

APRIL 2025

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SUPPORTS DIVISION NEWSLETTER

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From the Director's Desk

Happy Spring! I'm so grateful for longer days, blooming trees, warmer temperatures, baseball, and the promise of summer. I love spring cleaning, the vibrant colors of the season, and the feelings of new beginnings, transformation, renewal and fresh perspectives.

In the spirit of spring cleaning and decluttering, I encourage everyone to take a minute to clean up your voicemail and inbox, get organized, and prepare to take on new projects. A clean space allows for greater mental clarity and creativity!

Get outside and take a walk. Look around and notice the flowers, watch the grass turn greener, and hear the birds chirping in the trees. A change of scenery can refresh the mind. Sometimes you need to step away to step forward mentally.

As far as new beginnings, DDSD has received five new positions from the Medical Assistance Division and we are reorganizing the Community Programs Bureau to better meet the needs of waiver recipients and our provider network. I anticipate this increasing internal efficiencies and communication, while improving customer service.

Transformation is occurring at the Federal level, so DDSD is watching and monitoring for any impact to our programs. Transformation opens new possibilities that weren't there before and encourages the exploration of new paths. Our mission remains the same!

Renewal of our Mi Via Waiver will begin in a few weeks. We anticipate the changes to the waiver will allow for greater choice, autonomy and tools for participants to self-direct.

Lastly, fresh perspectives. On April 1st, DDSD hosted its second Advocacy Partners meeting. These meetings are intended to provide opportunities to think collaboratively with our partners across the IDD system, discuss ways to be innovative in service delivery methods, and exchange solution-focused ideas within the think tank. Diversity of perspectives results in better outcomes for the people we serve!

Remember that to support others you must first support yourself. So I challenge you to stand up and read the rest of this newsletter outside in the sunshine, wind, or snow...it is spring in New Mexico!

Jen



HEALTH CARE
AUTHORITY

Supports Waiver Extension Request to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Contributor: Selina Leyba, Bureau Chief

On February 28, 2025, the Health Care Authority (HCA) submitted a request to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for a 90-day extension of the Supports Waiver, which is set to expire on June 30, 2025. The extension is intended to give the HCA additional time to assess the ongoing need for the Supports Waiver.

The Supports Waiver was created in 2020 to provide a limited-service array for people who were waiting over 13 years to receive services through DDSD's more comprehensive waivers, such as the Developmental Disabilities (DD) and Mi Via Waivers. The Super Allocation initiative began in late 2021 and effectively ended the DD waiting list by the end of 2024. This means everyone who was offered the Supports Waiver was also offered an "allocation" to the comprehensive waivers, no longer needing the Supports Waiver.

The HCA has requested funding from the legislature to be able to bring people into the waivers, or "allocate" them, as they apply. This would allow for a continuous allocation process and eliminate ever having another waiting list, thus no longer a need for the Supports Waiver. Until the legislative session ends and DDSD solidifies its FY26 budget, the HCA reached out and received guidance from CMS on requesting an extension to allow us to make the final decisions about the future of the Supports Waiver.

The HCA will provide updates on the status of the request for a 90-day extension. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this communication, please submit them to Selina Leyba at: SelinaT.Leyba@hca.nm.gov

HCA Medical Assistance Division Waiver Staff Transition to DDSD

Contributor: Selina Leyba, Bureau Chief

To streamline how the Health Care Authority (HCA) manages administration and operation of four 1915c home and community-based services waivers for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disability (ICF/IID) we are making organizational changes to the Medical Assistance Division (MAD) and Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD).

On March 1st, DDSD received five (5) positions from MAD, including three (3) staff, that transitioned to DDSD to handle all 1915c waivers (Developmental Disabilities, Mi Via, Medically Fragile and Supports) and the ICF/IID program. The HCA is always looking for ways to be more efficient, accessible, and provide a whole-person experience for program recipients. We feel this will be a wonderful improvement and streamlining opportunity for all. For transition questions contact Selina Leyba at SelinaT.Leyba@hca.nm.gov. Additional contacts listed below.

Developmental Disabilities Waiver Program Manager

Steven Fernandez, steven.fernandez@hca.nm.gov, (505) 584-1687

Mi Via Waiver Program Manager

Elaine Hill, elaine.hill@hca.nm.gov, (505) 506-6103

Medically Fragile Waiver Program Manager

Josh Parkins, josh.parkins@hca.nm.gov, (505) 670-8954

Supports Waiver Program Manager

Anysia Fernandez, anysia.fernandez@hca.nm.gov, (505) 629-7476

UNM and DDSD Together Offering Autism Supports

Contributor - Jennifer Rodriguez, Director

Did you know that DDSD has a contract with the University of New Mexico's School of Medicine, Center for Development and Disability (CDD) for Autism Programs to provide evidence-based services to individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families? Autism Programs include training, technical assistance, family support, direct services and support and increase the capacity of communities to provide high quality autism services. Goals related to DDSD's contract include:

- Provide training to individuals with ASD, those working with individuals with ASD, their support teams and families.
- Provide consultation and coaching regarding ASD for agencies throughout the state in evidence-based practices and direct intervention.
- Provide lifespan family consultation and support to include providing information, referrals and individualized consultation and resources for families, providers and the general public.
- Operate a diagnostic evaluation clinic to complete multidisciplinary and diagnostic evaluations referred due to concerns of ASD.
- Provide outreach and information regarding ASD services.

In FY 24 the Autism Programs began three new initiatives that are going strong in FY25.

1. NM START program - a systemic crisis prevention and intervention model. Due to its highly successful launch UNM received expansion funding through UNM Hospitals and recruitment for new clinical staff is currently underway.
2. NM ECHO Autism Program developed 2 ECHO cohorts:
 - ECHO Autism STAT-for primary care providers and focuses on using the STAT screening tool as a method of observation, whose intent is for primary care to diagnose and medically treat children with unambiguous symptoms of ASD in their practices.
 - Advanced Diagnoses ECHO-for community psychologists to gain proficiency with the ADOS-2 and to deepen their understanding of differential diagnoses of people with suspicions of ASD.
3. Community Health Worker (CHW) Specialty in Autism Supports-a 12-hour curriculum supports CHWs' understanding of ASD and how to support families and link them to diagnosis and resources. Please visit the Autism Portal for current training and best practice resources related to ASD. <https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/>

Direct Care Workforce Technical Assistance Focus

Contributor - Jennifer Rodriguez, Director

The Administration for Community Living (ACL) Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the federal agency leading this initiative. The state agency leading New Mexico's collaboration is the Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD), and they invited the Health Care Authority (HCA), including DDSD, the Department of Workforce Solutions, and the New Mexico Caregivers Coalition to receive technical assistance (TA) with them on direct care workforce challenges and best practices. New Mexico will receive TA and training from the ACL through the spring of 2025.

