

NMDOH News Brief

IMMUNIZATION



NM Department of Health Immunization Program

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COVID Care Calls:

An initiative to help the most vulnerable New Mexicans get vaccinated

Maggie June, BA, Cht
 NM Immunization Coalition

NMIC is working on an exciting new initiative called COVID Care Calls that began in January to assist New Mexicans who need help in order to get a COVID-19 vaccination appointment. The online registration portal has been a helpful tool for so many New Mexicans; however, for those who don't have internet, don't use email, don't text or have mobility challenges that prevents them from getting to a

COVID-19 vaccination appointment, obtaining a COVID vaccination can feel like an insurmountable challenge.

These challenging issues are addressed through COVID Care Calls. Trained volunteers connect with special populations, working directly with each person over the phone to schedule their vaccination appointment. This initiative also addresses the needs of those who don't have transportation. The COVID Care Calls initiative is



vaccination team that goes to an individual's home to administer the vaccination.

By collaborating with Albuquerque Fire & Rescue, we have been able to help people who are medically homebound to receive their COVID vaccines. We identify people who need extra assistance with getting vaccinated, and then we work with EMS to schedule a series of home visits. EMS in Sandoval

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Fun Zoom photo showcasing NMDOH's COVID Leadership Team

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CDC issues appeal to help kids safely return to school

Anna Pentler, MPH, MBA
NM Immunization Coalition

We all want our kids to be back in school safely, and that means getting caught up on vaccines that were missed over the last year. CDC’s public sector vaccine ordering data show a 14% drop in 2020-2021 compared to 2019, and measles vaccine is down by more than 20%.

Kids need to get caught up now so that they are protected as they go back to in-person learning. Here are some key activities and approaches:

- Identify families whose children

have missed doses and contact them to schedule appointments

- Prompt clinicians when children are seen to deliver vaccines that are due or overdue
- Let families know what precautions are in place for safe delivery of in-person services
- Encourage members to identify and follow up with families whose children have missed doses to get appointments scheduled
- Send reminders to families about school immunization requirements
- Follow-up with families of children who are not in



compliance with requirements to encourage compliance

- Use the state’s immunization information system’s reminder-recall capacity to notify families whose children have fallen behind on vaccines
- Talk to families about the importance of well-child visits & getting caught up on recommended vaccines

CDC General Best Practice Guidelines for Immunization: Vaccination Programs. ACIP Vaccination Programs Guidelines for Immunization | Recommendations | CDC.

Kudos to New Mexico’s Public Health Nurses

Heather Black, RN
Chief Nurse, NM Department of Health

Our Public Health nurses have always led the way towards a healthy New Mexico. They live and work in their communities; providing compassion, dedication, and an exceptional level of care. This is who they are.

This past year, with the COVID-19 pandemic affecting us all, their professionalism and heart shine through. Since March of 2020, our Public Health nurses show up for work day after day with

enthusiasm, perseverance, and commitment to do their part to end the pandemic. They have missed out on time with their loved ones, time off to re-charge, and time for self-care. They have suffered personal loss and tragedy, burn-out and exhaustion, and fear of a never-ending pandemic. Despite this, they lead by example, always willing to do more and never complaining while still maintaining clinic programs and operations.

“To do what nobody else will do, in a way that nobody else can, in spite of all we go through; that is to be a nurse.”

— *Rawsi Williams*

This is why our Public Health nurses are the heartbeat of Public Health and why it is such an honor to work alongside them every day. Thank you for all you do for your clients, your communities, and New Mexico!

It's official!

New Mexico has a lot of Heart

Don't miss the exciting feature story that covers why New Mexico is doing so well with the COVID-19 vaccine rollout.

The story features Laura Parajon, MD, MPH, and aired April 2 on NBC. Click [here](#) to access the video.



Looking Ahead...

Potlucks and in-person camaraderie

Andrea Romero
Interim Immunization Program Manager

A smile appears on my face when I anticipate once again gathering with the Immunization Program team for good potlucks and old-fashioned in-person socializing. I look forward to once again resuming our traditional lunchtime gatherings in the conference room, as a team; it was our time to catch up with each other and take a pause from our busy schedules. We enjoyed many favorite homemade dishes, like Felica Martinez's salsa and Grace Gonzales' scrumptious desserts. We celebrated holidays, retirement parties, birthdays and seasonal gatherings with treats like Lynne Padilla's pumpkin spice pancakes—that became an anticipated fall staple. When it's safe, I look forward to these resuming the traditions that bring us close.

Looking back to Spring 2020, our priority was to keep our team connected to each other while also staying safe, as the Program switched to a virtual platform. We plunged into new remote ways of working; quickly becoming proficient on virtual platforms—zoom meetings suddenly crowding our calendars. We are grateful to meet virtually,

it's now become our way to support and connect with each other.

By wintertime, we had combined our efforts in preparation of the vaccine rollout. We prepared to enroll COVID-19 providers and we prepared the NMSIIS registry. We updated storage and handling guidance, ordering & redistribution process, supplemental funding requests—for supplies and staff, and assisted in the development of the registration process. As the rollout continues, the Program focuses to get New Mexicans vaccinated swiftly and equitably. We are thankful to our new partners for their invaluable help in this success. We've formed new partnerships with many internal programs and also partners like the COVID-19 Vaccine Planning team that continues their important work.

I look forward to the day we gather again to share stories and delicious dishes. The best way to get back to the life we knew, is to get vaccinated! We are in this together, let's take the step to stop the spread. Register for the COVID-19 vaccine at vaccineNM.org. Everyone 16 and older may register and self-schedule an appointment.

Thank you team and thank you to our incredible partners for your hard work. I am grateful for everyone's dedication to the health of all New Mexicans. I am proud to work alongside each and every one of you.

COVID Care Calls initiative
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County is providing home vaccination services every two weeks, to ensure that medically homebound community members throughout the county have access to vaccines.

While serving the medically homebound, we have also found that some caregivers have not yet been vaccinated. At times, this may be due to vaccine availability, but some caregivers have difficulty getting to appointments due to their responsibilities.

We've highlighted a few stories below, that COVID Care Callers have shared

- One example was a 70-year-old woman who cares for her daughter. I scheduled her daughter's home vaccination and she was so happy that someone was coming to help them! Then she said, "Now if I can just get mine!" I asked her if she would like me to help schedule a vaccine for her and she said, "yes, please!" We were able to schedule her to be

vaccinated at home, along with her daughter. She told me, "You just made my family's day! We are so grateful! God bless you!"

- A gentleman who was homebound but needed transportation told me that he knew of a service that would probably take him. I had then



told him to call me back if there were changes to the ride. After a few calls back and forth, he let me know that the ride service was able to take him to his appointment. I was glad that he was able to get a ride, letting him know that I wanted to help him as much as possible.

- Most of the calls I make end up with a "God bless you" or a genuine show of appreciation to me. I feel the sincerity through the phone from people who truly appreciate that someone is finally checking in on them. Whether I'm scheduling or just giving an appointment notification call,

I'm always thanked whole-heartedly and it motivates me to make sure every special population is well taken care of!

- An older couple from Northern New Mexico were excited to be able to get their vaccinations scheduled together, but they were apprehensive about choosing a date and time and asked if it would be possible for me to call their daughter who is in charge of their medical appointments and drives them. After a quick call to their daughter, the appointments were able to be scheduled. Their daughter was delighted and surprised to receive the phone call, and her parents were relieved to have the service provided for them.

Contact us

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Call or email us for more information about our newsletter or if you have an item to submit for publication.

