

New Mexico Universal Child Care Briefing *for Early Childhood Funders*

Cabinet Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky

December 1, 2025



NEW MEXICO

Early Childhood

Education & Care Department





Universal Child Care is Here!

New Mexico is First State in Nation to Offer Universal Child Care

Universal Child Care



Starting November 1, 2025, families in New Mexico can get assistance paying for child care, no matter their income. Raising children is not something families should do alone. When families are supported, the whole community benefits.

Universal child care makes child care assistance available to all New Mexicans, regardless of income, by:

- Removing income eligibility requirements from the state’s child care assistance program
- Continuing the waiver of family copayments
- Adding more child care options and making it easier for families to find care—but it will take time. As more providers join and expand, access will continue to improve across the state.

More information: nmeccd.org/universal

Take the Universal Child Care Pledge

By taking the pledge, these are the many ways you can show you're a proud partner:

- You believe in universal access to affordable, quality care.
- You will encourage families to enroll in Child Care Assistance.
- You will support and help share ECECD's Universal Child Care outreach efforts, including digital and in-person events, resources, and communications that help families and providers stay informed.
- You are committed to seeking and sharing accurate information about Universal Child Care to strengthen public understanding and counter misinformation.
- You are dedicated to working together to ensure that Universal Child Care strengthens New Mexico's economy and supports working families.

748 Pledges from *Proud Partners and counting.*



TAKE THE UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE PLEDGE

www.nmeccd.org/universalpledge/

Take the pledge: nmeccd.org/universalpledge

Universal Child Care *Testimonials*



Dawn Green

Certified Peer Support Worker
Albuquerque, NM



Changes for Families

Overview of Changes for Families

- Child Care Assistance is available to any family in New Mexico who is working or going to school, regardless of income or immigration status.
- If a participating child does not have a federally eligible immigration status, the financial assistance will be paid with state funds.
- To receive assistance, families must find an available slot with a provider of their choice that accepts child care assistance.
- No copayments, gross receipts taxes, or fees.



Overview of Changes for Families *Continued*

- Activity requirements waived for certain populations, including:
 - Grandparents raising grandchildren
 - Families caring for babies born substance-exposed
 - Families experiencing housing instability
 - Families involved with the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD)
- Presumptive eligibility will allow families to enroll in Child Care Assistance while their application is processed helping reduce delays and ensure quicker access to care.
- **Flexibility in hours of care:** families will be able to choose to enroll their child in full-time or part-time care, regardless of the hours in their work or school schedule.





Changes for Providers

Overview of Changes for Providers

- **Rate Increases:** Providers already accepting Child Care Assistance will see increased reimbursement rates for services beginning November 1, 2025. This rate increase does **not** require any changes to hours or employee pay.
- **Enhanced Rates:** Providers may choose to opt-in to receive enhanced rates if they:
 - Are open at least 10 hours per day, 5 days a week, and
 - Meet minimum wage requirements as outlined in the new rule

Providers Not Currently Accepting Child Care Assistance May:

- Begin accepting Child Care Assistance for all children on November 1
- Limit the number of enrolled children supported by Child Care Assistance
- Only provide services to private pay families

Enhanced Rates

- Enhanced rates are optional, and available for providers who opt-in to provide services for 10 hours a day, five days a week and meet minimum pay requirements. Providers are not required to participate.
- Public commenters expressed concern that the enhanced rates proposed could not support the longer hours and wage requirements.
- Final rule increases the enhanced rate and reduces the minimum wage requirements.

Final Wage Requirements for Entry-Level Education and Care Staff by Quality Level			
2 Star	2+/3 Star	4 Star	5 Star
\$16/hour	\$17/hour	\$18/hour	\$19/hour

National Accreditation

- Final language adds the American Montessori Society (AMS) and the Association Montessori International (AMI) to the list of nationally accredited bodies approved by ECECD.
- Programs with Head Start and Early Head Start status will be automatically eligible for the highest reimbursement rate.



Professional Development Information System (PDIS)

- A monitoring system to ensure compliance with professional development requirements that supports workforce development.
- Providers will be required to keep and maintain a complete up-to-date file in PDIS for each staff member including substitutes and volunteers working more than six hours of any week and having direct contact with the children.
- Providers will have six months to comply from November 1, the effective date of the updated regulation.
- User friendly guides and training videos coming soon!

Accessing the Final Rule

- All public comment received by ECECD is posted and available on the department's website: nmeccd.org/regulation-changes
- Official responses to public comment and explanatory statements are available on the Sunshine Portal: statenm.my.salesforce-sites.com/public/SSP_RuleHearingSearchPublic
- Official final text for each regulation is posted on ECECD's website, State Records Center and Archive's website, and the Sunshine Portal.
 - ECECD website: [Notice of Rulemaking and Public Rule Hearing 8.9.3 NMAC, 8.9.4 NMAC, and 8.9.5 NMAC](#)



Next Steps

Join the Conversation: Universal Child Care Fall Tour

In-person events: **Roadshows**, **Community Conversations** with Coalitions, and **Eligibility Fairs**.

Roadshows



*Roadshows are in-person events for child care providers and early childhood professionals **hosted by ECECD leadership** across the state.*

Community Conversations



Community Conversations are in-person events for community members hosted by local early childhood coalitions and ECECD.

Eligibility Fairs



*Eligibility Fairs are events for families held at child care facilities across the state and **hosted by program directors** and ECECD. Families can speak directly with their program director to request an Eligibility Fair.*

November Progress Report

Families

7,034 children
5,948 families



- **18%** under 200% FPL
- **33%** under 400% FPL
- **63%** over 400% FPL
- **39%** infants and toddlers
- **37%** preschool
- **24%** school-age

Supply

296 providers
opted in to
enhanced rate



- **113** new home applications
- **26** new home certifications
- **166** increase to capacity

Workforce

Coming soon!
We'll be tracking:



- Background checks for new workers
- New workers taking the required entry-level health and safety training in Quorum

Needs

Everyone has a role to play in ensuring that Universal Child Care succeeds:

- Ongoing education and advocacy
- Strategic technical assistance to registered and licensed home providers
- Effective messaging and communications
- Customized supports for quality and business practices
- Innovative supply building strategies
- Evaluations of implementation and impact





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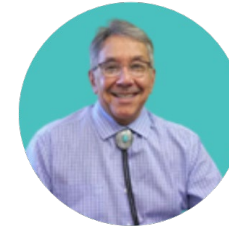
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Stay Connected with the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department



NMECECD.org



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ECECD's bi-weekly newsletter delivers agency announcements, resources, training opportunities, and upcoming events straight to your inbox. Join our monthly Community Call (held the first Tuesday of each month) for updates and engagement.

Sign up at nmececd.org/newsroom.



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