TA is focusing on identification and understanding of the caregiver role and compensation structure across systems with the goal of developing a foundation for a cohesive state caregiver workforce training, recruitment and retention strategy that considers programmatic silos as a force in caregiver employment economics. New Mexico systems supported by a combination of Federal and State funding to be considered include Medicare, Medicaid, State Unit on Aging/Area Agency on Aging (Older Americans Act Title III and VI), and State General Funds. Additional systems integral to caregiver economies of scale include Veterans Affairs, and city and county funded programs.

The above state agencies hope to have the following in the upcoming months:

- Identification of action steps to implement training equivalencies across programs.
- Identification and mapping of career paths for caregivers across programs and in association with existing hospital and health programs.
- Exploration of a universal collection tool for caregiver specific data across programs to identify workforce trends.
- Exploration of a state reimbursement baseline for caregivers across programs.
- Development of a Direct Care Worker Strategy.

DDSD will continue to share information as our TA continues.

Exciting Updates - Establishing a New Grievance System for HCBS Services

Contributor: Christina Hill, Deputy Bureau Chief

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Access Rule is a federal rule intended to improve care for individuals receiving Medicaid-funded services. This rule aims to increase transparency and accountability, standardize data and monitoring, and create opportunities for states to promote active beneficiary engagement in their Medicaid programs. Ultimately, the goal is to improve holistic access to care.

In Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) programs like DDSD waiver programs, access to care also means access to settings that allow for full participation in community life, promote independence, and provide opportunities for choice. This ensures that individuals are not confined to isolated or institutional settings but can live, work, and engage in activities within the community.

As part of the Access Rule, New Mexico is required to create a grievance system by July 26, 2026 allowing individuals to file complaints or concerns regarding their services, person-centered planning, or the settings in which they receive care. Grievances can be filed orally or in writing, and will be resolved within 90 calendar days, with the possibility of a 14-day extension under certain circumstances.

The new grievance system will make sure that people can file a grievance easily, receive help when needed, and have their issues addressed in a timely manner. This process will ensure that issues such as a person's service plan not being followed, or concerns about settings, are addressed in a fair and timely way.

We already have some systems in place to help with this process, but procedures still need development. We're committed to meeting the July 2026 deadline, and we'll keep you updated as we move toward creating a grievance system that is accessible, transparent, and responsive to everyone's needs. Stay tuned!



Strengthening Strategic Goals with Employment First Partners

Contributor: Alix Dean, Statewide Community Inclusion & Supported Employment Lead

This spring, Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) will host the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN), for a Statewide Employment First Strategic Planning session from April 30th – May 2nd. SELN is a nationwide technical assistance center for building capacity and effectiveness of Employment First (E1st) initiatives within I/DD agencies and their partnerships.

Joining us at this meeting is University of New Mexico Partners for Employment (PFE) and New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR). Together, DDSD, NMDVR, and PFE are dedicated to building capacity and effectiveness of employment services throughout New Mexico to improve the quality of community participation for waiver participants.

E1st is a national systems-change framework designed to build and support access to competitive integrated employment for participants receiving waiver services. Since 2016, DDSD has prioritized employment as the first choice for community inclusion services, driven by the statewide E1st policy.

In New Mexico, this visit from SELN will provide a valuable opportunity to strengthen our strategic planning for systemic improvements and improve our collaboration on E1st outcomes for waiver participants.

Some areas we will be discussing at this meeting include:

- 1. What is an appropriate goal or measure of success for the next five years?**
- 2. What role does a professionalized workforce of employment staff play in the system?**
- 3. What is each agency's role in building and supporting provider capacity to meet the need for job developers and job coaches?**
- 4. What are the best funding methods and rates for these services across agencies?**
- 5. What barriers keep our employment rates below the national average of 24%?**
- 6. What data can each agency provide to help track progress towards our goal of providing high-quality services?**
- 7. Are employed individuals in appropriate employment outcomes or under employed?**

We would like to hear about your experiences . If you believe the above list is missing a critical piece of the E1st puzzle, please reach out to me.

