

MINUTES
of the
FOURTH MEETING
of the
LEGISLATIVE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

August 18-21, 2026
McKinley County Courthouse
207 West Hill Avenue
Gallup

The fourth meeting of the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee (LHHS) was called to order by Representative Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson, chair, on Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at 10:02 a.m. at the McKinley County Courthouse in Gallup.

Present

Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson, Chair
Sen. Linda M. López, Vice Chair
Sen. Jay C. Block (8/20, 8/21)
Rep. Eleanor Chávez
Rep. Pamelya Herndon (8/18, 8/21)
Rep. Jenifer Jones (8/18, 8/19, 8/20)
Sen. Larry R. Scott (8/18, 8/19)
Sen. Antoinette Sedillo Lopez (8/18, 8/19, 8/20)

Absent

Advisory Members

Rep. Marianna Anaya
Rep. John Block
Rep. Kathleen Cates
Rep. Nicole Chavez (8/18)
Rep. Anita Gonzales (8/19, 8/20)
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson
Rep. Tara L. Lujan (8/20)
Sen. Shannon D. Pinto
Sen. Harold Pope
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Rep. E. Diane Torres-Velásquez (8/20, 8/21)
Sen. Rex Wilson

Rep. Christine Chandler
Sen. Angel M. Charley
Sen. Katy Duhigg
Sen. David M. Gallegos
Rep. Miguel P. García
Sen. Martin Hickey
Rep. Alan T. Martinez
Rep. Elaine Sena Cortez
Rep. Sarah Silva
Sen. Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics
Rep. Reena Szczepanski

Guest Legislators

Rep. Michelle Paulene Abeyta (8/18, 8/19)
Sen. Linda M. Trujillo (8/20, 8/21)

(Attendance dates are noted for those members not present for the entire meeting.)

Staff

Zander Dawson, Staff Attorney, Legislative Council Service (LCS)

Ian Keller, Staff Attorney, LCS

Grace Balderamos, Staff, LCS

Guests

The guest list is in the meeting file.

Handouts

Handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file and posted on the legislature's website.

References to Webcast

The time reference noted next to each agenda item in this document is cross-referenced to the webcast of the committee meeting, which can be found at www.nmlegis.gov, under the "Webcast" tab. The presentations made and committee discussions for agenda items can be found on the recorded webcast for this meeting.

Tuesday, August 18 — Joint Meeting with the Federal Funding Stabilization and Affordability Subcommittee (FFSAS)**Welcome and Introductions (10:02 a.m.)**

Representative Thomson welcomed everyone to the meeting. Committee members and subcommittee members introduced themselves.

Government Results and Opportunity Fund Evaluation Process (10:11 a.m.)

Sarah Dinces, program evaluator III, Legislative Finance Committee (LFC), and Simon Miller, performance analyst, Department of Finance and Administration (DFA), provided an update on the implementation of evaluations to be conducted by the LFC and DFA of certain state agency programs funded by the Government Results and Opportunity Program Fund (GRO) pursuant to House Bill 158 (2026). They explained evaluation criteria and considerations for state agencies administering programs that will be evaluated. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2026&ItemNumber=1>.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Workforce Outcomes (11:14 a.m.)

Allegra Hernandez, senior fiscal analyst, LFC, and Lily Earnest, intern, LFC, provided a presentation about workforce outcomes of recipients of TANF funding in New Mexico. They reviewed the state's spending on the TANF program and participation rates and work requirements of TANF funding recipients. They highlighted challenges faced by participants

leaving the TANF program, such as finding sustainable employment. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2026&ItemNumber=2>.

Public Comment (12:26 p.m.)

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

Status Update on the LFC Progress Report for the New Mexico Health Exchange (BeWell New Mexico) (1:50 p.m.)

Elizabeth Dodson, program evaluator, LFC, and Danielle Ceballes, program evaluator, LFC, discussed an LFC progress report on the New Mexico health insurance exchange that showcases trends in exchange premiums, exchange subsidies and exchange enrollment. The report indicates that since state subsidy assistance has increased, purchasing insurance through the exchange has become more affordable. Report recommendations include expanding cost containment measures to maintain long-term Health Care Affordability Fund sustainability. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2026&ItemNumber=3>.

