



STATE OF NEW MEXICO

## Public Education Department

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM, GOVERNOR

Ryan Stewart, Cabinet Secretary

### NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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## **Programs keep families in homes, students in school**

*PED urges NM families to apply for mortgage, rent, utility help*

SANTA FE – The Public Education Department is urging eligible New Mexico families to apply for two programs to help pay the mortgage or rent and keep the lights on so children will not be uprooted from their local schools:

- The federal [Emergency Rental Assistance](#) program was created to reduce evictions or utility service cut-offs due to financial challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The [New Mexico Homeowner Assistance Fund](#) offers grants of up to \$10,000 to maintain housing and reduce housing cost delinquency related to the pandemic.

"This has been an incredibly difficult year for so many New Mexico families that lost jobs or income due in one way or another to the pandemic," Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. "We owe it to our children to keep their families intact and in their homes so they can focus, as they should, on their education without fear of being suddenly uprooted."

Under the Emergency Rental Assistance program, the state of New Mexico is distributing nearly \$170 million to pay back, current or future rent and utility bills for eligible families.

Eligible households may receive up to 15 months of assistance plus three additional months -- if funding is available -- to ensure housing stability. Assistance awards can be used for unpaid, current and future rent and utilities, although priority will be placed on paying past-due rent and utilities.

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program was established by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. In New Mexico, the Department of Finance and Administration has been administering the program since April 5 in partnership with the City of Albuquerque.

Renters across the state are eligible for the program -- except for residents of Bernalillo and Doña Ana counties and those who live in a pueblo or tribal area. Those two counties, as well as tribal governments, will administer their own Rental Assistance Programs, which can be accessed through links at [RentHelpNM.org](http://RentHelpNM.org).

An application for rental assistance may be submitted by either an eligible household or by a landlord on behalf of that eligible household. In general, funds will be paid directly to landlords and utility service providers. If a landlord does not wish to participate, funds may be paid directly to the eligible household.

Landlords and utility providers are encouraged to [download a W9](#) and submit it to the Department of Finance and Administration via [ERAVendor.Relations@state.nm.us](mailto:ERAVendor.Relations@state.nm.us) as soon as possible to ensure a streamlined process for receiving payment.

In addition, the [New Mexico Homeowner Assistance Fund](#) -- a \$1 million, six-month pilot program co-sponsored by the state and the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority -- was announced this week and is the first state program specifically for homeowners.

The assistance covers past-due and current mortgage payments for income-eligible New Mexicans who have experienced a financial hardship associated with the COVID-19 health crisis.

The New Mexico Homeowner Assistance Fund replaces the COVID-19 Homeowner Assistance Program, which also served homeowners with housing cost assistance payments. The Mortgage Finance Authority will make payments directly to mortgage or loan servicers, escrow companies, or other housing providers. To be eligible for the program, household income must not exceed 100 percent of the area median income.

Applications can be made online at [housingnm.org](http://housingnm.org) or by calling 505.308.4206 or toll-free 866.488.0498 to request a paper application.

More information about both programs, including income eligibility and frequently asked questions, are available on [the Department of Finance and Administration website](#).

Other assistance programs available right now to eligible New Mexicans include:

- **Connectivity:** The Emergency Broadband Benefit program provides a \$50 monthly credit on the cost of high-speed internet (\$75 for households on tribal land) and a one-time credit of \$100 to buy a digital device. For more information, including an FAQ and a list of participating providers: [fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-program](http://fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-program).
- **Health care:** Lower your costs and sign up for health care at Healthcare.gov or call 800-318-2596. If you lost your insurance, get help with the cost of COBRA coverage here: [DOL.gov/general/topic/health-plans/cobra](http://DOL.gov/general/topic/health-plans/cobra)
- **Food:** Connect with New Mexico's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program at [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) | New Mexico Human Services Department \(state.nm.us\)](http://Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) | New Mexico Human Services Department (state.nm.us)) Students ages 1-18 can also pick up free grab-and-go summer

meals at more than 700 sites across New Mexico. Find one near you: [summerfoodnm.org](http://summerfoodnm.org).

- **Unemployment:** Get an extra \$300 per week and unemployment benefits extended until Sept. 6. Sign up at the [New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions](http://New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions)
- **Free COVID-19 vaccine:** Get an appointment for a free shot near you at [vaccinenm.org](http://vaccinenm.org). You can also sign up at [Sweepstakes | NMDOH \(vax2themaxnm.org\)](http://Sweepstakes | NMDOH (vax2themaxnm.org)) for a new statewide vaccination incentive program that is offering a total of \$10 million in prize money, free travel packages, state parks passes and more.

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The New Mexico Public Education Department partners with educators, communities and families to ensure that all students are healthy, secure in their identity and holistically prepared for college, career and life. Currently, the NMPED serves more than 317,000 students in 187 districts and charter schools. Find an abundance of resources for administrators, educators, families and students at [New Mexico Public Education Department \(state.nm.us\)](http://New Mexico Public Education Department (state.nm.us)) or follow the PED [at NMPublicEducationDepartment](#) on Facebook and @NMPED on Twitter.