Alix.Dean@hca.nm.gov or (505) 819-7346

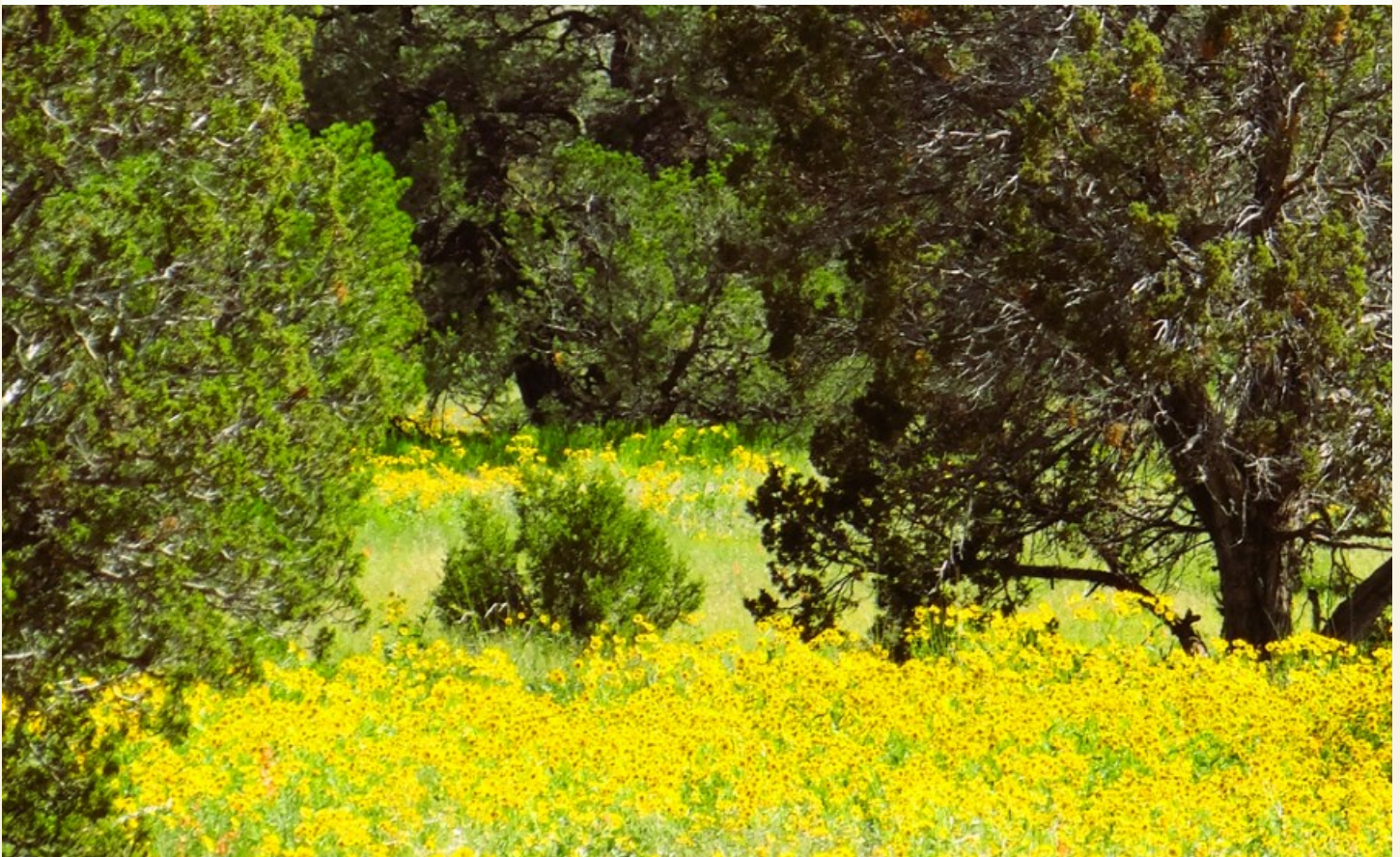


Bureau of Individual Safety and Advocacy (BISA) Report Data

Contributor: Scott Doan, Deputy Director

The Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) launched a new bureau in April of 2024, the Bureau of Individual Safety and Advocacy (BISA). A primary priority of BISA is the prevention of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of individuals receiving Home and Community Based Services waiver programs in New Mexico. One strategy DDSD utilizes is daily BISA reviews and triage of each case of alleged abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation (ANE). Upon meeting specific criteria, BISA can execute an ANE response process which includes notifying DDSD leadership and promptly notifying DDSD staff about alleged critical ANE allegations so that appropriate support can be effectively coordinated and implemented for individuals identified as alleged victims. BISA does not complete investigations into ANE. This is the role of the Division of Health Improvement's Incident Management Bureau. BISA's focus is on determining what, if any, additional support or actions need to be taken by DDSD to secure the individual's health and safety.

BISA reports and monitors all open cases. Additionally, it works in collaboration with assigned DDSD subject matter experts including, but not limited to, subject matter experts from the Regional Office Bureau, nurses, regional behavioral and crisis specialists, waiver managers and other relevant roles. BISA monitors each open case including actions taken to secure the safety of the individual. This process not only is designed to assist in keeping people safe, it also plays a crucial role in person centered planning, understanding each individual situation and what is needed to effectively respond, what resources are available and how to execute them, discern recommendations for follow up, and identify trends in agencies or environments where people receive services or live. It is imperative to understand just as everyone is unique so is each situation. As DDSD does its best to keep people healthy and safe we need to identify all resources that may be needed and have a variety of strategies to deploy as needed. Routinely collecting and reviewing data results in better outcomes for the people we support and is imperative in keeping people safe and free from abuse, neglect and exploitation.



Intermediate Care Facility for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/IID)

Contributor: Jennifer Rodriguez, Director

An Intermediate Care Facility for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/IID) provides, in a residential setting, ongoing evaluation, planning, supervision, treatment, and integration of health or rehabilitation services to help individuals with intellectual disabilities function at their greatest ability in home and community-based settings. ICF/IID is a Medicaid benefit and an alternative to home and community-based services (HCBS) waiver programs for individuals at the ICF/IID level of care. ICF/IIDs offer support in the least restrictive settings and include all needed services for individuals whose mental or physical condition require services on a regular basis that are above the level of a room and board setting and can only be provided in a facility which is equipped and staffed to provide the appropriate ICF/IID services.

In New Mexico, there are ICF/IID providers throughout the state and each one has a variety of facilities/homes which are individually licensed and certified by the Health Care Authority's Division of Health Improvement. ICF/IIDs are in the community and range from one bed to up to sixteen beds with an average of 6 beds in a facility (residential home). Interested individuals are encouraged to explore ICF/IIDs to gain a better knowledge of the care and services provided.

Below are the providers who operate ICF/IIDs in New Mexico. For admission criteria and more information, please visit Intermediate Care Facility for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/IID) - New Mexico Health Care Authority. For information on provider availability, contact Jessica Trujillo at jessica.trujillo@hca.nm.gov.

- ARCA/InterCare (Albuquerque)
- Casa Angelica (Albuquerque)
- Santa Maria El Mirador (Santa Fe)
- Great Livin' (Albuquerque)
- Los Lunas Community Program (Albuquerque)
- EvershineCare (Las Cruces)
- CARC Inc. (Carlsbad)



Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Visit to New Mexico

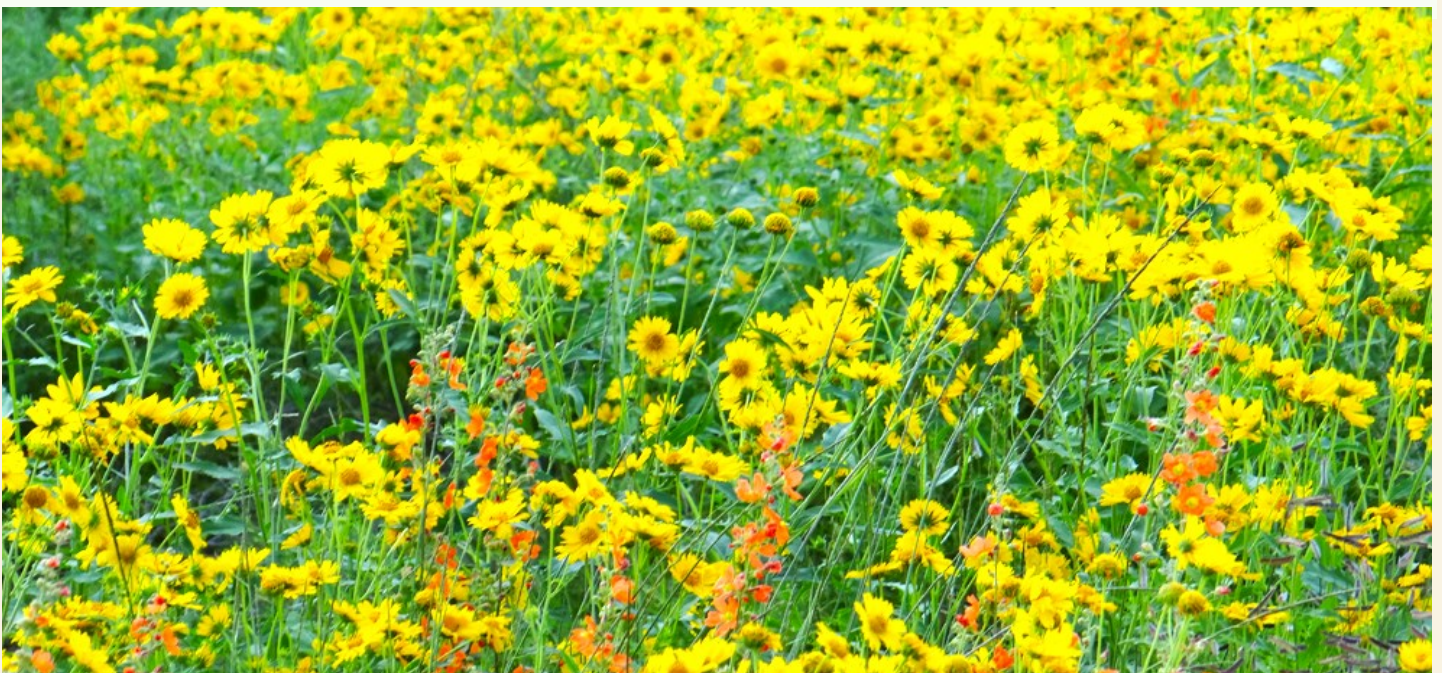
Contributor: Selina Leyba, Bureau Chief

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) conducted a routine site visit from September 16 through September 19, 2024, to monitor and assess New Mexico's compliance with Home and Community Based Services Settings Requirements. CMS visited several settings that reflected a diversity of settings and service types. CMS also visited with state officials, care coordinators, case managers and Medicaid waiver recipients and providers. DDSD received many compliments from CMS about how we provide services and supports and providers received real-time feedback and technical assistance. Overall DDSD was pleased with CMS's evaluation and comments on our service delivery system and settings where people receive support. Below are some areas CMS identified where we could make improvements.

- Include more information in Mi Via Service and Support Plans (SSPs) and identify a way to share all relevant information with the entire support team.
- Add due processes rights and appeals processes to residential agreements and leases.
- Residential models need to demonstrate how they will support participants' full access to the greater community by allowing individual choice for competitive, integrated employment.
- Identify a mechanism to document individual choice in the Individual Service Plan (ISP) when people transition to new residential agencies or homes.
- Ensure locks are installed in entrance doors, bedroom doors and bathroom doors to allow individuals privacy within their own homes and spaces.
- Allow individuals access to food at all times (as documented in person centered plans.)
- Allow access to visitors at the individual's discretion.

DDSD is currently working on remediation to align with CMS Settings Requirements. Please stay tuned for future updates and guidance.

For questions related to the CMS site visits, please contact Selina Leyba at SelinaT.Leyba@hca.nm.gov.



DDSD First Annual Waiver Recipient Satisfaction Survey

Contributor: Jennifer Rodriguez, Director

The In January 2025, DDSD developed its first waiver recipient satisfaction survey. Surveys in home and community-based programs provide valuable insight into the experiences of waiver recipients and their families. This information can be used to identify areas of strength and areas in need of improvement, which helps ensure that services are more effective and aligned with participants' needs.

Key benefits captured in this survey were related to:

- Improved Program Quality
- Enhanced Person-Centered Supports
- Increased Satisfaction and Engagement
- Identifying Gaps in Services
- Accountability and Transparency
- Data for Funding and Advocacy
- Building a Supportive Community
- Improved Compliance with Standards

Surveys of waiver recipients and their families in home and community-based programs are essential tools for gathering feedback, ensuring continuous improvement, and fostering a more person-centered and responsive approach to support. The insights gained from this survey can drive positive changes, improve satisfaction, and ultimately enhance the quality of services provided.



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DDSD First Annual Waiver Recipient Satisfaction Survey (cont.)

555 responses submitted

Do your provider staff treat you with courtesy and respect?



Please add any feedback or suggestions you have in the text box below

"I am very happy with the Mi Via Waiver."

"finding CCSI and transportation and higher education support continues to be a huge barrier"

"The waiver had brought a lot of nice people into my life and has helped me live a much better life"

"Everything is very good "

Come See How We're Teaching Friendship & Relationships Course (FRC) Classes

Contributor: Thea Kavanaugh, Statewide Socialization & Sexuality Education Project Contractor

The Friends and Relationships Course (FRC) classes extend a warm welcome to observers and Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) members, marking an important step in our commitment to inclusive education. These classes serve as the foundation of our socialization and sexuality education (SSE) services, fostering a collaborative environment where SSE providers, FRC teachers, parents/guardians, therapists, Behavior Support Consultants (BSCs), and Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) unite their expertise to support student success. Through observations, we aim to demystify our teaching methods and lesson topics while breaking down barriers and challenging negative perceptions often associated with sex education.

We've selected our classroom locations with accessibility in mind, choosing welcoming community spaces such as local centers, libraries, churches, organization meeting spaces, and community colleges. Understanding that physical attendance isn't always feasible, several SSE Providers offer virtual learning options, ensuring that geographic distance from our rural areas or other obstacles don't stand in the way of accessing these vital educational opportunities.

The cornerstone of our program rests on a belief shared across all SSE Providers and FRC Teachers: every person deserves comprehensive education about relationships and sexual health in an environment that prioritizes both safety and support. Our qualified FRC teachers carefully craft learning spaces where students can explore essential life topics with confidence, from developing friendships and self-advocacy skills to understanding sexuality and maintaining sexual health and well-being.

We welcome diverse observers to our classroom community. This includes individuals with IDD who are considering enrollment, parents and guardians exploring our educational approach, and future FRC teachers seeking to learn our methods. IDT members fulfill a particularly crucial role by supporting their clients' Individual Support Plan (ISP) goals and creating optimal learning conditions through specialized assistance with communication, behavior management, and anxiety reduction. Our curriculum strongly focuses on social connection, teaching students practical skills for planning their own social activities, engaging in meaningful dialogue, and building genuine relationships beyond agency-scheduled events. Therapists and BSCs, as key members of the IDT, play a vital role in helping students transfer classroom learning to home and community settings. The concepts taught in class often align directly with therapy and BSC objectives, supporting students' progress toward ISP goals, particularly in developing meaningful relationships and achieving personal visions. This collaborative approach ensures students can practice and reinforce skills effectively, leading to safer and more successful social interactions. Importantly, therapy and BSC providers have unique opportunities to train and guide Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), family members, and other supporters—both those who attend classes and those who cannot—on implementing class materials in various settings. While classroom teachers face limitations in practicing skills outside the classroom environment and have minimal opportunities to support student development outside of the classroom environment, BSCs and therapy providers can bridge this gap, ensuring consistent skill application across all environments.

