



NEW MEXICO FIRST
People. Ideas. Progress.

New Mexico First and Project SHARE NM Newsletter

Stay Informed and Engaged

August 10, 2020



Update on Health: Body, Mind, Spirit

On April 5th, community members from across New Mexico came together to begin a month-long series of conversations about how to improve the health of our communities and residents. Throughout the Town Hall series, New Mexicans will consider our values, challenges, and assets to discover common ground on policy recommendations that can move us forward to a healthier New Mexico.

For those of you who aren't able to join us, we'd like to share some of the highlights from the opening session. The Town Hall was launched by an outstanding panel of knowledgeable, experienced, and dedicated New Mexicans, who spoke on the four town hall themes: Continuum of Care; Health Workforce;

Toxic Stress, Trauma, and Resilience; and Food Security and Systems. You can find [links to the presentations](#) on our NM First website. This week, the newsletter focuses on Continuum of Care.

Continuum of Care

Sharon Finarelli, Executive Director of the [NM Alliance of Health Councils](#), brought both her personal and professional experience to the question of how we build a robust continuum of care, from health promotion and prevention to treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care, to ensure good health for New Mexicans across the age span.

Drawing upon her own experiences as a mother, daughter, patient, and rural community member, Sharon drew a vivid picture of the barriers that block access to physical and behavioral health. These include:

- Lack of information, communication and understanding on the part of health care professionals as well as those they serve;
- Social stigmas, especially around mental health, that discourage people from seeking help and too often from receiving help;
- Lack of time, transportation, job flexibility, and insurance, which makes health care inaccessible or unaffordable.

“To summarize, when I look at continuum of care, I think it reaches beyond healthcare, beyond behavioral health, into community health. The community needs to be a part of making that continuum work, and that happens when we have equity and social justice in our community.”

[Read Sharon's powerful presentation.](#)

Entering the Continuum Through Universal Screening

Screening and assessment for areas of risk and concern across the population is key to effective early intervention, and effective treatment and specialty care. Health partners are bombarded with recommendations and tools for screening and assessment. People-centered approaches to universal screening and assessment protocols for issues that are prevalent in a community can help normalize sensitive conversations, giving space to providers and participants in care, to explore issues that impact health.

Still, some are difficult to screen, and assess for conditions and concerns if there are not readily available resources to recommend and help people connect to, as a strategy to improve health. For example, screening for depression and suicidality in a county with high suicide rates is less likely if there are not mental health providers to refer to if indicated by a screening result. Yet, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention notes that according to the most recent data, there were 1.4 million suicide attempts in 2018, and suicide was the 10th leading cause of death in the US. The rates of suicide in NM are 50% higher than the national average, yet we do not have universal screening across the health delivery system in New Mexico.

At the health promotion and prevention end of the continuum, screening and assessment, using evidence-based tools is essential in prevention and early identification across a range of health concerns. [According to the CDC](#), there is a great deal we can do to improve outcomes for chronic disease through screening. Preventative health screening can increase the likelihood that people get the supports they need, in a timely way, to improve quality of life and increase life expectancy.

HERE'S
THE
SCOOP!



Ice Cream Socials and Senators

The opening session concluded with a virtual ice cream social, with everyone sharing their favorite treat and some great stories. Here's Roy Montibon's story.

