



**NEW MEXICO FIRST**  
*People. Ideas. Progress.*

## **New Mexico First and Project SHARE NM Newsletter**

Stay Informed and Engaged

November 23, 2020

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**Special Legislative Session.** Governor Lujan Grisham announced a special legislative session convening tomorrow, November 24th, with the aim of delivering economic relief to businesses, renters and workers. The special session will hopefully last one day, focusing entirely on economic assistance, and allocating \$300 million in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) money. The governor wants the funding to go toward an extra \$300 a week in unemployment assistance to workers, housing assistance and small business grants. The Special Session will broadcast, and more details will be available, from the legislature's [webcast page](#).

## Thanksgiving in the age of COVID-19

NM is still in a COVID-19 crisis. During the past week, the number of new daily cases tripled in the four days between November 16th and November 19 to an all-time high of 3,664. COVID-19 hospitalizations and COVID-19 deaths are also setting records. **The risk of infection, serious illness and death from COVID-19 has never been higher than right now.** Our hospitals are already at or over capacity, and healthcare staff are stretched to the limit.

To turn the curve in rising infections, the Governor issued an Executive Order on November 17th with further clarification on November 19th. All in-person, non-essential services are closed. New Mexicans are instructed to stay home except for those trips that are essential to health, safety and welfare.

**Get tested!** If you have symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19, [sign up for a test](#) and follow [instructions for self-isolation](#) to protect others. Encouraging others to get tested is a “Job To Do” together. Watch and share this [Facebook video](#) and find how you can help us move forward toward healthy AND economically strong communities. For more information, visit the [Job To Do website](#).



## So what about Thanksgiving?

Thanksgiving is going to look a lot different this year. Recommendations from our public health leaders include avoiding travel and large gatherings, but there are still many ways to celebrate without putting yourself or others at risk.

- Have a virtual dinner with family and friends. Share recipes ahead of time and host a virtual dinner over Zoom, Skype or Facetime. [Play some games.](#)
- Order Thanksgiving to go. Order groceries or whole meals for delivery or curbside pickup. You'll be supporting your local restaurants, businesses and community while saving time and the stress.
- Make neighborhood deliveries and/or exchange food with a neighbor. Prepare your favorite recipes for family and neighbors—especially those at

higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19—and deliver them in a contact-free way.

- Volunteer for Thanksgiving food programs or donate to your local food pantries or [mutual aid organizations](#) to help others have a safe and memorable Thanksgiving. To find your local food pantry, add your location to [this search](#).



## Emergency Resources

The [New Mexico Foundation](#) is currently making **emergency grants from the Vecino, Neighbor Helping Neighbor Fund** to non-profits that support communities impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. If you are a nonprofit or

tribal entity in New Mexico interested in applying for funding, go to the [foundation's website](#) for more information.

As the COVID-19 crisis continues, [nearly half](#) of New Mexican households are at risk of going hungry. Our **NM food pantries** are continuing to step in, as demand keeps increasing and will likely grow even more over the winter months with COVID infections rising and income and housing relief programs scheduled to end. Resources are stretched thin. Over 85% of Food Bank funding is from private philanthropy and individual donations. **They need our help.**

Lorenzo Alba, Executive Director of [Casa de Peregrinos](#) in Las Cruces assures us that “All you’ve got to do is go on to our website and donate. With a dollar, we can buy six meals, so I always tell people, it’s better to donate money than a can of food. I can’t stretch a can of food, but I can stretch a dollar.” Donate to one of our [NM Food Banks](#), or to find your local food pantry, add your location to [this search](#).

**Laguna Pueblo** is experiencing a serious spike in COVID-19 cases with 107 active cases of COVID-19 and 102 households in quarantine. The Pueblo currently has five members hospitalized and one death. Monetary donations can be directed to the Laguna Community Foundation:

<https://www.lagunacommunityfoundation.org/donate/> To donate food, contact John Garcia, Incident Commander, Laguna Emergency Operations Center, at [jgarcia@pol-nsn.gov](mailto:jgarcia@pol-nsn.gov) or call 505-552-1951(O) or 505-290-4247 (C).

**P-EBT Self-Serve Portal.** The P-EBT program provides nutrition assistance to New Mexico families to offset meals missed because schools are in a remote learning mode. Students eligible for free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch at school can get food benefits in addition to their pickup meals from school. The

benefit amount is calculated at \$5.86 per child for each day the child was 100 percent virtual in school. New Mexico families can now access a self-service portal to check their children's eligibility for P-EBT benefits and update addresses. [Access the new portal](#) through the Human Services Dept's online tool. [Learn more.](#)

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# Moving Upstream: Strengthening Food Policies and Systems

New Mexico First's 2020 Town Hall on Health: Mind, Body, Spirit, brought over 300 New Mexicans from across the state together to identify the challenges and the resources to build healthy, resilient communities. Town Hall participants reached consensus on the following recommendations and related addressing food security and hunger.

- Increase partnerships with the health sector, including Food Rx (nutritious food as a prescription), public-private partnerships, school-based health centers, and food insecurity screening. Align public health strategies to address food insecurity.
- Reduce food waste and increase food rescue and distribution.
- Increase opportunities for New Mexico entrepreneurs, community-based organizations and worker-owned businesses to address food system challenges broadly defined and ensure equity in supports in terms of racial/ethnic/gender/geography.
- Strengthen local access and resilient food production and value-added processing.
- Increase income security and improve food access for all N.M. residents.

Action teams have been formed to move these and other recommendations into policies and programs. The [final Town Hall report](#) is available on the NM First website. To sign on to an action team, email [info@nmfirst.org](mailto:info@nmfirst.org).

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## Tip for Civic Engagement

Coming out of highly contentious federal and state elections, gratitude may not be the first sentiment that surfaces for people. If you are feeling relieved or celebratory, that is likely tempered by concern as legal battles continue. If you are feeling disappointed or outraged, that may make this a difficult time to be thankful. As we consider new ways to honor traditions while abiding by public health orders, connecting with gratitude may be a challenge.

Gratitude is more than feeling a sense of relief or hope when something plays out in our favor or interest. Gratitude is also being humbled by people who risk their own well-being to care for our communities and our loved ones. Gratitude is the act of noticing the people and practices that strengthen well-being and honoring those gifts. Gratitude is the act of finding opportunities to contribute to the well-being of others.

If life and world events are giving you pause during this season of gratitude, find

one way to connect with others in a kind and loving way. Make space for others who see and understand the world differently than you. Hear and share stories that allow you to find common ground or better understand and make peace with differences.

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](mailto: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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