



Susana Martinez, Governor
Kyky Knowles, Acting Cabinet Secretary

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NM Aging & Long-Term Services Department Takes Action to Safeguard Taxpayer Dollars

Community Services for Seniors to Continue without Disruption

SANTA FE, NM -- The New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD) last month elected to terminate its contract with the Non-Metro Area Agency on Aging (NMAAA) amid serious concerns about fiscal management and accounting for state and federal funds for senior programs across New Mexico. After discovering a pattern of inaccurate recording and reporting of funds by NMAAA, the department also referred these concerns to the Office of the State Auditor on December 20 to request assistance to further investigate the accounting and use of public funds.

"In fulfilling our mission to serve some of the state's most vulnerable residents, our priority is supporting the providers who take care of our elders - while safeguarding taxpayer dollars," said Kyky Knowles, Acting Secretary of the New Mexico Aging & Long-Term Services Department. "It was critical that we make this move in order to be good stewards of federal and state dollars and to avoid jeopardizing our federal funding due to questionable finances by NMAAA."

Under the Older Americans Act, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) coordinate with a network of community-based providers at the local level to provide comprehensive services for older adults that help them stay healthy and independent. Senior providers offer services to New Mexico's elders including: Adult Day Care, Congregate Meals, Home-Delivered Meals, Respite Care, and Transportation. As the State Unit on Aging, it is ALTSD's role to monitor and evaluate the performance of all programs and activities provided by AAAs, including the accounting for all financial expenditures.

"We are not going to be distracted by those that want to try and politicize this issue," Knowles continued. "Our focus now is on the path forward, and we've already started to transition with senior providers around the state so they can continue to provide these vital services without disruption."

Beginning February 1, ALTSD will begin directly handling all reimbursement requests and payments to senior providers in the Non-Metro AAA service areas. Funding for senior programming has not been affected by the move. This action is only a change in the way community providers are reimbursed.

ALTSD has more than 60 full-time staff dedicated to ensuring a seamless transition with community-based providers. This staff is prepared to directly manage all contracts and provide technical assistance to providers. Further, the agency is on track to have all new contracts in place with providers by the end of January.

This is a temporary measure that is expected to last for a period of six months to allow ALTSD to review its processes and structure and gather public feedback from community providers and partners. During the interim period, ALTSD will undergo a third-party assessment of the State Plan for Aging and Long-Term Services, area plans, the six planning service areas, and state and federal budgets.

If, in the course of this review, it is determined that NMAAA will be de-designated as an Area Agency on Aging, ALTSD will follow all federal guidelines, including required public notice and hearings. Throughout the process, ALTSD has kept their federal oversight agency fully apprised of all steps being taken and received their technical assistance to ensure compliance with all obligations under the Older Americans Act.

For more information, New Mexico seniors or community service providers can contact the Aging and Long-Term Services Department at NM.providers@state.nm.us

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