



NEW MEXICO FIRST
People. Ideas. Progress.

New Mexico First and Project SHARE NM Newsletter

Stay Informed and Engaged

June 29, 2020

"Remember that the people behind bars are members of our community, who have made some mistakes, but most of them are going to be back in our community. Imagine that it's your loved one and what you would want for them."

Lalita Moskowitz, [ACLU New Mexico](#) Staff Attorney, and Equal Justice Works Fellow.



COVID-19 Crisis

A [recent report](#) on the coronavirus crisis inside our jails and prisons is alarming. "Currently, the nation's top COVID-19 hot spots are all correctional facilities."

Unfortunately, correctional facilities are [COVID-19 hotspots](#) for New Mexico as well. About 80% of inmates at the Otero County Prison have tested positive for the coronavirus. More than 400 inmates have tested positive and three have died. The prison also holds inmates serving time on federal convictions, 284 of whom have tested positive for COVID-19. There are at least 146 people with the virus at the ICE Otero County Processing Center. All three facilities are managed by private operator Management and Training Corporation. The San Juan Detention Facility today announced 66 new cases of among inmates and one employee at the San Juan County Adult Detention Center, bringing the total to 99 cases. Six

more state inmates – three at the Central New Mexico Correctional Facility in Los Lunas and three at the Otero County Prison Facility – have tested positive.

New Mexico now has 11,809 cases, with 5,264 recoveries. There are now 114 people hospitalized with the disease throughout the state, according to the Health Department.

The state continues to encourage New Mexicans to stay home, "except for outings absolutely necessary for health, safety and welfare," in an attempt to minimize person-to-person contact to mitigate the spread of the virus.

The NM Department of Corrections and state Department of Health have published [precautionary measures](#) taken to limit the spread of the coronavirus within its 11 prisons.

Yet the threat goes beyond those currently incarcerated, endangering staff, their families, and the communities where staff live and where those released from incarceration return. What is New Mexico doing to support those who are incarcerated or returning to the community?



Photo by [Jonathan Klok on Unsplash](#)

Transitions

The first line of defense for those transitioning back to the community falls to the three Managed Care Organizations. These organizations are mandated to ensure that those who are eligible for Medicaid are connected to Medicaid and healthcare resources within 48-72 hours.

JUST Health is a new Centennial Care (Medicaid) program designed to promote and help develop healthy and safe communities by linking the justice and healthcare systems. The program expands Medicaid coverage to ensure that individuals who are incarcerated don't lose their eligibility when they return to the community. New Mexico's Behavioral Health Services Division has mandated that all three Managed Care Organizations provide services to their members while

incarcerated and to link members with appropriate community resources upon their release. For further information please contact [Sonya Salazar](#), JUST Health Coordinator for Presbyterian Centennial Care.



Community Resources

Community-based organizations like [The Olive Tree](#) in Truth or Consequences are on the frontline. In addition to its wide range of programs for residents of all ages, The Olive Tree manages Sierra County's RISE program, connecting community members who are incarcerated or returning to the community with services to ensure a successful transition.

RISE was intended to begin service planning with participants while they are incarcerated, but the lockdown at detention centers means that case managers are challenged to get services in place at release. This has resulted in delays in accessing SNAP, Medicaid, and Social Security benefits, as well as medical treatment. Probation and Compliance offices have been shut down until recently.

COVID-19 has added to the barriers for clients trying to find employment. With no income, they often need help with housing, food and clothing. Case managers have seen an increase in depressive symptoms among participants struggling with self-isolation and lack of social involvement. Therapy and group sessions are starting to take place again following state COVID-19 safe practices guidelines. Throughout it all, the program staff have been essential workers, providing services for their clients and being that "go to" person for them during this unstable time.

Incarcerated and Pregnant?

The NM CARA program offers help for New Mexican women who are incarcerated and expecting, as well as mothers of any babies born with drugs or alcohol in their systems. This program, managed jointly by the Children, Youth and Families Department and the Department of Health, works with mothers-to-be to create a plan for care, to ensure that newborns are cared for safely and with

appropriate services. CARA staff also support mothers when they are released from incarceration to get all the services they may qualify for, want and need. Learn more about the CARA program in NM.



