

Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor
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DOH and HSD propose a three-tiered plan for people with disabilities currently waiting for assistance on the Developmental Disabilities Waiver

Santa Fe – New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) and the Human Services Department (HSD) propose implementing a three phased approach to provide temporary assistance to those on the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waitlist first and to ultimately overhaul the DD Waiver program over a 6-year period in hope of implementing a more sustainable program that better provides the services needed and eliminates the waitlist.

Delivering on a campaign promise, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham instructed DOH and HSD in March of 2019 to develop a Supports Waiver program to aid approximately 5,000 New Mexicans waiting more than a decade for placement on the Developmental Disabilities waiver (DD Waiver).

“A waiting list of this size is completely unacceptable and indicative of a lack of care and attention by state leadership in recent years,” Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham said, “My administration is building a system that will provide high-quality services for New Mexicans with developmental disabilities and their families. Over time, this waiting list will be eliminated. I want it done now, but it will take time and we are aggressively pursuing the remedy. Through our commitment to working with families, tribal leaders and other community stakeholders, we will deliver for the most vulnerable population in our state.”

The **first phase** will provide for funding some additional services in state fiscal year (FY) 2020 for individuals on the DD Waitlist who are not Medicaid eligible. For the individuals on the DD Waitlist who are enrolled in Medicaid, HSD will create fulltime positions dedicated to the outreach and education of these Medicaid Managed Care enrollees to ensure they are maximizing the benefits available to them and that the Medicaid managed care organizations are providing the full array of services to which those individuals are entitled.

This will allow both departments to provide some immediate relief to individuals on the DD Waitlist while gathering public input and negotiation the terms of the **second phase**, which is a Supports Waiver, with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

“Gathering input and public comment from our stakeholders to ensure we have the information we need to build consensus and make informed decisions on the services needed for the Supports Waiver is essential,” said Kathyleen M. Kunkel, DOH cabinet secretary.

In FY 2021 DOH intends to implement the support Waiver with a limited budget and service array for all individuals on the waitlist, while developing the **third phase** which will be a tiered Developmental Disabilities Waiver intended to provide services more appropriate to an individual’s needs. Everyone on the waitlist will be allocated to the tiered waiver based on their assessed needs with the goal of eliminating the waitlist entirely over six years.

The changes proposed in the second and third phase will require legislative approval, stakeholder input, more waiver slots, additional services and additional funding.

"We are enthusiastic about this approach and hopeful that it will allow us to better serve this population more effectively in the long-term," said Angela Medrano, deputy secretary for the Human Services Department.

DOH and HSD will continue to develop this plan while providing ample notice and public comment periods to ensure the stakeholder community agrees with and is informed of this planned approach.

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