



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
Aging & Long-Term Services
Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham
Katrina Hotrum-Lopez, Cabinet Secretary
Sam Ojinaga, Deputy Cabinet Secretary
Buffie Saavedra, Deputy Cabinet Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 27, 2020

4,000 Food Boxes to be Created by Volunteers and Staff for Seniors and Adults with Disabilities

*Five truckloads of food to be boxed for thousands of New Mexico's most vulnerable,
to sustain them for 14 meals*

NEW MEXICO- Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has emphasized the need for her departments to rally resources in order to bolster support for our state's most vulnerable. That's why every day over the coming weeks, the State's Aging and Long-Term Services Department [ALTSD] will be unloading truckloads full of bulk foods and compiling the food items into meal boxes. The meal boxes will then go to HUB site volunteers to hand out at senior sites or deliver to eligible seniors and adults with disabilities. Today, March 27, 2020, ALTSD Cabinet Secretary Katrina Hotrum-Lopez officially started the process of putting together the food boxes, kicking off the effort with staff from her department, from CYFD, as well as volunteers. Each box contains two weeks' worth of food inside. In direct response to the public health emergency and the isolation steps being taken to decrease the rate of COVID-19 infections, the Cabinet Secretary instructed her team to accept calls for seniors who need meals and mobilize volunteers to support those most vulnerable in our community.

"I am so proud of my team who pulled off this massive lift, creating an entire food distribution and volunteer-based operation from scratch. It's so gratifying to see our community members stepping-up to volunteer, our private sector coming to our aid, our partners at the City's Department of Albuquerque Senior Affairs, Bernalillo County's Department of Behavioral Health Services, and fellow state agencies like CYFD and HSD all chiming in to make this a success. Our teamwork through this challenging time is critical," said Secretary Hotrum-Lopez.

The state ALTSD has purchased five truckloads of food from Shamrock foods for the first wave of food, with additional purchases planned for the coming weeks from RoadRunner Food Bank. They've also been working with food banks across the state to connect seniors and disabled adults to supplies. The Department is actively working to create 43+ hubs like this one throughout New Mexico. The process of unloading the trucks that were carrying more than 150,000 lbs. of bulk food, unpacking those boxes, sorting the food, repacking the food into meal boxes, loading the boxes, and delivering the boxes is a labor and time-intensive process. The ALTSD is in the process of re-creating this system across the state, utilizing a volunteer-based workforce.

To date, more than 35,000 seniors and adults with disabilities have requested supplies and the requests continue to come in. The Department estimates there are approximately 104,000 seniors in New Mexico who live at or below the poverty level, with the majority living in Bernalillo County. The first waves of deliveries will be going to areas with the highest volume of requests: Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, and neighboring tribal and rural communities. They will also be prioritizing individuals who are considered at-risk.

"We are still in great need of volunteers," said Secretary Hotrum-Lopez. "We really need help getting these supplies into the hands and homes of the people that are depending on them."

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Approximately 400 volunteers from all over the state have reached out to the ALTSD offering to help put together and deliver the boxes. Rural areas are still in need of volunteers. The Charter School location will require 40 volunteers daily.

Secretary Hotrum-Lopez expressed her thankfulness to the Governors' strong leadership, and to all the partners who have already stepped up from the private, public, and non-profit sectors to help with the effort across the state, including:

- Department of Senior Affairs, City of Albuquerque – who have helped breakdown bags of flour, beans, peas, rice, sugar, and pancake mix to place in the 4000 boxes.
- CYFD (probation and parole), the Human Services Department, and the Albuquerque Police Department – who helped unload more than 150,000lbs of food
- Bernalillo County's Department of Behavioral Health Services- who is operating a donation drop-off site and helped upload the five truckloads of food
- Smalley And Company- who provided forklifts to get the pallets of food off of the trucks
- Robert F. Kennedy Charter School and their Administration- who opened their doors for this operation to utilize their cafeteria and gymnasium
- The faith-based and pantries across the state- who are already providing food to seniors and adults with disabilities
- The Jesus Christ Later Day Saints Church- who provided a \$15,000 grant to purchase supplies for this effort
- Duke City Gladiators Indoor Football Team- the entire team came and helped create meal boxes

Seniors who are in need of supplies can contact 1-800-432-2080. Volunteers who are well and able to help can email ALTSD-Volunteers@state.nm.us with "READY TO HELP" in the subject line and include in the content of the email what town/city they live in and their phone number.

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