Civic Engagement Tip

Relationship-based Work. Before and during this pandemic, I've been inspired by the bright, generous, talented, effective people I've met through the community work New Mexico First leads and is involved in with others. From passionate and committed volunteer legislators, to people of faith, advocates, public servants, community organizers, civic organizations, chambers of commerce, and people who have children with special needs, folks who are experiencing homelessness, those who are serving children and families, and those who are feeding New Mexico, our broad policy priorities allow us to be invited into the heart of New Mexicans to hold space for meaningful conversations and action around public policy and systems change.

Working with hundreds of people every week provides opportunities to learn and connect the dots while also seeing the gaps and challenges. For those who are in communication often, you may have noticed our commitment to grounding conversations in our shared humanity. We invite joy, hope, and inspiration openly while acknowledging what is deeply problematic.

Relationship-based work is more than bringing people together. It's also about creating community and connection that endures well beyond a particular task or project. In policy it makes sense to pay attention to strategy, tactics, and next steps. We are significantly more successful together when we make change with deep respect and connection to one another.

This section is authored by Lilly Irvin-Vitela, President and Executive Director of New Mexico First. She invites you to connect! Email her at lilly@nmfirst.org.



New Mexico First Policy Domains Special Session Overview, HB 1 and SB 5

Overview

- While HB 1 awaits review by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and it hasn't been signed into law as of 6/24/20, the information below highlights decisions made by our volunteer legislators in the New Mexico House of Representatives.
- We appreciate the uncertain and challenging economic decisions that needed to be made and the thoughtful approach to sharing the responsibility of addressing budget constraints, using federal CARES Act relief dollars judiciously, and leaving nuanced decisions about how to

address sanding to state agencies who have the most nuanced understanding of emerging and existing needs and priorities.

- We appreciate the difficulties and challenges related to health and safety during the special session and the incredible acts of service demonstrated by our Representatives.
- While HB1 addressed policy areas comprehensively, New Mexico First focuses in the following policy domains, and this overview is targeted to those areas: health, education, economic development, natural resources, good government, and agricultural resilience and healthy local food systems.

Overview

- While SB5 awaits review by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and it hasn't been signed into law as of 6/24/20, the information below highlights decisions made by our volunteer legislators in the New Mexico Senate.
- We appreciate the uncertain and challenging economic decisions that needed to be made and the thoughtful approach to share the responsibility of addressing budget constraints, using federal CARES Act relief dollars judiciously, and leaving nuanced decisions about how to address financial reductions to state agencies who have the most nuanced understanding of emerging and existing needs and priorities.
- We appreciate the difficulties and challenges related to health and safety during the special session and the incredible acts of service demonstrated by our Senators.
- While SB5 addressed policy areas comprehensively, New Mexico First focuses on the following policy domains and this overview is targeted to those areas: health, education, economic development, natural resources,

good government, and agricultural resilience and healthy local food systems.

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Volunteer

Volunteers are urgently needed at food banks across the state. Community members are encouraged to help out at any of five food banks (see below). Volunteers must be free of illness and in good health. If you have [traveled](#)

[internationally](#) or have traveled outside your county or the state of New Mexico recently, please consider volunteering after self-quarantining as recommended by [New Mexico public health orders](#).

Volunteers are needed to help prep food for distribution at food bank warehouses and also at various food distribution locations away from the food bank. Those interested in a volunteer shift should plan to bring and wear masks while volunteering.

- Roadrunner Food Bank based in Albuquerque: Visit www.rrfb.org/volunteer for details or www.rrfb.org/cervis to register online. Questions? Call: 505.349.8837 or 505.349.8841 during business hours.
- The Food Depot based in Santa Fe: Visit www.thefooddepot.org/volunteer, email volunteer@thefooddepot or call 505.471.1633 ext. 130.
- The Community Pantry based in Gallup and Grants: call 505.726.8068 or 505.287.5090 for details. Visit our website at: www.thecommunitypantry.org or email assistant@thecommunitypantry.org
- ECHO Food Bank based in Farmington: call 505.325.7466 for details.
- Food Bank of Eastern New Mexico based in Clovis: call 575.763.6130 for details or visit this link for volunteer needs.

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Our Mission. Our Values.

Our Mission

To be a catalyst for positive change by engaging citizens in policy and enabling action.

Our Core Values

Meaningfully engaging New Mexicans in public policy; Striving for and respecting consensus; Pursuing and respecting diverse points of views; Ensuring inclusion and transparency; Rising above partisan politics; Changing policy to improve people's lives; Creating an informed citizenry that is powerfully motivated; Reaching out statewide including rural and tribal communities; Partnering with others; Promoting civility and Democracy at its best!

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