Approval of Minutes (2:31 p.m.)

Upon a motion made, and without any objections, the committee approved the minutes of the July 20-22, 2026 meeting.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 2:33 p.m.

Wednesday, August 19 — Joint Meeting with the FFSAS

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:32 a.m.

Health Care Authority (HCA) Updates on the 2025 Federal Budget Reconciliation Bill, the Health Care Affordability Fund and the Rural Health Transition (9:33 a.m.)

Alanna Dancis, acting Medicaid director, HCA, and DeAnna Stock, director, Health Care Innovations, HCA, provided an update on the upcoming effects of the 2025 federal budget reconciliation bill on the state's Medicaid program, including stricter eligibility requirements, decreases in provider payments and the phasedown of state-directed payments. They

discussed the HCA's plans for trying to keep coverage affordable and reviewed the time line of the rural health transformation program. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2026&ItemNumber=4>.

Food Insecurity Update (10:58 a.m.)

RubyAnn Esquibel, principal analyst, LFC, discussed state funding on food security initiatives, including GRO funding for food banks, and the growth of food insecurity in the state. Jill Dixon, executive director, The Food Depot, and Katy Anderson, vice president of strategy, partnerships and advocacy, Roadrunner Food Bank, described the expansion of food pantries' and food banks' roles in deterring food insecurity and nutrition insecurity amid federal cuts to the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the rising cost of living. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2026&ItemNumber=5>.

Revenue Maximization Opportunities for New Mexico (1:00 p.m.)

Alissa Narode, associate manager, Public Consulting Group, and Matt Reidy, senior project manager, Public Consulting Group, offered potential strategies for the state to mitigate financial effects of decreases in federal funding to the state resulting from the 2025 federal budget reconciliation bill. They noted strategies for expanding federal grants, protecting Medicaid coverage and supporting health care providers. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2026&ItemNumber=6>.

2030 Census: Opportunities and Impacts (1:30 p.m.)

Robert Rhatigan, director, Geospatial and Population Studies Center, University of New Mexico (UNM), explained how the state could prepare for the 2030 census since New Mexico has the highest rate of hard-to-count populations in the country. He provided information about the United States Census Bureau's Local Update of Census Addresses program, which helps to develop the list of addresses for the census, highlighting the program's role in increasing census participation of residents of tribal lands and rural areas. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2026&ItemNumber=7>.

Public Comment (2:24 p.m.)

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 2:40 p.m.

Thursday, August 20**Reconvene**

The meeting reconvened at 9:45 a.m.

Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services Update (9:45 a.m.)

Maridel Acosta-Cruz, chief executive officer (CEO), Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services, provided an update on the operations, finances and staffing of Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services. She summarized challenges faced by the hospital in recent years and noted that the hospital is trying to recruit cardiologists, orthopedic surgeons, general surgeons and primary care practitioners. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2026&ItemNumber=8>.

Navajo Technical University (NTU) Nursing Program Update (10:45 a.m.)

Michelle Kahn-John, Ph.D., R.N., program consultant, NTU Nursing Program, and Casmir I. Agbaraji, Ph.D., dean of undergraduate studies, NTU, provided a presentation about NTU's registered nurse and nurse assistant programs. They discussed student recruitment and retention and challenges faced by students and the nursing programs due to the NTU campus's rural location. They noted that more than one hundred students are on the nursing programs' waitlist. Lynda M. Lovejoy, former state senator, District 22, reviewed grants and funding for certain programs at NTU. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2026&ItemNumber=9>.

Motion to Draft Letter (11:20 a.m.)

On a motion made by Representative Chávez and seconded by Senator Sedillo Lopez, the committee voted to write a letter to the LFC, the Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations and Finance Committee to request an increase in funding for NTU to train more health care providers.

Public Comment (11:30 a.m.)

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

UNM-Gallup Health Care Workforce Programs (1:19 p.m.)

