

Universal Child Care: Update to Providers on Final Regulations

Friday, October 24, 2025

Emcee: Sonya Martinez, Communications Director



NEW MEXICO

Early Childhood

Education & Care Department

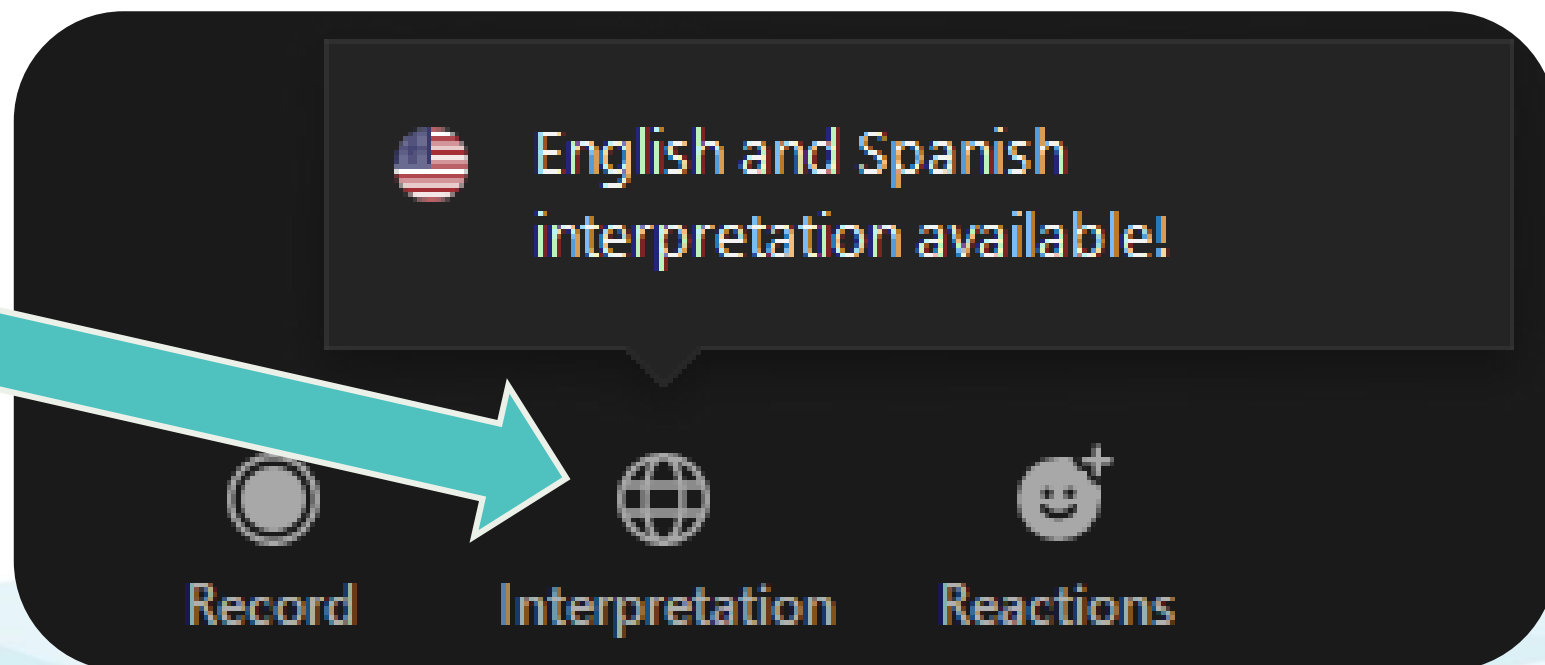
Language Instructions

Inglés > Español

Instrucciones de Interpretación

Step 1: Click the Interpretation Symbol

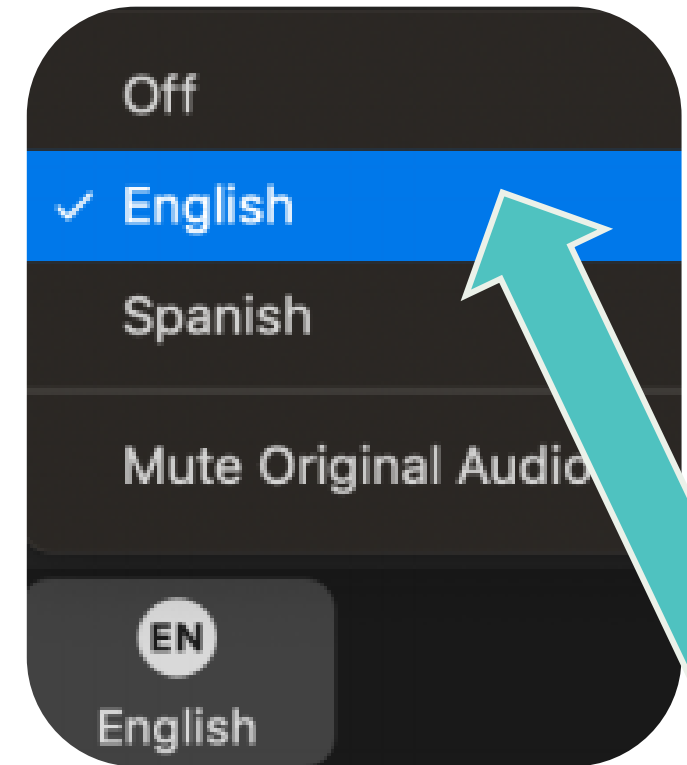
Paso 1: Selecciona el símbolo de INTERPRETACIÓN



Steps 2 and 3: Choose From the Menu

Pasos 2 y 3: Elija del menú

- You'll then see a menu; click "Spanish" OR "English"
 - **Vas a ver el menú; haga clic "Spanish"**
- If you would prefer to hear ONLY Spanish, also click "Mute Original Audio."
Otherwise you will hear the Spanish loud and clear and the English quietly.
 - **Si usted prefiere escuchar SOLO Español, también haga clic "Mute Original Audio"**
- If you choose "English" you will automatically hear only English.
 - **Si seleccionas "Inglés", automáticamente solo escucharás inglés**
- You will now hear the Spanish interpretation.
 - **Ahora usted escuchara la Interpretación en Español**



Closed Captions Enabled

1. Look for the **“Show Captions”** or **“CC / Live Transcript”** button on the Zoom toolbar.
 - On desktop: It’s usually at the bottom of the window.
 - On mobile: Tap the screen, then tap the **“More (...)”** menu.
2. Select **“Show Captions”** or **“View Full Transcript”** (depending on what’s available).
3. You can also click the small arrow (v) next to the CC icon to adjust settings like:
 - Caption font size
 - Whether to show or hide the full transcript

Agenda

- I. Universal Child Care Basics
- II. Public Comment and Final Rule
- III. Implementation
- IV. Join the Conversation
- V. Help Spread the Word
- VI. Take the Universal Child Care Pledge





Universal Child Care Basics

Providers Currently Accepting Child Care Assistance

- **Thank You For Your Partnership:** Universal Child Care is an expansion of Child Care Assistance. There is no special sign-up process for providers—it simply means more of your families can participate.
