



**Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-New Mexico**  
**Rocky Mountain Synod**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

1701 Arroyo Chamiso Santa Fe, NM 87505  
Phone/Fax 505.984.8005  
ruth@lutheranadvocacynm.org  
www.lutheranadvocacynm.org



**New Mexico Conference of Churches**

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Proposed Rule Changes**  
**Legislative Health & Human Services Committee**  
**September 11, 2014**  
**Ruth Hoffman**

- **The SNAP program is crucial to the lives of many New Mexicans living in poverty.**
  - As of March, over 420,000 people used the program to meet the daily nutrition needs for themselves and members of their families. (HSD has not published a more current Monthly Statistical Report.)
- **This proposed change reverses rules that have been in place for well over a decade.**
  - Both Republican and Democratic governors have seen the wisdom and need for waiving the work requirement and recognized the economic realities of our state. Unemployment remains high and jobs are certainly not easily found.
- **New Mexico has among the highest rates of hunger in the country and more alarming, nearly 30% of our children are experiencing hunger as well as 18% of our seniors.**
  - The SNAP program is vital to those struggling to meet their families' nutritional needs. It is also vital to local food and grocery stores and to America's farmers. Remember, SNAP is administered by the U.S. Agriculture Department.
- **Implementing such a work requirement is a complex task.**
  - Human Services Department which already has a backlog of applications and is under a federal judge's order to improve its administration of the SNAP program to deal with that backlog.
  - Many questions must be answered and the answers to those questions must be focused on what are the best ways to help low-income New Mexicans move to family-sustaining income.



**ELCA World Hunger**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-NM works in an advocacy partnership with the Presbytery of Santa Fe

- Where are the jobs? Where is the job training? What is community service and how will it be administered? Where is the affordable child care? How will the many other barriers to employment addressed?
- These are just some of the many questions that have not been answered and must be answered!
- **It is very doubtful that HSD or SL Start, the work program contractor, has the capacity to manage the thousands of participants that must now be added to the work program caseload.**
- **We fear that participants will simply be pushed off of the SNAP program when they are unable to comply with a poorly planned and administered program. This will most certainly harm struggling families and children.**
  - Last year, HSD made Education & Training participation mandatory for about 26,000 childless adult SNAP participants. Data shows that of those 26,000 referred to the E&T program, over 24,000 lost SNAP benefits for failure to comply.
    - HSD has not provided data to show job placement and retention rates of current E&T participants.
  - This approach appears to be based on the assumption that people and families that seek assistance are trying to avoid responsibility. They are not! They are trying to survive in a very difficult economic environment. They are trying to raise their children in a safe environment. They need stable, affordable housing. Their children need quality early childhood education and affordable, quality childcare. They need good paying jobs! What they don't need is a hostile state agency looking for ways to push them off benefit programs.

***Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-NM has advocated for people living in poverty and with hunger for over 30 years. I also speak on behalf of the NM Conference of Churches, which includes the NM representations of the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, the Christian Church-Disciples of Christ, the Community of Christ, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as well as the three Roman Catholic Dioceses in our state. We are people of faith who are very concerned about our many neighbors living with poverty and hunger. As people of faith we believe that all are beloved children of God and that we are all called to care for one another and that government is one of the ways that we can care for each other.***