



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Nearly \$160 million in Stabilization Grants Issued by Lujan Grisham Administration provide critical support to New Mexico's Child Care Industry

SANTA FE – Three months after the state's Early Childhood Education and Care Department awarded more than \$157 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds – one of the largest investments in early care and education in the state's history – childcare providers say the support has been critical in their efforts to educate and care for the youngest New Mexicans.

The state awarded grants to over 1,000 providers in all 30 counties where there are child care programs.

"New Mexico is clear: providing quality education and care in a child's earliest years is crucial to ensuring they arrive at kindergarten ready to thrive," said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. "Childcare providers like the more than 1,000 we've supported are critical to realizing our cradle-to-career educational system, and I'm so thankful for these dedicated professionals who lay the foundation for the lifelong health, success, and well-being for New Mexico children and families."

"The stabilization grant has been a great blessing," said Connie Coates, office manager and treasurer at Canyon Christian Academy in Alamogordo, which offers PreK. "The funding we received made it possible for us to hire a full-time classroom aid to help in our preschool, allowing for more individualized attention to better focus on each of the students' needs."

"We've been able to hire a third teacher for each of our classrooms, which, because of the pandemic, the children have really needed that one-on-one attention," said Jennifer Salinas, director of the Early Learning Center at Kaune in Santa Fe. "We've also hired a part-time mental health consultant and later we hope to hire a full-time mental health consultant. We also plan to use the funding for maintenance on our building, including upgrades to our heating and plumbing systems, and the installation of outdoor learning spaces."

"It's made a huge difference on our stress levels," said Fatima Gonzalez Ray, director of Little Amigos Child Development Center in Las Cruces, when asked about the stabilization grant. "The funding has helped us offset any unforeseen expenses and made it possible for us to make payroll, hire new teachers, and purchase much-needed supplies and materials for our classrooms. We've also been able to purchase for each classroom a new HEPA-filtered air purifier, which so far has led to a reduction in sick days taken by our staff."

Last year, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Child Care used earmarked funds from the ARPA to issue Child Care Stabilization Grants to states, territories, and tribal agencies administering the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). As the lead CCDF agency for New Mexico, ECECD received \$197,076,859.00 through the ARPA Child Care Stabilization program which includes a 10% set-aside for administration, supply building, and technical assistance, leaving a total of \$177,369,173 for direct grants to New Mexico child care providers. New Mexico was among the first states to obligate and distribute these funds, paying the first of six monthly installments in October.

In recognition of the extraordinary economic strains caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, these grants are designed to help the child care industry in New Mexico address the fallout from decreased enrollment, workforce shortages, and higher costs. Child care businesses may use the stabilization grant funds for personnel costs, rent, utilities, facilities maintenance, insurance, personal protective equipment, cleaning, and other health and safety practices, purchases of or updates to equipment and supplies to respond to COVID-19, goods and services necessary to maintain or resume child care services, mental health supports for children and employees, and paying for past expenses that resulted from the pandemic.

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The New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) launched in 2020, one of only four cabinet level agencies nationwide that consolidated all early childhood agencies under one roof. ECECD's mission is to optimize the health, development, education, and well being of babies, toddlers, and preschoolers through a family-driven, equitable, community-based system of programs and services. Learn more about how ECECD supports children, families, and the early childhood professionals that serve our communities at nmececd.org. On Facebook and Twitter as [@NewMexicoECECD](https://www.facebook.com/NewMexicoECECD).