- **Rate Increases:** Providers already accepting Child Care Assistance will see increased reimbursement rates for services beginning November 1, 2025. This rate increase does **not** require any changes to hours or employee pay.
- **Enhanced Rates:** Providers may choose to opt-in to receive enhanced rates if they:
 - Are open at least 10 hours per day, 5 days a week, and
 - Meet minimum wage requirements as outlined in the new rule



Providers NOT Currently Accepting Child Care Assistance

Providers Not Currently Accepting Child Care Assistance May:

- Begin accepting Child Care Assistance for all children on November 1
 - If they have a 2-Star or above license.
- Limit the number of enrolled children supported by Child Care Assistance
- Only provide services to private pay families

To Begin Accepting Child Care Assistance

- Visit nmeccd.org/child-care-assistance and read the FAQ tab for Providers
- Call 1-800-832-1321 for more information
- Set up an account in the EPICS child care provider dashboard.
 - Details at: nmeccd.org/epics-child-care-provider-dashboard-information-and-support



Public Comment and Final Rule

Summary of Final Rule Changes

- Increased reimbursement rates above proposed rates including adjusting the PreK wrap around rate
- Added school age care to the enhanced rate chart
- Lowered the required hourly rate for providers who opt-in to the enhanced rate and limit it to education and care staff
- Allows state financial assistance for participating children regardless of citizenship status
- Recognizes Montessori accreditation and Early Head Start and Head Start as eligible for highest reimbursement rates
- Clarifies process to obtain a Tribal government license
- Amends requirements for Professional Development Information System (PDIS)
- Outlines coordination with Early Intervention Specialists
- Removes approval requirement regarding family handbook and program policies
- Maintains majority-age group size and ratios

Accessing the Final Rule

Final rules will be published in the New Mexico Register on November 4, 2025.