Jonathan Lumibao, nursing director and chair, Nursing and Human Services Division, UNM-Gallup, discussed admissions, enrollment and staffing at UNM-Gallup's nursing programs. He highlighted wraparound services offered to students and noted that UNM-Gallup wants to begin a high school licensed practical nurse program. Lucia Guerrero, former chair, Applied Technologies and Allied Health Sciences Division, UNM-Gallup, discussed UNM-Gallup's programs in emergency medical services, dental assisting and medical laboratory technology. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2026&ItemNumber=10>.

Behavioral Health Reform and Investment Act Regional Implementation: Behavioral Health Region 11 (2:02 p.m.)

Evan Williams, executive director, Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments, provided an update on the time line of the implementation of Behavioral Health Region 11's behavioral health plan pursuant to the Behavioral Health Reform and Investment Act. Michele Morris, legislative analyst, Navajo Nation Department of Health, discussed the Navajo Nation Department of Health's goals for the behavioral health plan. Marnella Kucate-Yepa, director, Health and Human Services Division, Pueblo of Zuni, discussed challenges unique to Behavioral Health Region 11, which is composed of San Juan and McKinley counties, the Navajo Nation and the Pueblo of Zuni. Bronwyn Neeser, consultant, commended the collaboration among the local governments in Behavioral Health Region 11 in developing the behavioral health plan. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2026&ItemNumber=11>.

Alcohol Harms Alleviation Coalition Update (3:16 p.m.)

Joanne J. Ferrary, former state representative, District 37; Senator Sedillo Lopez; Senator Pinto; Sindy Bolaños-Sacoman, co-director, Alcohol Harms Alleviation Coalition, and founder and executive director, Tribal Behavioral Health Providers Association; and Debra Martinez, manager, Behavioral Health Investment Zone, City of Gallup, reviewed legislation related to alcohol harms alleviation proposed in recent years and shared ideas for potential legislation to reduce alcohol harms in the state. They discussed alcohol-related mortality in different regions of the state and compared alcohol use trends in New Mexico to nationwide alcohol use trends. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2026&ItemNumber=12>.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 4:06 p.m.

Friday, August 21

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:32 a.m.

New Mexico Medical Board Oversight and Implementation of the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact (9:34 a.m.)

Karen Carson, M.D., F.A.A.P., chair, New Mexico Medical Board, and Monique Parks, interim executive director and director of operations, New Mexico Medical Board, provided an update on the work of the New Mexico Medical Board. They reviewed board staffing and operations, complaint volume, physician compliance and caseload complexity. They explained expected effects of New Mexico's joining of the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact, including licensure time lines and the triage of complaints. Harry Rommel, LHHS fiscal analyst, LFC, briefly described funding for the board. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2026&ItemNumber=13>.

Community Action Agency Update (11:15 a.m.)

Dawn Hommer, CEO, Community Action Agency of Southern New Mexico; James Shiplet, CEO, Mid-West New Mexico Community Action Program; Della Purgerson, Community Services Block Grant administrative manager, Mid-West New Mexico Community Action Program; Terri Laughlin, Community Services Block Grant coordinator, Mid-West New Mexico Community Action Program; and Alberto Zavala, Healthy Kids Healthy Preschool Program manager, Community Action Agency of Southern New Mexico, provided an overview of the work of community action agencies in New Mexico. They described their personal experiences working with their respective community action agencies and shared success stories of New Mexico residents helped by community action agencies. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2026&ItemNumber=14>.

Access to Justice (12:08 p.m.)

Therese E. Yanan, executive director, Native American Disability Law Center, and Jean Philips, DNA-People's Legal Services, Inc., discussed the work of and collaboration between the Native American Disability Law Center and DNA-People's Legal Services, Inc. Ms. Yanan noted the unique legal challenges faced by Native Americans with disabilities who live in the Four Corners region. They described systemic legal issues that their respective organizations work to mitigate and how their respective organizations are funded.

Public Comment (12:51 p.m.)

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 12:57 p.m.