Confidentiality stands as a fundamental pillar of our learning environment. Given that students may choose to share personal experiences and questions during class - enriching the learning experience for everyone, we require all guests (defined as anyone who isn't an FRC teacher or student) to sign a confidentiality agreement.

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Come See How We're Teaching Friendship & Relationships Course Classes (cont.)

While we may share certain information with a student's IDT when it serves their best interests, we maintain privacy standards for all classroom discussions.

For prospective observers, we welcome both scheduled and spontaneous visits to our FRC classes. While advance notice allows our FRC teachers to better prepare for additional participants, we recognize that coordinating schedules can be challenging, especially for IDT members supporting multiple clients. Upon arrival at class time, observers should identify themselves as guest observers and complete our sign-in process. Each observer will then receive our confidentiality policy to review, which outlines our commitment to protecting student privacy and creating a safe learning environment. After reviewing this important document, observers must complete our confidentiality agreement before joining the class session.

Just as you would thoughtfully plan involvement in other community-based services your clients attend, we encourage mindful participation in FRC classes. This means maintaining appropriate professional boundaries within your scope of practice and being judicious with observation time. Remember that while your presence can greatly benefit your client's learning experience, it's essential to balance support with fostering independence in this educational setting. Your role as an observer should mirror the professional approach taken in other community services, providing support while respecting the unique learning environment of our FRC classes.

This educational environment embodies our dedication to fostering spaces where individuals can develop essential relationship skills. By opening our classroom doors, we're not just teaching, we're nurturing a community that supports and celebrates each person's unique journey toward building meaningful connections and romantic relationships.

Case Manager Guide: How to Register Individuals for the Friends & Relationships Course Socialization and Sexuality Education (SSE)

1) Secondary Freedom of Choice (SFOC)

- Review and complete SFOC form indicating individual's preferred SSE Provider

2) Add SSE Service to Budget

- SSE Services ONLY: Budget revision requests for FRC series registration are exempt from the standard 30-day projected start date.
- Key Service Details:
- Service start date can begin within first 3 weeks of an 8-week FRC series Allocation: 1 unit per FRC Series
- Maximum: 3 units per ISP year
- Service Code: S9446 HB-TN (Incentivized rate, Statewide)

3) Contact SSE Provider Securely via SCOMM

- Notify preferred SSE Provider of individual's desire to register for the upcoming FRC series
- Provide the following required documents to SSE Provider to complete registration: SFOC
- Budget Approval or Revision Request Current ISP
- PRS Consult Note (if receiving PRSC services) Complete/Provide any additional info requested by SSE Provider

4) For More Information Contact via SCOMM

- Preferred SSE Provider
- DDSD Statewide SSE Project Contractor: Thea Kavanaugh

Developmental Disabilities Waiver - Individual Service Plan (ISP) Updates

Contributor: Claudia Rice, Policy & Research Analyst

In April 2024, the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) began to revise the Individual Service Plan (ISP) for the Developmental Disabilities Waiver. The goal of this project was to make the form more person-centered, accessible, and user-friendly. To make these improvements to the ISP, DDSD received technical assistance, guidance, and feedback from the National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices & Systems (NCAPPS), DDSD staff, the case management system, external stakeholders, and service providers. The updated ISP draws from the Mi Via Service and Support Plan, and person-centered plans from other states.

The new ISP includes several revisions, additions, and emphasizes person-centered planning. Person-centered planning is strength-based, culturally informed, helps cultivate connections, demonstrates rights, choice and control, and utilizes teamwork and collaboration. These themes steered the project and are conveyed in the document using thoughtful, evidence-based open-ended questions and discussion prompts. Some additions to the ISP include questions regarding employment, promoting use of enabling technology, and having a safety and risk assessment. In addition, information on people's rights and choices within service settings was added to promote discussion around autonomy in various settings, and to comply with person-centered plan requirements published by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in December 2024. While some of the content in the new ISP remains the same or similar to the original ISP, this information has been rearranged and re-formatted for ease of use.

The updated ISP will be rolled out in the coming months along with training and instructions for all providers involved in the ISP creation process for the Developmental Disabilities Waiver. The DDSD will work to keep all stakeholders and collaborators informed on the logistics of implementing the new ISP.

Preparing for Unforeseen Circumstances - DDSD's Emergency Operations Plan

Contributor: Claudia Rice, Policy & Research Analyst

It is imperative that waiver recipients, their supports, and service providers remain informed on how to respond to natural disasters and emergencies to keep people safe during these situations. To prepare for unforeseen circumstances, the DDSD created an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The EOP assists DDSD staff members response to a broad range of emergencies that occur in New Mexico, such as fires, floods, severe weather events, and more. The EOP ensures that DDSD staff monitor the health and security of waiver recipients while also helping to address concerns in a timely and efficient manner. The EOP processes do not include abuse, neglect, or exploitation (ANE); ANE must be reported using existing procedures. During emergencies, the DDSD will contact affected waiver recipients' Case Manager, Consultant, or Community Support Coordinator. DDSD staff will inquire about the waiver recipient's situation and if they have any needs. DDSD will also follow up with waiver recipients and their supports to make sure any problems are being addressed. If needed, reach out to the DDSD during emergencies to help resolve issues or obtain information.

For resources and helpful tips on how to stay prepared for emergencies, visit the websites below:

- Ready.gov: Created by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) has a variety of resources on emergency planning for flooding to extreme heat and more.
- Administration for Community Living (ACL): Visit the ACL website: acl.gov/emergencypreparedness for resources on how to prepare for emergencies and natural disasters.
- State of New Mexico Governor's Commission on Disability: The state of NM has resources on how individuals with disabilities can prepare for emergencies. Visit gcd.nm.gov and under Technical Assistance, click on the Emergency Preparedness menu item to learn more.

Designated Training Can Improve the Lives of People Being Supported

Contributor: Daniel Cordova, Training & Knowledge Management Unit

As a therapist or nurse, you already know how valuable your time is. So, what can you do to ensure that the people you support have everything they need to live their best life? The answer may not be all that simple, but we do want you to know that DDS is here to offer you some possible strategies to help. We will be discussing specifically the designated training process that is available to you and how this may benefit the person being supported, the agencies that are there providing everyday support, and you the therapist, or nurse.