- All public comment received by ECECD is posted and available on the department's website: nmeccd.org/regulation-changes
- Official responses to public comment and explanatory statement will be available on the Sunshine Portal: statenm.my.salesforce-sites.com/public/SSP_RuleHearingSearchPublic
- Official final text for each regulation will be posted on ECECD's website, State Records Center and Archive's website, and the Sunshine Portal on November 4.
 - ECECD website: [Notice of Rulemaking and Public Rule Hearing 8.9.3 NMAC, 8.9.4 NMAC, and 8.9.5 NMAC](#)
 - State Records Center and Archives website: srca.nm.gov/nmac-home/nmac-titles/title-8-social-services
 - Sunshine Portal: statenm.my.salesforce-sites.com/public/SSP_RuleHearingSearchPublic

Reimbursement Rates

- Public comments expressed concern about financial viability for programs under the proposed rates.
- The final rule raises the proposed standard and enhanced reimbursement rates.
- Adjusted the PreK wrap around rate.
- Updated rates will be posted on ECECD's website at nmececd.org/universal.



Enhanced Rates

- Enhanced rates are optional, and available for providers who opt-in to provide services for 10 hours a day, five days a week and meet minimum pay requirements. Providers are not required to participate.
- Public commenters expressed concern that the enhanced rates proposed could not support the longer hours and wage requirements.
- Final rule increases the enhanced rate and reduces the minimum wage requirements.

Final Wage Requirements for Entry-Level Education and Care Staff by Quality Level			
2 Star	2+/3 Star	4 Star	5 Star
\$16/hour	\$17/hour	\$18/hour	\$19/hour

Updated: Reimbursement Rate Charts

The updated Reimbursement Rate charts are available at nmececd.org/universal and via the QR code.

(Updated October 24, 2025)



