

State of New Mexico

CHILDREN, YOUTH and FAMILIES DEPARTMENT

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GOVERNOR

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April 10, 2020

Dear Foster Parent,

Thank you for your continued diligence and patience as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic together. These are difficult times for all of us, and your commitment to the health and wellbeing of the children has never been more important. We will continue to support you in this time.

New Mexico is fully committed to reinvesting additional federal child welfare money that it is receiving due to COVID-19 in direct ways that support New Mexican children and families. To that end, we are announcing that foster parents will be receiving an additional \$175/month/child to support the needs of children and youth effective April 2020 and continuing until emergency restrictions are lifted. This represents an approximate 25% increase in the average foster care rate for each child each month during this period of crisis.

We hope this temporary increase helps your family adjust and address emergent needs with children and young people being home for the rest of the school year and the many other ways the stay-at-home order is likely affecting your family.

As the virus continues to spread and we are losing more New Mexicans, the stay-at-home order is never more important. Even though the order allows essential outings, the Governor has asked to even minimize those trips-- for example sending just one person to the store if possible and limiting trips overall. If you need to get outside, please try to do so in areas where limited amounts of people will be.

We are working on providing you with educational and other enrichment activities in the coming days and weeks.

As you know, as of April 26th and in step with the New Mexico Supreme Court, we have moved away from most in person visits with biological parents. The Court also ordered that visits must continue. By video whenever possible and via phone when unavailable. In these times of uncertainty, maintaining those visits and having your support to do them is absolutely critical. These visits can help reduce trauma for children and youth in this crisis. If you or the biological family of the children in your care need support in making those visits happen you can reach out to our staff.

We are committed to reinstating in-person visits as soon as it is deemed safe to do so. Family reunification, whenever it is safe to do so, is the foundation of New Mexico's child welfare system. Visits and connection are key to family reunification.

CYFD.org now has a dedicated “COVID-19 Updates” tab that leads to a page with resources, support, and these and other communications directly from the department. We encourage you to only consider news from trusted sources or directly from state government.

If you or anyone in your household is struggling with stress, anxiety, or mental health issues in these times, you can call the The New Mexico Crisis Access Line (NMCAL). NMCAL free, open 24/7, and you do not have to be in crisis to access their services. You can talk to a trained professional right away and/or be referred to mental health providers that can help you via virtual scheduled visits. You can call 1-855-NMCRISIS (662-7474) for support. They have also just released a brand new NMConnect App for iOS and Android, which can be accessed in the App Store or Google Play Store.

Essential child welfare staff are still working in the field for child abuse investigations and more. Those that are still working in offices or facilities are following guidance from the Department of Health to prevent potential spread. Our buildings are closed to the public and will go through a deep cleaning process before we reoccupy these offices.

CYFD has also been collaborating with other organizations to provide food to children, youth, and elders. We are also working with our existing youth shelter and domestic violence shelter providers.

We are here for the children and youth of our state. Many of our workers are helping New Mexicans in ways we have never seen before, and that assistance extends to families connected to CYFD. Please let your worker know how else we can help during this extended crisis.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Blalock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Secretary Brian Blalock