



NEW MEXICO FIRST

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New Mexico First and Project SHARE NM Newsletter

Stay Informed and Engaged

July 6, 2020



Early Childhood Education and Care Department

On July 1st, New Mexico launched its newest state agency – the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD.) View the [launch video](#) here. NM will join with just three other states who have also created Cabinet-level early childhood departments. Now our very youngest New Mexicans will have a stronger voice for state policy making, right along with public and higher education.

This new department is important for stakeholders and families alike for several reasons. Historically, the state’s early childhood services have been distributed

across different state departments leading to duplication of services and inefficiency. Housing them under one roof will improve access for families and children to home visitation, early intervention, nurse case management, childcare, and nutrition. At a time when New Mexico continues to rank 50th in child well-being, and 49th in child poverty, coupled with the additional strain of COVID-19, the launch of the new department is quite timely.

In 2017, current Lt. Governor Howie Morales introduced a bill to bring the state's prenatal-to-K-5 services under one department. With persistence and leadership, coupled with decades of advocacy work by providers, educators, parents, and concerned citizens, the bill passed in 2020. Elizabeth Groginsky will serve as its first Cabinet secretary, and Jovanna Archuleta will be NM's and the nation's first assistant secretary for Native American early childhood. Together, with a strong advisory board of over 40 members, the new department intends to ensure that every New Mexican child has access to needed educational, developmental, nutritional, and health resources.

For more information about the department's initiatives, and to access general information about early childhood services click the button below.

[Learn More Here](#)

Child Care Stabilization and Recovery Grant

One of the first actions by the new Early Childhood Education and Care Dept., partnering with the NM Economic Development Dept. is to provide \$12 million in grants to licensed childcare providers who have been impacted by the public health emergency. The grants will cover lost income resulting from closure, response and recovery costs. **This is not a first-come, first-serve grant.** The expectation is to cover all eligible providers who complete an application.

Applications will be available shortly on NewMexicoKids.org. You can also call New Mexico Kids at 1-800-691-9067 to request a paper application. One application per organization (include all sites).

For more information, contact:

Claire Dudley Chavez, Claire.DudleyChavez@state.nm.us, 505.690.7239 or
Matt Bieber, Matt.Bieber@state.nm.us, 505.629.9675



Updated Guidelines for Early Childhood Programs and Providers

As childcare centers and homes reopen, the paramount concern is safety for the children, their parents and providers. The Early Childhood Care and Education Department has issued updated guidelines in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). The guidelines are intended to help providers and early childhood professionals maintain social distancing practices and health, as well as safety standards. Please know that the situation is fluid, and new questions are emerging in this altogether new situation. As the Department learns more, it will share updated guidance.

Please address questions you may have to: Matt Bieber, matt.beiber@statem.us

Free Testing for Childcare Providers

Reminder: All childcare providers are required to get tested! Licensed or registered childcare providers are also responsible for ensuring that employees and caregivers/adults residing in the home are tested. Staff who experience symptoms or have someone in their household who has COVID-19-related symptoms or has previously been COVID-19 positive will be tested. Licensed and registered providers are required to report positive COVID-19 cases to the Dept. of Health and to the CYFD Early Childhood Services Division within 24-hours.

Find [dates and sites](#) for free COVID-19 testing for early childhood professionals, in English and Spanish.



Grandparents and Relatives Raising Children

CYFD's Kinship Navigation program is celebrating its first year in New Mexico by launching a pilot program of support services for grandparents and other relatives raising children. **Families Fostering Family**, a program of [Southwest Family Guidance Center and Institute](#), provides a coordinated and comprehensive array of services for kinship caregivers in **Bernalillo, Doña Ana, and Rio Arriba Counties**. The goals are to increase family stability, keep children connected to family and culture, and reduce the long-term effects of childhood trauma. The [program flier](#) provides more information.

Kinship caregivers statewide could be eligible for legal assistance from four agencies under contract to CYFD. Contact information is [available here](#).

For additional information and resources for kinship caregivers, visit the [Kinship Navigation page](#).



Food for Children

Many licensed childcare programs participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program which is administered by the Children Youth and Families Department. Leadership by the Governor's Office and Secretary Blalock moved forward two waivers for this federal program. The first is to allow local at-risk centers to continue to meet the "urgent need of child hunger" and [operate continuously](#) until September 30, 2020. A second waives Income Eligibility Requirements and [reimburses meals at the free rate](#) for all child care providers in New Mexico who are providing services to first responders and essential workers, who still depend on child care for their children.

Child hunger in New Mexico was a concern pre-pandemic and is an ongoing public health challenge during the pandemic, especially during the summer months when children are out of school. Find a [map of sites](#) that are providing meals for children 1-18 years-old during the summer, or call 1-800-EAT-COOL (1-800-328-2665) to learn more about free and nutritious food during the summer.

With both an economic crisis and a public health crisis, policy makers will continue to look for solutions to strengthen New Mexico. 87% of New Mexicans oppose a food tax as a strategy for increasing revenue. New Mexico Voices for Children has created a [4-page fact sheet](#) that explains why taxing food would increase food insecurity.

Stay Engaged

Register for the New Mexico First Town Hall. Health: Body, Mind, and Spirit is the topic this year, and there are many ways to get involved and help build

consensus-backed decisions to strengthen health policy and systems in New Mexico. Due to the need for social distancing, the town hall will be conducted remotely through a series which will allow for dialogue, deliberation, and decision-making. Interpretation services are available. [Register here](#) to reserve your space.