Let's start by looking at how much time is invested in providing Individual-Specific Training (IST) on support and healthcare plans. Since turnover is prevalent in the direct support professional industry, we know that a lot of time is spent providing IST training to new staff. This imposes a huge constraint on your time and ultimately reduces the time you can provide crucial care for the people on your caseload. Additionally, this tends to utilize the finite number of units you have to provide support to those who need services most. This is where the benefit of designating a trainer can be most useful.

Oftentimes there may be some apprehension from therapists and nurses to designate a trainer. Rest assured you have more control over the process than you may think. A designated trainer is never allowed to complete assessments, provide evaluations, or offer professional judgement on your behalf. They are only allowed to provide training to staff on portions of your plan that you have designed for them, and if you as a professional feel that the designated trainer does not provide training to staff at the level you would, you have the option of rescinding your designation at any time. If you are interested in finding out more about the designated training process please reach out to **Kyle Cottrell at: 505-527-3611**, or by email at: kyle.cottrell@hca.nm.gov, and as always refer to the latest version of the service standards for more information.

Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) Provider Information

Contributor: Jenni McNab, Assistant Metro Director/EVV Lead

If you are a provider of the Developmental Disabilities Waiver, Mi Via Waiver, Medically Fragile Waiver, or Supports Waiver, clock in and out and bill through EVV, ensure your agency is reviewing informational exceptions as follows:

- **Informational Exceptions G1 and G2 unauthorized phone number** - these exceptions indicate that the phone number used to call the IVR does not match the phone number for the individual who is receiving the services. Providers should be checking for these exceptions and ensuring their Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are only using the individual's phone to clock in and out of the IVR.
- **Informational Exceptions G3 and G4 unauthorized phone number** - these exceptions indicate that the phone number used to call the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) does not match the phone number for the individual who is receiving services. However, the phone number the DSP is using to call the IVR is in the AuthentiCare system somewhere. Providers should be checking for these exceptions and ensuring their DSPs are only using the individual's phone to clock in and out of the IVR.

It is a requirement for providers who use EVV to ensure their DSP's only use the individual's phone to call the IVR. The IVR should not be utilized by the DSP calling from their own phone.

If an individual has a new phone number or address that hasn't been updated in Medicaid, providers can add an additional phone number and/or address on the AuthentiCare client home page. Make sure this phone number isn't the DSP's number. For questions contact: **Consolidated Customer Service Center at 800-299-7304**.

What is Supported Decision Making (SDM)?

Contributor: New Mexico Aging and Long -Term Services Department

Supported Decision Making (SDM) is an approach for assisting individuals with disabilities and older adults who rely on others for help making life decisions. In SDM, the person makes their own decisions about important life choices, such as health care and financial matters, with the assistance of a trusted group of friends, family, or professionals. Supporters help the person obtain relevant information, understand that information, evaluate risks and benefits, and/or communicate their decisions. In contrast to substituted decision making models like guardianship, supporters do not make decisions for the person.

How Does SDM Work with Guardianship and Conservatorship?

SDM does not eliminate guardianship or conservatorship. People who need guardians or conservators (or both) should have them. SDM simply gives people and their families another lesser restrictive option, if they choose it.

Does New Mexico Law Already Cover SDM?

No, there is no New Mexico state law that specifically recognizes people's right to choose SDM. More than half of the states have clarified their laws to specifically recognize and respect people's right to choose SDM. Texas, in 2015, was the first state to pass a law related to SDM. Twenty seven (27) states and the District of Columbia recognize SDM in their laws.

How Can SDM Help People Who Choose to Use It?

When people choose SDM, they make their own decisions instead of having someone else make decisions for them. Research has repeatedly found that older adults and people with disabilities who make more of their own choices—who are more self-determined—can have better lives. For example: research shows that people with disabilities who are more self-determined are better able to recognize and avoid abuse and among people with similar abilities and limitations, those who made their own decisions were more likely to live independently, work, be active members of their communities, date, and marry than those who had people making decisions for them. A study also showed that young adults who used SDM were more independent and confident, were better at making decisions, and made better decisions.



Enabling Technology Spotlight Series

Contributor: Aaron Joplin, Northwest Regional Director

Think about a time when you were dependent on someone to help you complete an activity of daily living, like needing someone to open and close doors for you. Or think about what it would be like to depend on someone to support you to participate in a recreational activity. How hard would you work to become more independent and find systems, tools, technology, or rehabilitation to get back to being more autonomous with these activities? Now think about the individuals supported through one of the 4 home and community-based services waivers operated by DDSD. Frequently, people depend on assistance and support from direct support staff. With a nationwide shortage of Direct Support Professionals (DSP), face-to-face support is not always available, impacting services, activities, and opportunities for people who need assistance.

The good news is that there are strategies to address the DSP shortage and support individuals in becoming more independent without DSPs. We all use it, many of us on a daily basis, and it is called technology. Think about how the technology you use and have access to could also be used to support individuals in becoming who they want to be with less reliance on people to provide support. DDSD has a list of vendors that provide technology supports to all people, not just people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD.)

On the 1st Wednesday of every month DDSD hosts a virtual community of practice called the Spotlight Series where we showcase different vendors, individuals who have implemented and use technology successfully, and ways to navigate waivers to get technology for people with IDD. The Spotlight Series is open to anyone who would like to attend: service providers, case managers, therapists, individuals and their families. On April 2nd, we will be spotlighting CreateAbility.

CreateAbility is an enabling technology company that designs and develops innovative applications and solutions to support processes across the healthcare continuum. Their mission is to eliminate barriers, foster independence, and empower people with intellectual disabilities and traumatic brain injuries to flourish beyond their current capabilities. CreateAbility's technology solutions are used by provider agencies, hospitals, group homes, rehabilitation facilities, and individuals. Their apps focus on:

- Person-centered care planning
- Task-prompting
- Health and wellbeing assessments
- Emotional self-regulation skills
- Career exploration and Discovery
- Video check-ins

CreateAbility's solutions offer evidence-based, user-friendly apps that can run on iOS or Android devices and provide a corresponding dashboard for providers to remotely monitor an individuals progress and setbacks in real-time, gather critical healthcare data, and communicate with users.

