

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

August 18-20, 2025
University of New Mexico-Gallup
705 Gurley Avenue
Gallup

The fourth meeting of the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee was called to order by Representative Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson, chair, on Monday, August 18, 2025, at 9:24 a.m. at the University of New Mexico (UNM)-Gallup in Gallup.

Present

Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson, Chair
Sen. Linda M. López, Vice Chair
Rep. Eleanor Chávez
Rep. Jenifer Jones (8/18, 8/19)

Absent

Sen. Jay C. Block
Rep. Pamela Herndon
Sen. Martin Hickey
Sen. Larry R. Scott

Advisory Members

Rep. Marianna Anaya
Rep. John Block
Sen. Angel M. Charley (8/18, 8/19)
Rep. Nicole Chavez (8/18, 8/19)
Rep. Joanne J. Ferrary
Rep. Anita Gonzales (8/18)
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson
Rep. Tara L. Lujan (8/20)
Rep. Alan T. Martinez (8/18, 8/19)
Sen. Shannon D. Pinto
Sen. Harold Pope
Rep. E. Diane Torres-Velásquez (8/18, 8/20)

Rep. Kathleen Cates
Rep. Christine Chandler
Sen. Katy Duhigg
Sen. David M. Gallegos
Rep. Miguel P. García
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Sen. Antoinette Sedillo Lopez
Rep. Elaine Sena Cortez
Rep. Sarah Silva
Sen. Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics
Rep. Reena Szczepanski

Guest Legislator

Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom (8/18)

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

Staff

Zander Dawson, Staff Attorney, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Andrea Lazarow, Bill Drafter, 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.

Monday, August 18

Welcome and Introductions (9:24 a.m.)

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

Welcome to UNM-Gallup (9:28 a.m.)

Sabrina Ezzell, chancellor, UNM-Gallup, discussed the associate degrees and certificates in allied health and human services offered by UNM-Gallup. Jonathan Lumibao, director, Nursing Program, UNM-Gallup, noted the steady enrollment in the branch campus's nursing program and support services offered to students, such as financial aid and on-campus child care. They described UNM-Gallup's collaboration with the Gallup-McKinley County School District to encourage high school students to pursue careers in health care and human services.

Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) Program Evaluation (10:11 a.m.)

Maggie Klug, program evaluator, Legislative Finance Committee (LFC), and John Valdez, program evaluator, LFC, presented the LFC's program evaluation of MAT in public health offices. Findings included that the Department of Health (DOH) has provided MAT to more than 300 patients in public health offices, most of those treatments were paid for by Medicaid and most public health offices do not have staff dedicated to MAT. Gina DeBlassie, secretary, DOH, noted that mobile health units have been purchased to provide MAT and that the department plans to expand marketing efforts. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2025&ItemNumber=2>.

Juvenile Justice Overview (11:31 a.m.)

Carlie Malone, senior fiscal analyst, LFC, described data trends regarding juvenile justice system referrals, juvenile delinquent referrals, secure facilities and populations, recidivism, risk assessment and dually involved youth and reviewed previous LFC recommendations. Corey Adams, deputy director, Juvenile Justice Field Services, Children, Youth and Families

Department (CYFD), provided an update on dually involved youth, department staffing and department initiatives regarding juvenile justice. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2025&ItemNumber=3>.

Child Welfare Update (1:18 p.m.)

Kari Armijo, secretary, Health Care Authority (HCA); Secretary DeBlassie; and Teresa Casados, secretary, CYFD, outlined the interagency collaboration among their respective departments and the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) in administering the provisions of the federal Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (CARA) and Senate Bill 42 (2025). They described plans of safe care for substance-exposed newborns and explained CARA-related data, procedures, care coordination and hospital engagement. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2025&ItemNumber=4>.

HCA Federal Funding Update (2:27 p.m.)