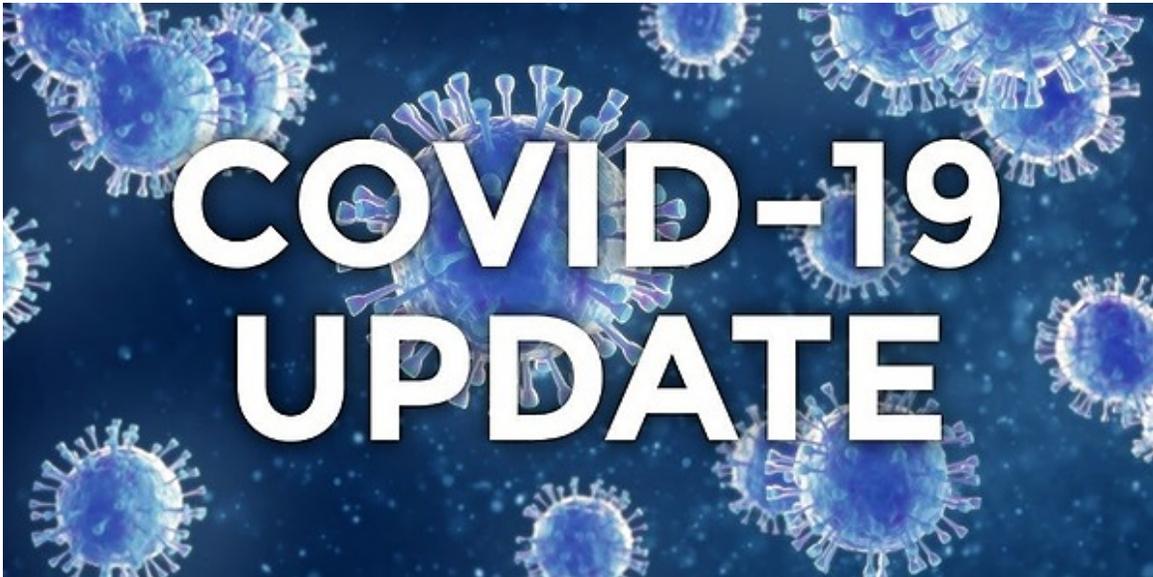
"When Julie and I first arrived in Las Vegas, NM with an overloaded Penske truck, we were totally exhausted. After unloading the truck, I needed a coffee and asked our real estate broker to recommend a coffee shop.

On the way to the coffee shop, we passed truck after truck with 'StarWagons, Burbank' on the side. We had moved from the corner of 4th and Main in Downtown LA, which is arguably the most filmed corner in the United States, so we were used to seeing StarWagons. I thought, 'Did we actually drive 16 hours to Las Vegas, NM, or are we just on a giant film set that we never left?' (We didn't realize it, but the Coen Brothers were filming No Country for Old Men in Las Vegas when we arrived).

So, when we got the coffee shop (in a hotel lobby), I had movies on my mind. We walk in and across the lobby is a tall man with silvery hair in a beautiful blue suit. I thought to myself, 'If I were a filmmaker and needed to cast a senator, I'd cast that guy.' The tall gentleman saw us walk in and strode over with his hand out. He

said, 'Hello, I'm Senator Bingaman, welcome to our ice cream social!'

My next two thoughts while I was shaking his hand were: 'Wow, he really is a Senator!' and 'Wow, they actually have ice cream socials here!' It was a 'double wow' moment! That's how I met Senator Jeff Bingaman." [New Mexico First was co-founded in 1986 by U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman (retired) and the late U.S. Senator Pete Domenici.]



COVID-19 Updates

While COVID-19 cases are starting to trend downward in New Mexico, we, like the rest of the country, are waiting anxiously to hear whether new relief efforts will become available as the pandemic stretches on. There are critical questions about paying for food, rent, or a mortgage, and going back to school or work. We will try to help keep us all up-to-date on our [COVID-19 information page](#). Here are a couple of updates.

Early Childhood Stabilization Grants. The deadline to apply for the Child Care Stabilization and Recovery Grant is **5:00 p.m. on August 13, 2020**. Licensed providers are eligible for this grant. To be eligible, your business must have severely curtailed business operations or experienced a revenue decline since March 16, 2020 or been forced to close.

