providing consultation and training for folks who are out there in all of the communities across the state, working with kids and teens who have some mental health conditions.

Amy E Glass: So, how can a program like ours, there are so many programs doing all kinds of good things across the state, how can we be aligned with this big change process? Like, how can we all...

Amy E Glass: Be involved in the transition, and try so we're not duplicating services, and we're all working together somehow.

Amy E Glass: How does that happen?

Amy E Glass: Well, you know, it... it...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: We're getting many, many similar inquiries coming in from...

Amy E Glass: I bet.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: You know, private providers, associations of providers, agencies.

Amy E Glass: Both public and private.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And from universities, and programs such as yours that are statewide in scope, as well as those that are more localized.

Amy E Glass: Right. And so...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: If we gave every single inquiry time on our agenda, it would become.

Amy E Glass: Exactly.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: you know, we would be totally bogged down. So, what the staff... what we've asked the staff to do is to... is to try to incorporate

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Groups such as yours, into the local planning efforts.

Amy E Glass: When we meet, for example, with Local Collaborative 2, you know, now, for you, that may mean several collaboratives.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: You know, you may have to go to several different meetings, which is...

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Because you're statewide in scope. Although, once we know you're statewide in scope, we could kind of begin developing a

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Statewide resource inventory.

Amy E Glass: That's another way we could... yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: So, we're struggling with it, staff is coming up with some ideas, we're going to be talking about that.

Amy E Glass: Hmm.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: I like the idea of that inventory, rather than have you go to NAV, and that's the other problem. Because we're...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: To go back to an earlier question you asked about why did this all start in the courts, it's because the legislature gave the courts some money last year, 2024.

Amy E Glass: I was still there when we did this.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: We gave them money to... Get away from the governor's plan of putting people in jail.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Putting, you know, because her plan, her legislation in that year was

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: If they don't want to go to treatment, put them in jail. Or keep them in jail until they decide.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: We didn't want to do that. That just seemed like... Too draconian an approach, too.

Amy E Glass: You know, foolhardy an approach.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: too expensive an approach, and too limiting an approach. So we decided and said, well, let's give some money, just a little bit, to test the water. So we gave the,

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Administrative Office of the courts, I think they got 3 million? That's... that figure is in my head. 3 million...

Amy E Glass: for, for the.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: 2024.

Amy E Glass: The diversion programs?

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: For the division, diversion programs. Okay. And so they've gone, I think, into 5 or 6 judicial districts, and they have different models. Each district was... was encouraged to create their own model, their locally appropriate model.

Amy E Glass: Yeah. Using the resources they had in their community.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: If they're treatment courts, or if they're, counseling programs for kids, whatever they... whatever resources they had to incorporate them into their program, and try to keep people from jail and from the juvenile detention facilities.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And so that was... that was why we got into that. And then the legislature this year in SB1 built on that, so that there's money in... in SB3,

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Right. That's designated specifically for those things, for those, courts, court diversion programs.

Amy E Glass: Is... so are those, district plans, systems that came out of it last year, are those...

Amy E Glass: available? Like, who... how do you see them?

Amy E Glass: See what's in them.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Oh, yeah, the Administrative Office of the Courts has a website, and you can see what's being done in Alamogordo, in Las Cruces, in Las Vegas, in Santa Fe.

Amy E Glass: And where's the other one?

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yeah, Carlsbad? I think Carlsbad or Roswell, one of those.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: there's five, I think, that are up and operating, and they... they're hoping, with the new money, to expand into some others. Now, I don't think...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: We didn't get one of those grants here in Albuquerque, in Judicial District 2, but we already had a lot of treatment courts going on, and there were some locally funded diversion programs, because we have the County Behavioral Health Initiative that was putting some money into diversion.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And so, they're doing some themselves, and when they give reports, they always

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Reference how they're doing it here, too.

Amy E Glass: I just want to say that I am very grateful that you are involved in this process. I know that you should be kicking back and enjoying retirement, but here you are working really hard on these issues, and many of us are very grateful about that.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Thank you. I would be going crazy if I weren't involved in it somehow, because I just feel too strongly about this stuff to let it go without trying to...

Amy E Glass: There's so much pickleball you can play, right?

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Exactly.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Well...

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: It turns out that in Albuquerque, you can play pickleball every day if you're willing to travel around town. There's a big pickleball group meeting everywhere.

Amy E Glass: Alright.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yeah, I would go... emotionally, you can only take so much pickleball.

Amy E Glass: Yeah, you're just... I, you have such an important historical, contextual perspective on all of these issues, having seen what's been happening for many decades.

Amy E Glass: And, so hopefully we can learn a little bit from the past. That would be ideal, right? And not make some of the same mistakes in...

Amy E Glass: In... in the way we are approaching these issues.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yes, yeah, absolutely. And I hope bringing some common sense to the... instead of ideology. Too often, we're making decisions based on

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: on.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: statements that I think have the roots only in ideology, not in the reality. Like, kids deserve to be in homes, not in institutions.

Amy E Glass: Right.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: In a vacuum, that's probably a true... a truth.

Amy E Glass: Right.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: But day to day, A well-run institution would be so much better than a series of 6 or 7.

Amy E Glass: bad foster care placements. Who may not be able to meet that child's needs.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: You can't meet that child's needs, exactly.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Because they already are full, and you're shoving into a home license for four, you're shoveling a fifth, or into a home that says, we can take infants, you're shoving in a teenager. All of those... those aren't the foster family's problems. Those are an agency desperate for a bed.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: It's making a bad choice.

Amy E Glass: Right. Boy.

Amy E Glass: Okay, and hopefully we'll see maybe some,

Amy E Glass: attention go towards, maternal, mental health and substance use issues, now that we have another draconian policy in place.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: We desperately need to be realistic about that.

Amy E Glass: Yeah.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And we also need to, you know, to acknowledge that when somebody is addicted, or has an alcoholism problem.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: That's a disease.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: You know, what they're forgetting in this is, well, we should punish that person for putting a child at risk.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Do you take babies away from blind mothers? Do you take babies away from

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: women who have to live in a wheelchair? No, not necessarily. You have to evaluate each case, and by treating it as a

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: As a sin, instead of a... illness, We're making huge mistakes.

Amy E Glass: That is a perfect place to wrap this up, because I just want to say yes, a thousand percent yes. Agreed.

Amy E Glass: Thank you for your time in talking with me today, and thank you. And thank you for the work that you're doing. I really look forward to seeing how this all, unfolds.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Great, and good luck to you, Amy, with your work. So important.

Amy E Glass: so much.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: And that... that workforce is the big stumbling block that we've run into over and over again. Money has gone unspent because they simply couldn't find people to hire to do the work.

Amy E Glass: Right, and so what is our approach to that?

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Yeah.

Amy E Glass: Yep, important piece of that puzzle. All right. Well, thank you, and have a wonderful day.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino: You too. Bye-bye.

----INTERVIEW ENDS----

Amy E Glass: Thank you for listening to this episode of the NM-ABC Podcast. If you have any questions or comments, please get in touch with us at nmabc@salud.unm.edu. We also want to thank BatchBug and Chozic for the music included here.

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