Secretary Armijo reviewed expected impacts of the 2025 federal budget reconciliation bill on Medicaid and the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in New Mexico. She explained the authority's plans to address federal funding changes and the potential role of the Health Care Affordability Fund in protecting coverage gains. Secretary Armijo noted efforts to increase staffing at the HCA's Income Support Division and improve staff training in preparation for the anticipated increased administrative burden after federal funding changes are implemented. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2025&ItemNumber=5>.

Public Comment (3:39 p.m.)

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

Recess

The meeting recessed at 3:55 p.m.

Tuesday, August 19

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:20 a.m.

Analysis of the Medical Claims and Billing System in New Mexico (9:21 a.m.)

Melanie S. Sonntag, Ph.D., research assistant professor, UNM Center for Social Policy, explained the process of prior authorization and presented the UNM Center for Social Policy's research findings from focus groups of clinicians and claims professionals regarding billing,

coding and claims systems. Findings included frustration among clinicians with the amount of time spent on billing- and insurance-related tasks that could be spent seeing patients and that decisions made by insurance companies interfere with patient care. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2025&ItemNumber=7>.

Alcohol Harms Alleviation Coalition (10:23 a.m.)

Representative Ferrary; Senator Pinto; and Debra Martinez, program manager, Behavioral Health, City of Gallup, discussed recent and proposed legislative initiatives related to alcohol harms alleviation. They compared data of alcohol use in New Mexico to alcohol use in other states, discussed the increase in alcohol-related mortality in the state and described the statewide economy of alcohol sales. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2025&ItemNumber=8>.

Public Comment (11:22 a.m.)

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

Evaluation of University Workforce Endowments (1:02 p.m.)

Clayton Lobaugh, program evaluator, LFC, presented the LFC's program evaluation of the use and impact of endowment appropriations for higher education nursing, teacher education and social work programs. Findings included underspending of endowment funds by New Mexico universities and delays in and implementation issues of spending money from endowment funds. Stephanie Rodriguez, secretary, Higher Education Department (HED), shared HED data about endowment appropriations and enrollment in and student completion of nursing, teacher education and social work programs. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2025&ItemNumber=9>.

Kevin S. Settlement Update (2:31 p.m.)

Therese Yanan, executive director, Native American Disability Law Center; George Davis, M.D., child and adolescent psychiatrist; and Jesse Clifton, staff attorney, Disability Rights New Mexico, reviewed recent legal actions resulting from the *Kevin S.* settlement and discussed the settlement's history and legacy. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2025&ItemNumber=10>.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 4:10 p.m.

Wednesday, August 20

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:12 a.m.

Services for Victims of Domestic Violence in Gallup (9:13 a.m.)

Emily Ellison, executive director, Battered Families Services, Inc.; Sabrina Martine, operations director, Battered Families Services, Inc.; Dianne Nakai, program manager, Battered Families Services, Inc.; Noreen Kelly; and Ken Collins, executive director, Hozho Center for Personal Enhancement, discussed the domestic abuse climate in western New Mexico and highlighted the role of Battered Families Services, Inc. in the community, its facility needs and services offered.

Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services (RMCHCS) Update (9:58 a.m.)

Jeff Linck, vice president of quality, compliance and risk, RMCHCS, and David McGrail, chief financial officer, RMCHCS, discussed challenges faced by RMCHCS, including increased medical malpractice premiums, concerns about facilities and difficulties recruiting and retaining physicians. They noted the hospital's participation in a risk retention group and discussed the Patient's Compensation Fund. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2025&ItemNumber=12>.

Early Childhood Tribal Advisory Coalition (11:00 a.m.)

Joannie M. Suina, M.J.I.L., Ed.D., assistant secretary for Native American early childhood education and care, ECECD, provided an update on the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Native American Early Childhood Education and Care and the Early Childhood Tribal Advisory Coalition. She described Native American early childhood centers and highlighted the coalition's goals and successful collaborations with 19 of the state's Indian nations, tribes and pueblos. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LHHS&Date=8/18/2025&ItemNumber=13>.

Public Comment (11:48 a.m.)

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

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.