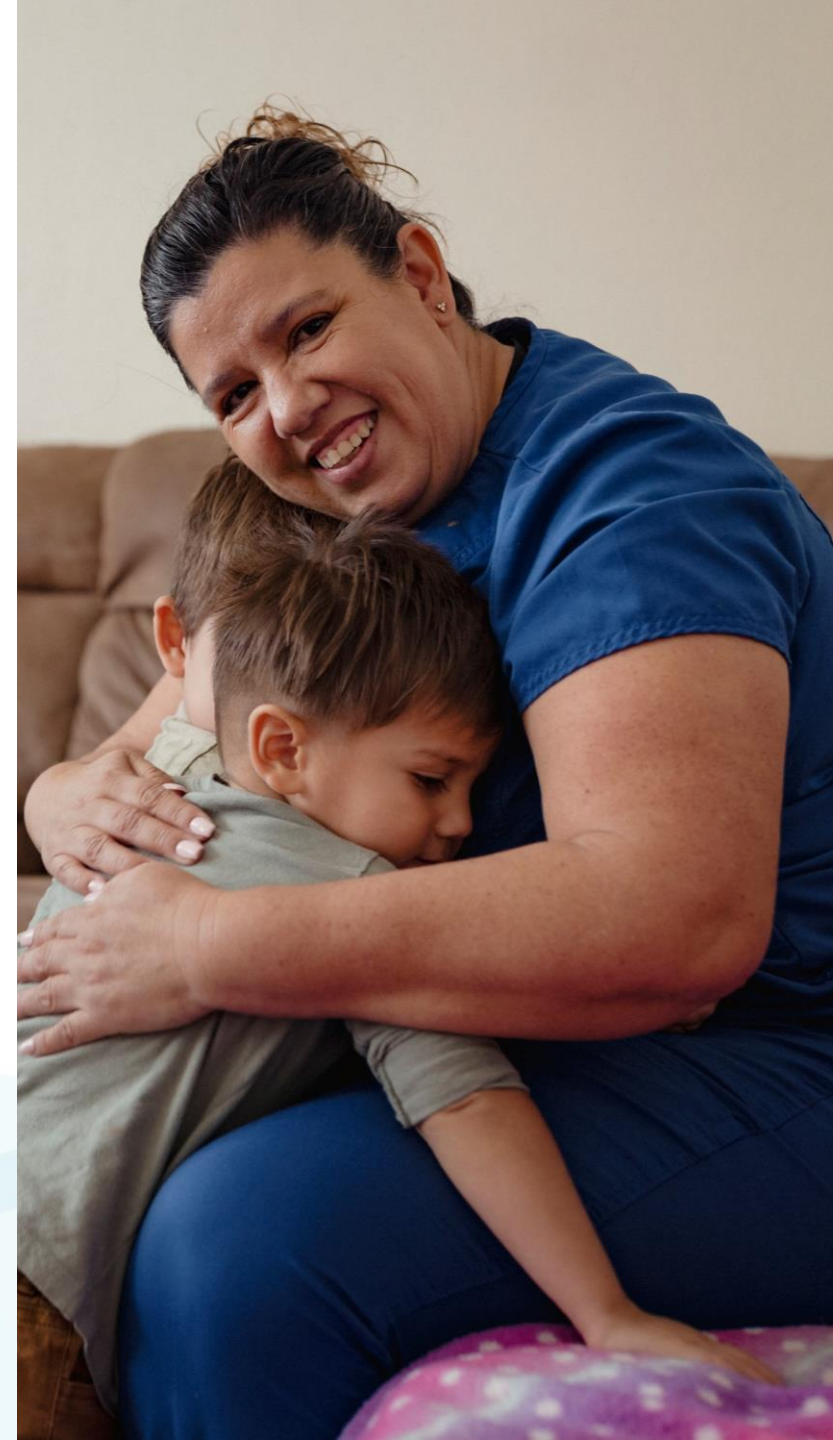
National Accreditation

- Final language adds the American Montessori Society (AMS) and the Association Montessori International (AMI) to the list of nationally accredited bodies approved by ECECD.
- Programs with Head Start and Early Head Start status will be automatically eligible for the highest reimbursement rate.



Provider Policies and Handbook

- Public commenters expressed concern with overreach, administrative burden, and enforcement
- Final language focuses on requiring child care programs to establish, implement, adhere to, and document any changes to written policies and procedures on key health and safety requirements and equitable access to services.
- Final language **does not require providers to submit written policy and procedures to ECECD** and does not require parental review and signature after each revision.



Outlines Coordination with Early Intervention Specialists

- Themes in public comment were primarily concerned with safety and potential employer liability when early intervention providers are in child care settings
- Final language highlights the alignment between the regulation change and federal and state law
- **Final language clarifies that child care providers:**
 - May require early intervention providers to sign and agree to standard policies and procedures for the child care program
 - May temporarily exclude early intervention service providers from their facility if the presence of the early intervention provider has caused a temporary undue burden or undue hardship, as defined by the applicable federal or state law.
 - If a child care provider temporarily excludes an early intervention service provider from their facility, then the child care provider must provide a written notification within 48 hours to ECECD with a detailed reason for the exclusion.

Capacity/Personnel and Staffing Requirements

- ECECD originally proposed two changes to staff/child ratios and group sizes.
- ECECD is not adopting these proposed amendments to address concerns raised by the public, including concerns about reduced flexibility, finances, and capacity. The regulations will revert to the original language.
- Final language at 8.9.4.21 B(4)(a) and 8.9.4.40 B(3)(a) NMAC will remove the proposal to limit the number of children allowed in a facility by group size regulation, regardless of square footage
- Final language at 8.9.4.23 A(9) NMAC will revert to original language, requiring staff/child ratios and group sizes based on the age of the majority of children in the group



The inside is:
Wet dry
Seeds are smooth
yucky yellow
orange goosy
feels like silk

Teamwork
to help people
to be nice to our friends
we should share toys
take turns
encourage our friends "You can do it!"

