



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

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

Stay Informed and Engaged

December 14, 2020

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**Let Your Light Shine**

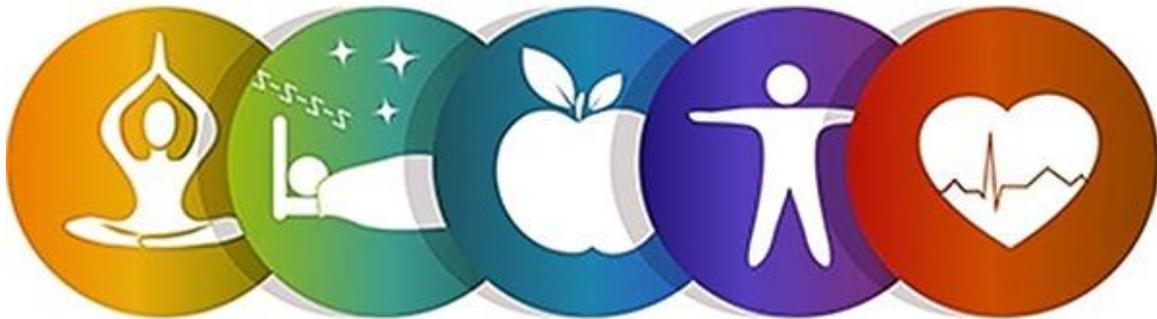


December Holidays: Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza

**New Mexico Celebrates!** This has been an extraordinarily difficult year, but New Mexicans are resilient folks, and we still celebrate life and light in our various religious and cultural traditions. [Christmas](#), [Hanukkah](#), [Kwanza](#), and numerous Native American [festivals and feast days](#) will be celebrated in December in New Mexico. Our newsletter will be on hiatus until the New Year. We wish you all a joyous – and safe! – holiday season.

**A Safe Holiday Season.** Celebrating with family, friends and community means thinking first and foremost of guarding everyone's health and well-being. The CDC has a number of suggestions for how we can celebrate safely. First, [assess the COVID-19 risk](#) of infection from various activities. From a low risk of "1" (opening the mail) to a high of "9" (going to a bar), choose activities that minimize your exposure to the coronavirus. Next, consider [alternative ways of celebrating](#), including virtual activities. Here are [some ideas](#) to get you started. Finally, when you are making decisions about how to celebrate, [do what's best](#) for you and your loved ones.

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## Wellness

**Stay Well.** Holidays bring other challenges to our health. Holidays may mean too much food, too little exercise, and stress, both good and bad. Here are [12 steps](#) to help keep you and your family well through the holidays.

**Stay Insured.** The deadline for selecting an insurance plan from the [beWellNM](#), NM's ACA marketplace is **TOMORROW, December 15th**. Subsidies are still available for New Mexicans who qualify. If you buy a plan during that time, your coverage will begin on January 1. But if you miss the deadline, or if you lose your insurance or experience a major life event outside of open enrollment, you should talk to an expert: [find a broker](#) or [find a counselor](#) about whether you're eligible for a Special Enrollment. The assistance is completely free. [Enroll now!](#)

Centennial Care, [NM's Medicaid program](#), provides health insurance for many New Mexicans. The three Centennial Care providers in NM are [Blue Cross Blue Shield NM](#), [Presbyterian Healthcare Services](#), and [Western Sky Community Care](#). 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](#).

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.

**Mental Health Support.** Holidays can be difficult for those who are grieving, depressed, or experiencing other mental or emotional distress. The [NM Crisis and Access Line](#) is available 24/7 to answer your calls and provide a listening ears and referrals to help. **Call toll free: 1-855-NMCRISIS (662-7474)**. Healthcare workers and first responders, you are our heroes on the front line. There is a support line specifically for you. The line is available 24/7 to offer support and connect you to a professional counselor. Call 855-507-5509. [Learn more](#).

Free tele-behavioral health services are also available for 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](#).

**Eat Healthy.** [Füdr](#), a free, bilingual, mobile friendly healthy lifestyle Website, was created by [Kids Cook!](#), a New Mexico non-profit serving New Mexicans since 2001. Users earn points redeemable for fresh produce at participating retailers, including Farmers markets, grocers, and other produce retailers in Albuquerque, Moriarty, and Torrance County. Users can also donate their points to organizations helping people in need.

Produce retailers and growers, healthcare providers and insurers, social service agencies, schools, park and recreation departments, and other public and private organizations are encouraged to [join the fudrr community](#). *The first 10 users that register and tell us they learned about fūdrr from this newsletter will win \$5 in fresh produce to enjoy or share with those in need.* [Register Here](#).