You can access the link to attend our Spotlight Series via our flyer that is emailed by DDSD's Provider Enrollment Relations Unit in the bi-monthly document distribution, or this link is on the Enabling Technology webpage located on HCA's DDSD website under the Waiver Programs & Services - Enabling Technology menu heading. Near the bottom of the page you will find the Technology First Community of Practice and Monthly Spotlight Series. Click this link at the scheduled time to access our Technology Spotlight meeting. Here is a direct link to our webpage: www.hca.nm.gov/enabling-technology/

Health and Wellness Visit Update

Contributor: Scott Doan, Deputy Director

March 17th of 2025 marks the two-year anniversary of when the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) began completing health and wellness visits. The primary focus of the visits is to prevent abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of anyone receiving DDSD operated services. Since March of 2023, DDSD has completed over 25,000 health and wellness visits with individuals receiving home and community-based services (HCBS) waivers.

Subsequently, in October 2023, DDSD committed to seeing every individual receiving HCBS waiver services, in their home, twice per year. Over the last 17 months, October 2023 to February 2025, DDSD staff have seen over 1,000 individuals per month. These health and wellness visits include a conversation with individuals receiving services, their families, and Direct Support Professionals, and include an observation of the home environment.

These visits have been invaluable to the Division, providing DDSD with firsthand knowledge of any issues or concerns that need to be immediately addressed. At any time during the visits, if abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation (ANE) is suspected, DDSD staff file a report with the Division of Health Improvement-Incident Management Bureau. In addition, if an individual, family, or Direct Support Professional has concerns or unaddressed issues, DDSD staff documents these concerns through our Regional Office Request for Assistance (RORA) system and tracks each of the concerns until they are resolved. Weekly, DDSD completes a quality assurance review of visits completed for the week to make sure RORAs and/or ANE reports were filed for issues or concerns that were noted or observed during the visit.

DDSD continues to seek and listen to feedback from all stakeholders regarding the health and wellness visits. The health and wellness visits have proven to be an effective strategy in keeping people safe, however we respect the feedback we receive from families and waiver recipients about the impact and experience of health and wellness visits in their lives. DDSD will continue to solicit feedback on health and wellness visits through our statewide Advocacy Partners meetings.

Remember, we are all in this together! The only way to eliminate abuse, neglect, and exploitation from our system is if we all stay diligent, heed the warning signs of ANE, work together, and when in doubt, report!



StationMD DSP Spotlight Series

StationMD DSP Spotlight Series

What motivates and inspires me to excel at my job is helping the individuals I care for, making a difference in their lives, and ensuring they always know someone is here for them.

Osvaldo Rosales

DSP at The New Beginnings, New Mexico



At StationMD, we are proud to highlight the dedication and hard work of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who make a lasting impact on the lives of the individuals they care for. This month, we are excited to feature Osvaldo Rosales, nominated by New Beginnings in New Mexico for his outstanding commitment to his role.

When asked to describe Osvaldo in three words, his team chose: Reliable, Efficient, and Confident. They shared, *“He puts his heart into his role as the House Lead and in everything he does to care for all the clients in the house. He anticipates their needs and addresses every single concern right away and accordingly.”*

Osvaldo, 22, is not only a dedicated DSP but also an aspiring photographer and auto mechanic- two passions he has pursued since childhood. As he does in his passions, he applies the same level of dedication and precision to his work in direct support.

When asked about advice for colleagues, Osvaldo emphasized the importance of patience and understanding: *“Take time to learn about your individuals, have patience with them, but most importantly, with yourself. Patience and compassion will take you very far.”*

Osvaldo also shared how StationMD has played a vital role in supporting him and the individuals he cares for. *“We couldn’t figure out exactly what was wrong, but the StationMD doctor helped us and led us in the right direction to get the proper care.”*

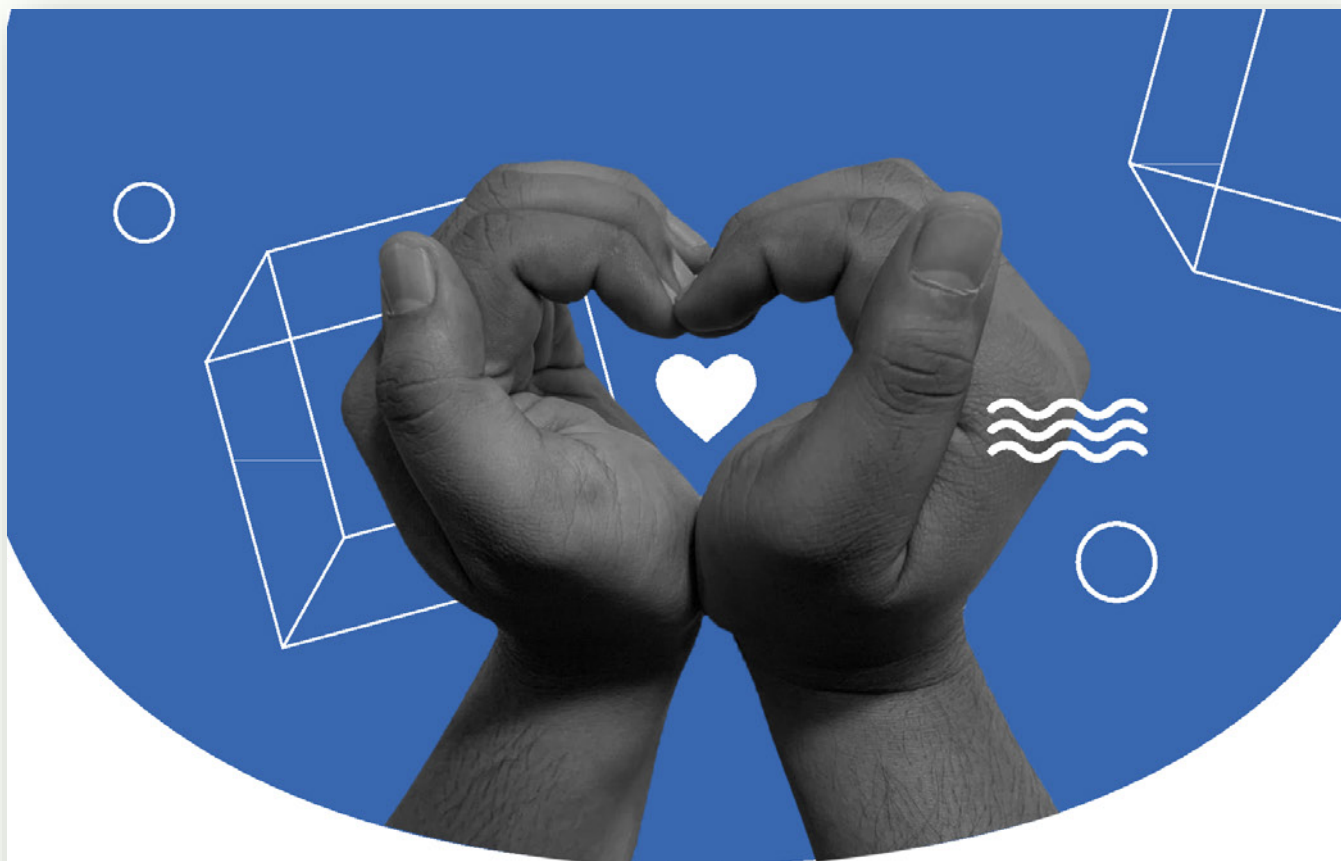
Thank you, Osvaldo, for your hard work, dedication, and the care you provide every day. We’re inspired by your commitment to your role and the care you give to the individuals you support!

