

# Family Guide to New Mexico's 2026 Legislative Session

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## Why This Guide Matters

Each January, New Mexico's lawmakers gather in Santa Fe for the legislative session. During the session, they make new laws and decide how to spend state money. These choices can change early childhood programs now and for years to come.

This guide helps families understand: what the legislative session is and why it matters; how a bill becomes law; how families can participate and make their voices heard; and which early childhood issues ECECD is working on this year.

## Who This Guide Is For

This guide is written for families and community members who care about young children in New Mexico. Your voice matters. Decisions made by lawmakers affect programs and services for families across the state.

## How New Mexico's Legislative Session Works

At the beginning of each year, New Mexico's elected leaders meet at the State Capitol, called the Roundhouse. They work in two chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Together, they make up the Legislature.

There are two regular sessions: 60-day sessions in odd-numbered years and 30-day sessions in even-numbered years, which focus mainly on the state budget and specific topics identified by the Governor.

## How a Bill Becomes a Law

- A bill is introduced in either the House or the Senate.
- The bill is reviewed by committees, discussed, and voted on.
- If approved, the bill is debated and voted on by the full chamber.
- The bill moves to the other chamber for the same steps.
- If passed by both chambers, the Governor may sign or veto the bill.

## How Families Can Participate

All legislative sessions and meetings are open to the public. Families can attend in person or watch online at [nmlegis.gov](http://nmlegis.gov). You can also contact your legislators by phone or email to share your experiences and perspectives.

Families are invited to attend Early Childhood Day at the Roundhouse from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, February 14. This is a welcoming, family-friendly event at the State Capitol.

## Why Universal Child Care Matters for New Mexico

New Mexico became the first state in the nation to offer no-cost, universal child care on November 1, 2025. This investment improves access for families, strengthens the workforce, and supports a stronger economy.

### At a Glance: Child Care Zoning Requirement Act

This policy removes barriers that make it difficult to open or expand child care programs, especially home-based care, by creating clear and consistent rules statewide.

### At a Glance: Tax Credit Incentive for Donations to Child Care

This policy allows individuals and businesses to receive tax credits for donating to licensed child care programs, helping providers raise funds for materials, training, and expansion.