**Healthy Lands.** Two training opportunities are available for New Mexican farmers and conservationists. The Cultivating Bernalillo County ‘Grow the Growers’ program is a comprehensive farm training and business acceleration initiative designed to attract new and emerging farmers into professional food production. The deadline to apply is January 4, 2021. [Click here to apply](#).

The New Farmer Conservation Assistance Program is introducing a pilot technical assistance program to train four paid Apprentice Technical Assessors (ATAs) to engage their networks, advise constituents and partners about conservation agriculture. Applications will be available soon. Contact Sean Ludden, Programs Coordinator at Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District at [ciudadprograms@gmail.com](mailto:ciudadprograms@gmail.com) or (505) 289-0323. [Download the flier](#).

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**Gratitude and Giving.** During the holiday season, we often share what we're grateful for. This year, that may feel more difficult to do. But science and our own experience confirms that feeling gratitude is great medicine. It can inspire optimism, improve health and increase happiness. What's even more powerful is moving beyond gratitude to giving back.

The [Gratitude Call to Action](#) suggests ways you and your family can “supercharge your thankfulness and make a difference for others.” Are you grateful for the food you eat? Donate to your local [food banks](#) and [pantries](#) who are still working overtime to feed hungry New Mexicans. Are you grateful for your warm, safe house? Contribute to those who are serving New Mexicans who [lack housing](#). Are you thankful for our healthcare workers and first responders? Write them a letter – or buy them pizza or other healthy foods! (We've heard that this is much appreciated by healthcare workers who are working long hours with little time to eat.)

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# COVID-19 RESOURCES

**Pause in Student Loan Repayments.** In response to the COVID-19 national emergency, the US Dept. of Education [announced](#) the extension of the federal student loan administrative forbearance period, the pause in interest accrual, and the suspension of collections activity through January 31, 2021. Federal student loan borrowers will not be expected to make any payments through January of next year, although they will continue to be able to do so and benefit from the 0% interest rate as they pay down principal. Non-payments will continue to count toward the number of payments required under an income-driven repayment plan, a loan rehabilitation agreement, or the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.

**Tenant's Rights.** The City of Albuquerque has updated an explanation of [tenant's rights](#). Find out what you need to know if you are unable to pay rent, including the steps to take, the resources available to you, and your rights to stay in your home.

**Rental and Mortgage Assistance.** Beginning Thursday, 12/10/20, NM MFA's COVID-19 Housing Cost Assistance Program will be accepting applications to help pay past-due housing payments for those experiencing a financial hardship because of COVID-19. Those who qualify can receive \$1,500 per month for up to three months for rent or mortgage payments. **It's important to apply ASAP** if you didn't apply for these funds in the first round. Link for more information and to apply: <https://housingnm.org/static/covid-assistance>

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## Tip for Civic Engagement

Winter holidays are a time across cultures to practice and explore traditions and cultures. They are also a time to connect with people who are important to us who may have fallen out of touch in the day-to-day routines of life. This year has brought changes to routine, stress and strain as people try to navigate in fluid, and uncertain times, and even greater challenges to stay connected. Connections have not only been strained because of public health threats. Connections have also had to weather a highly contentious political context.

When we connect with our nearest and dearest, it is natural to want to speak deeply and candidly about what is on our hearts and minds. However, this may expose ideas and beliefs that are in conflict. These moments may also put our own values in conflict. Should I say something to my friend or family member about the comment that they just made and how it hurt, disturbed, or offended me? If I say nothing, am I complicit in what I perceive as an unjust way of looking at and being in the world? If I say something will it undermine our family's values around unity, compassion, and hospitality? While there are no easy answers to these or other values conflicts that arise when we connect deeply and candidly with others, there are some ways to navigate with compassion and integrity.

1. Listen to understand, not to plan your counterattack. Endeavoring to understand someone is an act of love. Let someone get their thoughts out. Listen. Hearing someone out is not endorsing their ideas. It is honoring their right to be heard.
2. Seek common ground. If you can find something that you have genuine agreement about, acknowledge it. "It's clear that you really care about XYZ, I care about that too. I come at this a little differently though."

3. Check boundaries. Ask your loved one if they are open to hearing your perspective. If they say no, honor that. If they say yes, honor that too. If you can share your perspective in a way that is non-judgmental and makes the issue come alive in a personal way, your family member is more likely to hear you. You may not change their heart or mind, but you will succeed in humanizing people on the other side of the issue for yourself and them.

After all, staying connected to those who we've shared lives, history, culture, and traditions with no matter the forces at work to divide us is a powerful form of resilience. Honoring each other's humanity and seeing the light in others is what this season invites.

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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