Stay tuned for more DSP Spotlights as we continue to celebrate the incredible individuals who make a difference every day!

StationMD’s DSP Spotlight Series

StationMD’s DSP Spotlight Series program is dedicated to celebrating and highlighting the exceptional dedication and contributions of direct care professionals. Through this initiative, our goal is to cultivate a culture of appreciation and recognition for the impactful work carried out by DSPs, showcasing and acknowledging their unwavering dedication to serving the population with I/DD.

If you’d like to nominate a DSP from your agency, contact your Account Executive or [reach out to us here](#).



Join Advisory Council on Quality (ACQ)

The ACQ Council on Quality Supports for People with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (IDD) advises the New Mexico Health Care Authority on the systems that provides services and supports for people with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (IDD) of all ages and their families to be fully included in their communities.

What does an ACQ Member do?

- Attends one meeting every two months.
- Assist with developing and monitoring a system to monitor the quality of the services for people with IDD.
- Recommending service priorities and advising on State Plan development.
- Promoting collaboration among agencies and community programs.
- Suggesting legislative actions to expand and improve services.
- Advocating for cost-effective, specialized services and advising on policy changes.



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Learn More

<https://www.hca.nm.gov/advisory-council-on-quality/>



Special
smiles 😊

Special Care Dentistry Summit

Welcome to New Mexico's first Special Needs Dental Care Summit! This meeting seeks to bring those that have special needs, those that care about someone with special needs, and those that care for someone with special needs to discuss and plan how oral health care can be improved for New Mexicans with special needs.

We will hear from experts and those that need special care to network and prioritize ways to overcome our barriers to needed care. All are invited to share their experiences and consider how they can help improve oral health care for those with special needs. Dental professionals will learn how to improve their care. Individuals and caregivers will learn how to access and advocate for better care. Policy makers will learn the current barriers to care. Each will share their insights on how we can improve our system. We hope you will join us.

Professional participants can earn up to 6 CEU for attendance.

Scan the QR code below for more information.



New Mexico
DENTAL ASSOCIATION



NEW MEXICO DENTAL ASSOCIATION
Foundation
...the heart of dentistry

Friday, April 11, 2025

8:00-2:00

Albuquerque Jewish Community Center

Registration: Free (Meals included)



Fourth Annual Denim and Diamonds Benefit Gala

Rio Grande Down Syndrome Network

Rio Grande Down Syndrome Network is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower individuals with Down Syndrome and their families through advocacy, education and support. We are a collaborative network which seeks to create awareness, assure inclusion, and promote independence in individuals with Down Syndrome.

Our Mission

The Rio Grande Down Syndrome Network is a nonprofit organization whose **mission** is to empower individuals with Down Syndrome and their families through **advocacy, education and support**. We are a **collaborative network** which seeks to create awareness, assure inclusion, and promote independence in individuals with Down Syndrome.

4th Annual Denim & Diamonds Benefit Gala

Thank you for making last year's Denim & Diamonds Gala a success! Due to the last three years of success; we are excited to announce our fourth D&D Gala! We are continuing our work, raising funds to support programs, resources, and scholarships for families throughout all stages of life.

Our "Grand Ole Gala" will take place Saturday, April 12, 2025. Make plans to join us for a night of celebration, and fun in the theme of classic country music while helping support the more than 400 families we serve across northern New Mexico.

Join us for a night of cocktails, dinner, live and silent auction, live entertainment from Back in the Saddle, and plenty of surprises! To be part of this exciting event consider a sponsorship or purchase a ticket for this year's celebration.

For questions or to donate to our silent auction, contact Donyelle Lucero at president@rgdsn.org.

[Sponsor Our Event or Purchase Tickets](#)



E-Blasts

Contributor: Tammy Barth, Provider Enrollment & Relations Manager

Supports Waiver CMS Extension Request – 3/6/2025

DDSD Advocacy Partner Meeting - April 1, 2025 with Flyer – 3/6/2025

DDSD Document Distribution – 3/3/2025

Waiver Management Reorganization Memo – 2/21/2025

DSD Document Distribution – 2/17/2025

Disability Rights Awareness Day 2025 - February 13, 2025 – 2/10/2025

DDSD Numbered Memo regarding Safe Water Temperatures – 2/5/2025

DDSD Document Distribution – 2/4/2025

Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memo – 1/30/2025

edically Fragile Waiver Amendment Error Memo – 1/30/2025

Mi Via Waiver Amendment Memo – 1/29/2025

Approved DD Waiver Amendment & Supported Living Category 2 Rate Error Memo – 1/29/2025

New Hires and Promotions

Contributor: Joe Anaya, Human Resources

Melanie Buenviaje, DDSD Deputy Director, GEN, Santa Fe, started: 3/29/25

Claudia Rice, Staff and Constituent Supports Manager, Santa Fe office, started 3/29/25

Annabel DeBari, Registered Nurse Level III, Albuquerque, started: 3/1/25

Veronica Bachicha, Behavioral Health Therapist II, Albuquerque, started 3/1/25

Felicia Griego, Registered Nurse-Supervisor, Albuquerque, started: 3/1/25

Ana Orona, SOC/COM SV COORD II, Albuquerque, started: 3/1/25

Lundy Tvedt, Staff Manager, Santa Fe, started: 3/1/25

Jonyce Cordova, Business Operations Specialist-O, Santa Fe, started 2/15/25

Alix Dean, SOC/COM SV COORD-S, Albuquerque, office, started: 2/15/25

Andrea Grider, Registered Nurse Level III, Albuquerque, started: 2/15/25

Erin Farley, SOC/COM SV COORD-II Taos, NERO office, started: 1/18/25

Mikeala Romero, SOC/COM SV COORD-II Taos, NERO office, started: 1/18/25

ABOUT US

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