



**NEW MEXICO
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Bill Richardson
Governor

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CYFD Secretary

Michelle Lujan-Grisham

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New Mexico Health and Human Services Secretaries Take State's Critical Concerns to Washington, D.C.

New Mexico's Secretaries of Health, Human Services, Children, Youth and Families, and Aging and Long-Term Services, are in Washington, D.C. to discuss urgent health care and human services concerns with top federal officials.

The secretaries will be meeting with key Democratic and Republican federal Health and Human Services Department legislative committee members and members of the state's Congressional Delegation, to explain New Mexico's health care needs and discuss special federal appropriations that may be available to address those needs.

Secretary of Health Patricia Montoya will highlight two projects during the visit. The first is a three-part initiative that would improve rural behavioral health care by adding psychiatry and addiction psychiatry to 12 health clinics through telehealth; develop web-based training for treatment regimes; and expand an electronic patient chart system to include the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliant electronic records for people who receive behavioral health services through DOH.

The second project includes providing transitional housing for disabled youth, ages 18 to 21, who are leaving foster care, in hopes of reducing the number of individuals who become homeless later in life because they are not given proper support during this transition.

"It is important for our Congressional leaders and other federal officials to know the challenges that New Mexicans are facing," Secretary Montoya said. "These are two important areas where individuals and their special needs are being overlooked. These initiatives can help change that."

Human Services Secretary Pamela Hyde also seeks support for two projects: the interdepartmental information technology project, which would consolidate eligibility and intake processes for all health and human services in New Mexico; and a planning initiative to reduce fragmentation of services as the state moves into the Interdepartmental Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative, a bill signed recently by Gov. Bill Richardson

"This is an excellent opportunity to help New Mexico's congressional delegation and key congressional staff learn more about New Mexico's health and human services needs," Secretary Hyde said.

Michelle Lujan Grisham, Aging and Long-Term Services Department Secretary, is focusing on developing support services for aging New Mexicans who live in rural areas. In particular, she seeks \$600,000 for the Zuni Care Corps, to train caregivers to provide services to older and disabled Zuni members who prefer to remain in their own homes.

Participants will be paid an hourly wage and, after completing 2,000 hours of service, be eligible for college scholarships.

"We must include federal partners as we work to develop support for seniors and people with disabilities living in rural communities," Grisham said. "Developing the support system now will avoid a future where smaller communities are populated only by older people with no services or network of family to provide support."

CYFD Secretary Mary-Dale Bolson seeks an appropriation for emergency foster care. This is meant mainly for youths in the juvenile justice system whose crimes aren't serious enough to warrant being placed inside a juvenile facility, but who would be better rehabilitated in a community environment.

"I want to thank New Mexico's Congressional delegation for helping with this cause. Too often, older kids are being lost in the system. It doesn't have to be that way, and it is within our power to stop this from happening," Secretary Bolson said.

The Department also seeks \$1 million in federal funding to aid in transition programs to help young adults as they progress out of the juvenile justice system and into the world as productive adults.

The initiatives supported by the Cabinet Secretaries are part of Gov. Bill Richardson's comprehensive health care agenda, designed to expand access to quality health care for all New Mexicans, particularly low income and senior citizens. The Governor's plan includes reducing duplication and waste, eliminating fraud, and controlling costs in the health care system including Medicaid and Medicare.

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