What did you like better?

7	6
Swim	Swim
Rock	Rock
Karate	Karate
Football	Football
Baseball	Baseball
Tennis	Tennis

Morning Message
Music

Pumpkin
Seed
Pulp
Seeds
Vine

Implementation

Clear Communication to Families

Formal Notification to Families

Send written communication to all enrolled families.

- Confirmation of provider's universal child care participation status.
- If **not participating**, explain the reason (e.g., eligibility, operational decision).
- Contact info for questions or clarification.

Host Family Information Sessions

Educate families on universal child care (UCC) and their options.

- What is UCC?
- Benefits for families.
- How to apply.

Resources

- Visit [Child Care Services | Early Childhood Education & Care](#) click on “Apply for Services”
- Or call 1-800-832-1321
- Email child.care@state.nm.us if you have questions or concerns about child care
- Find a child care provider at [New Mexico Child Care Finder | Find Child Care Schools Near Me](#)

Attestation for Enhanced Rates

Providers will certify that they meet the hours and minimum wage requirements by checking a box in EPICS, under the "Employees" section:

New Mexico
EPICS ECECD

CHILD CARE

Dashboard

All Contracts

Notices of Action

Correspondence

Employees

Enhanced Rates Attestation

Certifications

Payments

CPP - Grant Opportunity

ACCOUNT

Account Settings

Hello, MARIA!

Logout

Congratulations, you are eligible to receive the enhanced pay rates.

Enhanced Rates Attestations

ENHANCED RATE ATTESTATION (10/07/2025 -)

Are you interested in receiving the Enhanced Rates?
YES

Do you operate 10 hours or more a day, 5 days a week?
YES

Do you meet the pay scale requirements \$21/hr based on your 5 Star level for all education and care entry-level employees?
YES

Start Date
10/07/2025

End Date
MM/DD/YYYY

☒ By checking this box, I affirm that I have read, understood, and agree to be bound by all terms, conditions, and regulations set forth under Section 8.9.3.17. I further acknowledge and consent that this action constitutes my electronic signature, executed under the law, with full legal effect, signifying my agreement to comply with all stated provisions.

Certified By
GOMEZ, MARIA C

Certified Date
10/24/2025

SAVE

22

Timing of Payments

ECECD is aware of challenges resulting from Child Care Assistance being paid at the end of the month for care that already occurred, rather than at the start of the month for care that will occur in the future.

- In spring 2026, ECECD will begin paying prospectively at the start of the month for care.
- ECECD is partnering with WESST, a community development financial institution, to provide no-interest loans to providers that need onramp support to Universal Child Care.
- ECECD can provide a letter of assurance that care will be reimbursed, for providers to use to secure a line of credit from their bank or financial institution.
- Providers currently accepting Child Care Assistance may request a one-time double payment in November (for children with active contracts in October) to help offset costs incurred in November from children converting from private pay, and/or newly enrolled children. That double payment will be reconciled once ECECD moves to prospective payments.
- **Providers can request assistance navigating these options at a support request form: forms.office.com/g/CeXd3kqgjE.**



Join the Conversation

Join the Conversation: Universal Child Care Office Hours

Virtual event dates and registration information can be found at [Universal Child Care Office Hours](#).

You're Invited Universal Child Care 101 for Families

Who Should Attend: New Mexico families who want to learn how Universal Child Care can benefit them. Join a virtual information session hosted by the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) to ask questions and connect directly with ECECD staff.

When:

- Tuesday, October 28, 12–1:15 p.m.
- Tuesday, October 28, 6–7:15 p.m.
- Wednesday, October 29, 12–1:15 p.m.
- Wednesday, October 29, 6–7:15 p.m.
- Saturday, November 1, 9–10:15 a.m.

Registration is Required

Register at newmexicokids.org to receive the Zoom link. Each session is capped at 150 attendees.

Spanish interpretation services will be provided.



Learn more about Universal Child Care at nmeccd.org/universal

You're Invited Universal Child Care 101 for Early Childhood Professionals

Who Should Attend: New Mexico early childhood professionals—including teachers, administrators, and home-based educators—are invited to a virtual information session hosted by the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) to learn about Universal Child Care updates, new reimbursement rates, and supports available through ECECD.