How to Apply:

- More information and the application link are available on the [New Mexico Kids website](#)
- Paper applications can be mailed to those without internet access. Call New Mexico Kids at **1-800-691-9067** to request a paper application.
- If you need assistance in completing the application, contact the [UNM Early Childhood Services Center](#) or call (505)-277-0469.
- If you encounter problems with the online application, contact AmpliFund at support@amplifund.Zendesk.com

Updates on SNAP Benefits. All SNAP families will receive the maximum SNAP funding for their family size through the month of August. [Details are available here](#). Still, Feeding America is reporting that project food insecurity rates in New Mexico for 2020 will increase to 21% of New Mexicans, up from 15% in 2018. Food insecurity rates for children are projected to increase in 2020 to 34%, up from 24% in 2018. Check the [interactive map](#) at Feeding America to see what the situation is in your county or congressional district.



In-Person Visits to Congregate Care Facilities

With New Mexico's dropping COVID-19 numbers comes good news for people with family and loved ones in long-term care facilities. Starting next week, nursing homes and other congregate facilities will be allowed to have in-person visits if they are in counties with less than a 5% test positivity rate and fewer than 10 average daily cases per 100,000 residents. Of the state's 33 counties, 21 currently meet that criteria.

In addition, facilities must be free of active COVID-19 cases, and visitors themselves must be healthy. Those visits will occur by appointment only, outside, with social distancing, PPE and either through open windows or with Plexiglas visitation stations.

Governor Lujan Grisham also issued a revised [executive order](#) exempting New Mexico residents who leave the state for urgent medical and family needs from

the mandatory 14-day self-quarantine for anyone entering the state. [New Mexico residents](#) who have left the state for fewer than 24 hours for parenting responsibilities also do not have to self-quarantine.

[Learn More](#)



URGENT CENSUS ALERT

Time is running out to be counted in the Census! On August 6th, the US Census Bureau announced that it will end self-response options as well as field data collection by September 30, 2020. As of today, only 53% of NM households have completed the Census. [Check response rates](#) for your city, county, congressional district, or tribal area.

Missing just 1% of New Mexicans means the loss of \$780 million dollars over the

next 10 years. Help make sure we get our fair share of our tax dollars. If you know someone who has not yet responded, please encourage them to do so today.

- Online: <https://my2020census.gov/>
- By phone:
 - English: 1-844-330-2020
 - Spanish: 1-844-468-2020
 - Telephone Display Device: 1-844-467-2020
 - [Other language options](#)



Register to Vote!

In New Mexico, you can register to vote online. Visit the [Secretary of State's website](#) to learn more and register to vote today. Do you think you are 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 peace of mind that your voice will be heard in the upcoming general election.

Tip for Civic Engagement

In an study called [Democracy Improves Health](#), hosted by Our World in Data, Esteban Ortiz-Ospina asked, “Does democracy lead to better health?” While the social and structural determinants of health are varied and intersectional, there appears to be a strong correlation between democracies and improved health outcomes. Causation is more difficult to establish as a controlled trial and a study of dynamic political systems is far-fetched. We live in a changing world with complex political systems, with huge impacts, rather than a laboratory. We cannot simply run an experiment with a newly established democracy and compare before and after outcomes. However, there are situations that Ortiz Ospina described as “natural experiments” in which transitions from autocratic regimes to more participatory forms of government lead to improved maternal health, infant mortality rates, and other birth outcomes.

In a National Public Radio Report by Jonathan Lambert on July 4th, 2019, entitled [Good News About Democracy: It's Good For Your Health](#), he described a study published in The Lancet, linking democratic processes to improved health.

“Democratic countries with free and fair elections generally had higher overall life expectancies among residents who were HIV-free than did autocracies.

Democratic experience also eased the burden of chronic, noncommunicable diseases like heart disease or stroke, according to the study.” As participants continue throughout August and September in the NM First Town Hall, Healthy: Body, Mind, and Spirit, we will work together to build a policy agenda to improve health and our democracy. If you missed our Town hall registration, please

consider getting involved in our implementation efforts starting in September. Taking part in addressing common issues of concern also strengthens hope, sense of efficacy, and real-world outcomes.

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.

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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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