



Universal Child Care: At a Glance for Families

A historic change for New Mexico families

Starting **November 1, 2025**, families in New Mexico can get assistance paying for child care, no matter their income. This means less stress for you, more support for your child's caregivers, and a safe, caring place for your child to learn and grow. Raising children is not something families should do alone. When your family is supported, the whole community benefits.

For Families: Child care often costs more than rent or a car payment. Universal child care helps ease the strain on your budget and lets you focus on what matters most—raising your children and giving them the best start in life.

HOW IT WORKS

- **No income limits.** Families who work or go to school can get child care assistance, regardless of income.
- **No copays. No fees for families.** Child care is expensive, averaging about \$12,000 per child each year. With universal child care, State and federal funds cover the costs. That means there will be no more co-pays or fees for families. Families will no longer have to choose between child care and other essentials.
- **Flexibility for families' schedules.** Families can choose care arrangements that fit their needs, not just their work or class schedules.

TOP QUESTIONS FROM FAMILIES

1. **Who qualifies — will all families be eligible?** Families in New Mexico that are working or in school can apply for child care assistance. Grandparents raising grandchildren, families caring for babies born substance-exposed, families experiencing housing instability, and families involved with the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) do not need to meet the work or school requirement. Only the child's immigration status is considered for child care assistance eligibility; the child must be a U.S. citizen, legal resident, or qualified immigrant.
2. **Who needs to apply?**
 - **My child is already enrolled in child care** — if you are not currently required to pay co-pays or fees, you don't need to do anything! If you currently have a co-pay or pay fees, you must re-apply to update your enrollment and eliminate your payments.
 - **My child is not enrolled in child care** — families not currently enrolled must apply.
 - **I was denied before because of income** — you can reapply starting November 1. Income is no longer a reason for denial. Child Care Assistance hours are no longer tied to your work or school schedule.



Questions? Visit nmececd.org/universal for answers and resources, including a communication toolkit.



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3. **When and how can I apply for universal child care?** November 1, 2025 is the first day families can apply under the new rules. Apply online at nmeccd.org/apply-for-services. Here's what you'll need to apply:
 - Current proof of income
 - Birth verification for all children in the household
 - Verification of school or training schedule for adults (if applicable)
 - Picture ID for the applicant
 - Proof of qualified immigrant status for those without a birth certificate from the U.S.
 - Proof of New Mexico residency (current NM ID or NM driver's license, lease, utility bill, or mortgage)
 - Contact information for your ECECD approved child care provider
4. **What happens after I apply?** Once you are approved for child care assistance, your benefits will begin on the day your child starts care with an ECECD approved provider. Families with children currently enrolled in child care and paying out of pocket should ask their provider if they accept payments from ECECD. If they do, you can apply for assistance to help cover your child care costs, regardless of your income level.
5. **How do I find an ECECD approved child care provider?** If you do not have a provider, use childcare.ececd.nm.gov to search more than 1,000 programs statewide by location, quality level, hours of operation, age, language, and more. For extra help, call UNM Resource and Referral at 1-800-691-9067 or visit an ECECD office (locations available at nmeccd.org/contact-us).
6. **What programs are included?** Universal child care includes child care centers, home-based providers, before- and after-school programs, and summer programs. All programs must be licensed or registered by ECECD.
7. **Is there enough child care to support families' needs?** Building a universal child care system takes time; and while New Mexico has already made major progress, not every family will immediately be able to find a child care provider with room to accept a new child. To meet families' needs, especially for infants, toddlers, and parents working non-traditional hours, ECECD is actively recruiting 1,000 registered home providers and 120 licensed homes in collaboration with our partners. Through low-interest loans and partnerships with business leaders, ECECD also hopes to license 55 more centers.



HOW TO GET ENGAGED

Universal child care is a historic step forward, and it will be even better with your input and support. **Families are the heart of this change.**

Call or email your legislator to thank them for supporting universal child care in New Mexico and share why it matters for your family: nmlegis.gov/members/find_my_legislator.

PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC COMMENT

The child care regulations are being updated to change the rules. You can share your feedback in writing or at the public hearing. Send written comments by email to: ECECD-ECS-PublicComment@ECECD.NM.Gov.

- Join the public hearing on October 9, 2025, from 9–11 a.m.
- In person: 1120 Paseo de Peralta, Santa Fe, NM 87502
- Via Zoom link: nmeccdorg.zoom.us/j/87500723914