When:

- Thursday, November 6, 12–1:30 p.m.
- Thursday, November 6, 6–7:30 p.m.
- Friday, November 7, 12–1:30 p.m.
- Friday, November 7, 6–7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, November 8, 9–10:30 a.m.

Registration is Required

Register at newmexicokids.org to receive the Zoom link. Each session is capped at 150 attendees.

Spanish interpretation services will be provided.



Learn more about Universal Child Care at nmeccd.org/universal

Take the Universal Child Care Pledge

Launching October 24, 2025

- ECECD invites providers, families, businesses, and community partners across the state to take the Universal Child Care Pledge.
- By taking the pledge, you show your pride in being part of this historic effort and your commitment to helping build a stronger, more equitable early childhood system for New Mexico families.
- **This pledge is about partnership, accuracy, and shared responsibility. It is a collective promise to support families, providers, and communities as New Mexico continues to lead the way in early childhood care and education.**



Launching October 24, 2025: nmeccd.org/universalpledge

How You Can Help Spread the Word

Everyone has a role to play in sharing Universal Child Care resources with their community:

- **Providers and Educators:** Include Universal Child Care resources in your newsletters, parent packets, and send-home materials.
- **Families:** Forward ECECD emails, share our posts on social media, and tell a friend about upcoming events.
- **Community Partners:** Print and display flyers, include links in your own communications, and encourage families to join upcoming sessions.
- **Schools:** Share invites to the events with families by email or text, print and post them in entryways and classrooms.



Executive Leadership Contacts



Elizabeth Groginsky

Cabinet Secretary

Email:

Elizabeth.Groginsky@eecd.nm.gov

Ph: 505-827-7684

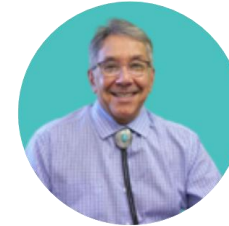


Shelley Strong

General Counsel

Email: shelley.strong@eecd.nm.gov

Ph: 505-670-3779



Ricky Bejarano

Administrative Services Division
(ASD) Director

Email:

Ricky.Bejarano@eecd.nm.gov

Ph: 505-487-0410



Dr. Joannie Suina

Assistant Secretary for Native American
Early Childhood Education and Care

Email: joannie.suina@eecd.nm.gov

Ph: 505-660-7047



Dr. Hailey Heinz

Policy, Research, and Quality
Initiatives (PRQ) Director

Email: Hailey.Heinz@eecd.nm.gov

Ph: 505-531-7215



Sonya Martinez

Communications Director

Email: sonya.martinez@eecd.nm.gov

Ph: 505-670-8338



Kendal Chavez

Deputy Secretary

Email: Kendal.Chavez@eecd.nm.gov

Ph: 505-670-2178



Sandy Trujillo-Medina

Early Care Education and Nutrition
(ECECN) Division Director

Email: sandy.trujillomedina@eecd.nm.gov

Ph: 505-231-3219



Sarah Grace

Human Resources Director

Email: sarah.grace@eecd.nm.gov

Ph: (505) 487-6584



Ariana Quinones-Miranda

Deputy Secretary

Email: ariana.quinones-miranda@eecd.nm.gov

Ph: 505-795-1786



Ali Hedrick

Family Support and Early
Intervention (FSEI) Division Director

Email: ali.hedrick@eecd.nm.gov

Ph: (505) 469-1742



Diana Sandoval-Tapia

Special Projects Coordinator

Email: diana.sandoval-tapia@eecd.nm.gov

Ph: 505-469-6912



Dave Borillo

Interim Chief Information Officer

Email: dave.borillo@eecd.nm.gov

Ph: 505-660-7154

Stay Connected with the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department



NMECECD.org



800-832-1321



**PO Drawer 5619
Santa Fe, NM
87502-5619**

ECECD's bi-weekly newsletter delivers agency announcements, resources, training opportunities, and upcoming events straight to your inbox. Join our monthly Community Call (held the first Tuesday of each month) for updates and engagement.

Sign up at nmececd.org/newsroom.



@NewMexicoECECD



NEW MEXICO
Early Childhood
Education & Care Department