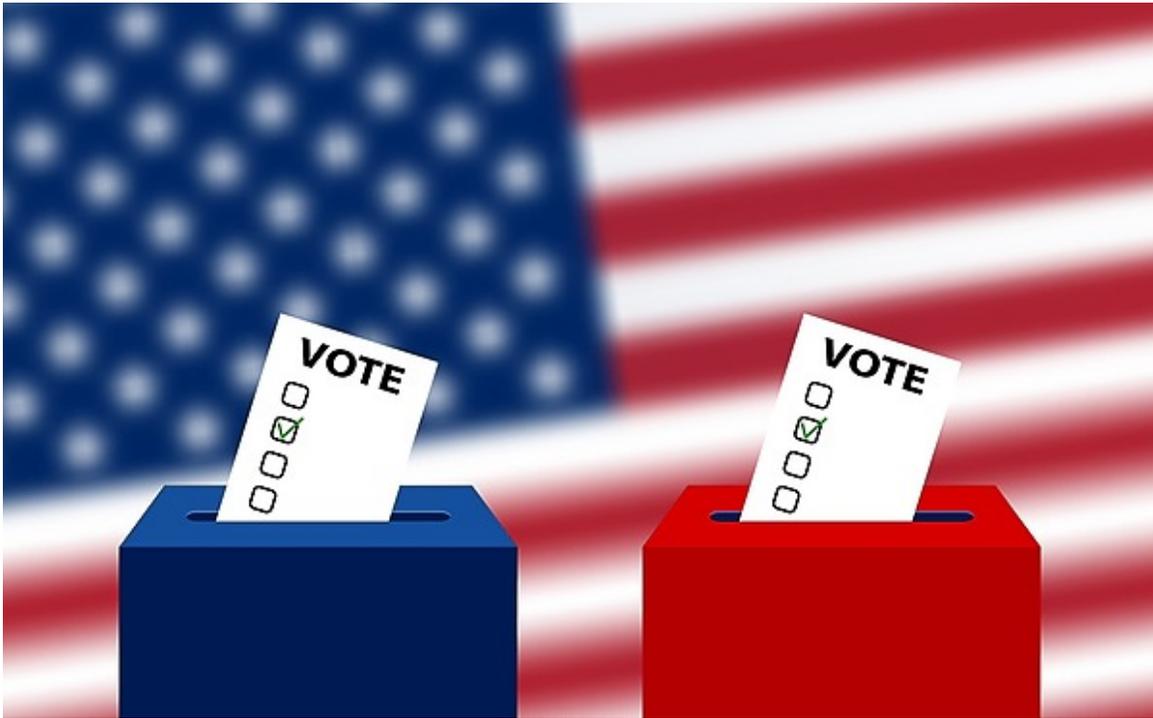
Stand and Be Counted: Census 2020. [The New Mexico Black Leadership Council](#) (NMBLC) is active with the 2020 United States Census Complete Count Committee. ***The 2020 Census is about justice. Census Justice.*** Article I, Section 2 of the United States Constitution mandates "Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States... according to their respective Numbers." And that representation determines how much of our "commonwealth" New Mexico will receive in the form of federal benefits. We need to make sure that we get our fair share.

One innovative approach taken by the NM Black Leadership Council: [recruiting hairstylists](#) to spread the word to their clients about the importance of the Census.

“Barbers and stylists spend more time with people in the community than doctors,” said Cathryn McGill, Executive Director of the NMBLC and chair of the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Complete Count Committee. “If we’re talking about trusted messengers, they’re our trusted messengers.”

Check out the [NMBLC Census page](#) for more information about why the census is important, how you can apply online, and learn more about the Tiny Census Concerts.

“New Mexico has a lot riding on who gets what, when. Regardless of who you are, what you look like, who you love, where you live, and how much money you have, spending 10 minutes to complete the 2020 Census is the most important thing you will do for your ancestors, for your community, and for you.”



Register to Vote

In New Mexico, you can **register to vote on-line**. Visit the [Secretary of State's website](#) to learn more and register to vote today. Do you think you're already registered to vote but want to make sure? Visit the [Voter Portal](#) and enter your information to double-check that you're registered and ready to participate in the next election. By taking care of this now, you avoid the fall rush and can have piece of mind that your voice will be heard in the upcoming general election.



Tip for Civic Engagement

In times of stress, it is normal to seek comfort. It's important that our understandable needs for comfort and security don't lull us into a narrow and inaccurate view of the world. Staying civically engaged through meaningful and respectful dialogue with people who hold diverse views from our own is one way to maintain an open mind and exercise sound judgment. Accessing news from a variety of credible sources is another way to avoid confirmation bias.

Shahram Heshmat, Ph.D., [describes confirmation bias](#) in an article in Psychology Today. "Confirmation bias occurs from the direct influence of desire on beliefs. When people would like a certain idea or concept to be true, they end up believing it to be true. They are motivated by wishful thinking. This error leads the individual to stop gathering information when the evidence gathered so far confirms the views or prejudices one would like to be true."

Confirmation bias only complicates civic life. Polarization often results in an “us vs. them” or adversarial approach to policy which turns most people off from engaging in policy. This is a very dangerous trend in a democracy and one we can do something about. We must continue to talk and think with people who hold many views, and we can commit ourselves to be informed by multiple sources and exercise critically thinking.

The Tip for Civic Engagement 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.

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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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