



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

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

Stay Informed and Engaged

December 7, 2020

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**GET  
COVERED  
2021**  
STAY HEALTHY  
GET INSURED

The idea of COVID-19 is frightening enough. Add the costs of treating medical conditions and keeping up with routine healthcare. What are the health [insurance options](#) for New Mexicans?

**Employer Sponsored Insurance.** In 2019, the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) reported that over one-third of New Mexicans (37%) had employer sponsored insurance (EIS). However, this year has already brought millions of job losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic with a subsequent loss of insurance. If you've lost your employer sponsored insurance, you still have options.

**ACA Plans.** [beWell New Mexico](#) administers the ACA health insurance marketplace for New Mexico. The **deadline is December 15th** for coverage beginning January 1, 2021. Many New Mexicans may be eligible for financial help to buy coverage, and of those, most are actually eligible for a free or nearly free plan.

**Medicaid.** Centennial Care, [NM's Medicaid program](#), provides health insurance for many New Mexicans. Between February and October, 2020, [76,000 New Mexicans](#) have joined Medicaid, up to an all-time high of nearly 900,000, or 37% of the population. The three Centennial Care providers in NM are [Blue Cross Blue Shield NM](#), [Presbyterian Healthcare Services](#), and [Western Sky Community Care](#).

**New Mexico Medical Insurance Pool (NMMIP).** If you don't qualify for any of these programs, you may be able to get coverage through the [NMMIP](#). The NMMIP does not require documentation regarding immigrant/residency status.

[Get Information – Get Enrolled](#)

[beWell New Mexico](#) will be hosting a virtual enrollment event on **Wednesday, December 9th**, from **12:30-6:00 PM**, via Zoom. Ask questions, find out if you qualify for subsidies, and make an appointment to get enrolled. [Register here](#).

On **Wednesday, December 16th, 11:00 AM**, [Western Sky Community Care](#) will offer a free workshop on how to apply for any of the three Medicaid plans. Participants can also sign up for free one-on-one sessions with a certified Medicaid determinator to assist in choosing and enrolling for a plan. RSVP by emailing [WSCCCommunity@WesternSkyCommunityCare.com](mailto:WSCCCommunity@WesternSkyCommunityCare.com) or by calling Member Services at 1-844-543-8996. [Learn more](#).



*Joe Ben, Jr., Ben Farms, Shiprock*

**Heathy Farming, Healthy Eating.** Healthy eating starts at the ground level,

literally. Healthy farming produces healthy food. [Healthy Futures](#) partners with community-based organizations to promote healthier lifestyles, improve education, and foster enriched opportunities for 21st Century careers. Their [Native American Agricultural Empowerment Program](#) assists Native American farmers in the Diné checkerboard areas of New Mexico to become more productive and successful, as well as help to empower their families to achieve healthier lifestyles, through innovative education and community training programs. Visit [The Land of Neeshjizhii](#) to see how this works.

Kyle Jim, a Diné farmer featured in this video, will be speaking about his project “Enchant the Environment” at the Agricultural Resilience Land and Water meeting, January 18th at 10 AM. For more information about joining the Ag Resilience Action Teams, email Erika at [Erika@nmfirst.org](mailto:Erika@nmfirst.org).



**Healthy Farms and Healthy Food for Rural New Mexico.** How do we grow a local frontier food economy and ensure access to healthy food in remote locations? [The Southwest New Mexico Food Hub](#), a project of the [National Center for Frontier Communities](#) based in Silver City, is a dual-purpose food hub designed to increase the local food economy, improve food access and reduce food insecurity for residents in southwest New Mexico. The Food Hub helps local food producers by providing marketing, coordination, aggregation and distribution services. By networking with area food pantries, the Hub can purchase bulk food items and distribute healthy foods to food pantries for a reduced cost.

This year the Hub began offering food boxes directly to consumers through a community supported agriculture (CSA) program. Boxes of local, seasonal produce and dried items such as beans, grain and spices were sold in \$35 and \$20 increments with the option of adding other items for an additional cost. The initial 10-week pilot of the CSA helped the Food Hub move locally grown product at a time where many regular markets were shut down. The CSA program will re-launch in April 2021 and will aim to operate year-round. If you are interested in receiving updates about the launch, please email Ben Rasmussen at [brasmussen@frontierus.org](mailto:brasmussen@frontierus.org).



[New Mexico Out-of-School Time Network \(NMOST\) Hunger Relief Newsletter](#)

provides the latest updates and opportunities related to afterschool and summer meals in NM. This is meant to be an open platform for sharing information. In addition, NMOST is launching its first podcast! "Rethinking Hunger" will be a biweekly interview-based podcast about people who are making change in our food system. Contact [Sophia Rose](#) for more information or if you have anything to share.

From the December newsletter: **Serving Meals on Weekends and Holidays through the Child and Adult Food Program (CACFP)** [Check out this webinar recording](#) from the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) to learn about how to start serving federally re-imbursed meals in your program over weekends and holidays. As we enter the holiday season, it is more important now than ever to ensure that children and families are receiving the meals they need to get through this time.



[Building Healthy Military Communities](#) is hosting virtual assemblies on December 8, 9, and 10 to provide education and information to members of the military community facing food insecurity. The assemblies will highlight programs that address food insecurity and identify resources. There will also be a demonstration

on how to prepare a budget and finish with a live cooking class. [Learn More](#) and register for one or all of the Assemblies.

**Protect our Water.** USDA is hosting listening sessions on the topic of water quantity in the West on Dec 17th at 8 am MST. If interested, you can learn more at: . Acting Chief Norton noted: “This listening session will enable us to hear directly from people at the local level on how to improve our programs and operations.” [Learn More](#).



### **Relief Funding**

The recent special legislative session approved several new programs to assist New Mexicans who have lost income and risk food or housing insecurity.

- **\$5 million - Cash Assistance** will be provided to low-income residents up to \$750 per household who did not receive a federal government stimulus payment. Payments will be provided to a household, on a **first-come, first-serve basis and a limited number of form requests will be accepted** based on funding availability. All form requests must be **submitted by**

**December 11, 2020.** Payments will be issued by the end of December 2020. [Apply now](#). *Están acompañados a una sesión informativa para aprender a cómo aplicar para este programa de emergencia estatal debido al COVID. Hoy, December 7th, 5:30-6:30 PM. [Únete aquí](#).*

- **\$100 million – [Small Business CARES Relief Grant](#)** will open for applications at noon on Monday, December 7 and close on December 18. The grants provide up to \$50,000 for New Mexico small businesses and non-profits with 100 or fewer employees. Hospitality and leisure businesses will be prioritized, but all affected small businesses are encouraged to apply. The New Mexico Finance Authority (NMFA) will administer this grant program.
- **\$15 million - Emergency Housing Assistance** will fund additional aid for emergency housing support and assistance for the homeless. The New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority will administer this funding. Contact: 800-444-6880 or [info@housingnm.org](mailto:info@housingnm.org)
- **\$5 million - Emergency Food Support** will go to emergency food bank services throughout the state to distribute food to New Mexicans in need. New Mexico Human Services Department will administer this funding. *To add YOUR contribution to emergency food support, visit the [NM Association of Food Banks](#) or find your local food pantry by entering your location in [this search](#).*
- **\$194 million - Additional Unemployment Benefits.** A \$1,200 benefit is available to New Mexicans who are currently on and determined eligible under an unemployment benefits program, who have recently exhausted unemployment benefits since September 12, or who will enroll in an unemployment program in the coming week. Visit the Dept. of Workforce Solutions at [www.dws.state.nm.us](http://www.dws.state.nm.us) or contact [nmdws.communication@state.nm.us](mailto:nmdws.communication@state.nm.us) for more information.

The [New Mexico Foundation's](#) Native American Relief Fund supports nonprofit agencies that supply Native American communities with basic needs, medical supplies, internet access, and other needs and expenses directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, the fund has distributed \$1.4 million, but the needs are still great. Help the Foundation reach its goal of \$3 million. [Learn more.](#)

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### **Tele-Behavioral Health Services**

NM Human Services Dept. is offering free tele-behavioral health services for those impacted by COVID -19. Those eligible include New Mexicans with serious mental illness, substance use disorder or other mental health needs, as well as healthcare workers in need of support. Five NM behavioral health providers will provide culturally appropriate wellness services as well as linkages to services and supports (housing, food, employment). [Learn more.](#)

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### **Tip for Civic Engagement**

In order for a social safety net to function at its best, we must be willing to engage in discussions about formal and informal supports. The economic pressure of this pandemic has exacerbated income, food, and housing insecurity for many while increasing vulnerability for people who have never navigated public benefits previously. Pre-pandemic and during these challenging times, helping people navigate social supports is critical. Some key things to keep in mind when helping people navigate include:

- Ask people what they know about a particular resource before launching into advice giving mode. When we assume what information people have or don't have, it can intensify feelings of frustration, anger, helplessness, or hopelessness. Taking the time to meet people where they are at really matters. Also, when you listen to people who are navigating social supports, you learn things that can make you more effective in helping others navigate. This is an iterative learning process.
- Acknowledge challenges and notice assets. When people express confusion or frustration navigating systems, being heard, acknowledged, and "seen" is very powerful. It can free people up to think creatively and consider other approaches to getting their needs met. As people describe their experiences, their skills and assets often come to light. When you acknowledge and affirm those assets, it can be a motivating to persist.
- Allow people to share their story but don't put people on the defensive by asking questions or interrogating them about how they found themselves in this circumstance. Let people tell as much or as little of their story as they feel comfortable. People are feeling particularly vulnerable and stressed during this pandemic as their formal and informal supports are functioning differently. Listening without judgment and offering support that is customized to each person's experiences, is especially important during these trying times.

This tip is authored by New Mexico First President and Executive Director, Lilly Irvin-Vitela. She can be reached at [lilly@nmifrst.org](mailto:lilly@nmifrst.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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