



NEW MEXICO

Early Childhood

Education & Care Department

Legislative
Session 2026

Family Guide to New Mexico's *2026 Legislative Session*

Volume. 1

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Welcome!



The Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) was created in 2019 to bring New Mexico's early childhood programs together in one place. ECECD supports children and families from pregnancy through age 5, along with the early childhood professionals who care for and serve them. This includes programs such as child care, PreK, home visiting, early intervention, and other services that help families with young children thrive.

Why This Guide Matters

Each January, New Mexico's lawmakers gather in Santa Fe. This meeting, called the legislative session, is when they make new laws and decide how to spend state money. The choices they make can change early childhood programs — both now and for years to come.

This guide is meant to help families understand:

- What the legislative session is and why it matters
- How a bill becomes a law
- How families can participate and make their voice heard
- Which early childhood issues ECECD is working on this year

Who This Guide Is For

This guide is written for families, but please share it with anyone in your community who cares about young children in New Mexico.

Remember: your voice matters! The decisions lawmakers make affect programs and services for all New Mexicans — including you and your family.

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, for the legislative session. These leaders are called legislators. They work in two groups, the Senate and the House of Representatives. Together, these two groups make up New Mexico's Legislature.

The state holds two types of regular sessions: 60-day "long sessions" happen in odd-numbered years like 2025 and 2027. Legislators can discuss any topic during these sessions.

30-day "short sessions" happen in even-numbered years like 2026 and 2028. These focus mainly on the state budget and specific topics the Governor asks them to consider. The Governor can also call special sessions at other times of the year if something urgent comes up.

New Mexico *Legislative Process*



STEP 1: A BILL IS INTRODUCED

Optimize the health, development, education, and well-being of babies, toddlers, and preschoolers through a family-driven, equitable, community-based system of high-quality prenatal and early childhood programs and services.



STEP 2: THE BILL GOES TO A COMMITTEE

The bill starts in one chamber—either the House or the Senate. A small group of lawmakers, called a committee, reviews the bill. They talk about it, ask questions, and may suggest changes.



STEP 4: THE FULL HOUSE OR SENATE VOTES

The bill is debated and voted on by all members of the House or the Senate. This is called a floor vote.

The bill goes to the other chamber: If the bill passes one chamber, it goes to the other one (House or Senate) to repeat the same steps.



STEP 3: THE COMMITTEE VOTES

The committee decides whether the bill should move forward.. Each bill is typically reviewed by least two committees and must pass each.

- If they vote **yes**, the bill continues.
- If they vote **no**, the bill usually stops.



STEP 5: THE GOVERNOR DECIDES

If both chambers pass the bill, it goes to the Governor. The Governor can:

- Sign it into law
- Veto it (reject it)



STEP 6: THE BILL BECOMES LAW

If the Governor signs the bill, it becomes a law. Some laws start right away. Others begin later in the year.



You might be wondering: "Can regular people like me get involved in making laws?"

The answer is yes! All legislative sessions and meetings are open to the public. See page 3 for all the ways you can participate.

How Can Families *Participate*?

Watch online

You can watch live or recorded committee meeting and House and Senate sessions.

Website: www.nmlegis.gov

Share your story!

Talk about how a bill affects your family or your experience as a parent or caregiver.

Attend in-person

Anyone can visit the Capitol in Santa Fe. It's free and open to everyone. Families can:

- Sit in the chamber galleries and watch House and Senate floor sessions
- Attend committee meetings

Schedules are posted on the Legislature website and updated daily during the session www.nmlegis.gov/Calendar/Session, shows when hearings and floor sessions are happening. Capitol staff are available throughout the building and can help direct you to the correct room.

Families are invited to attend Early Childhood Day at the Roundhouse from 10 a.m.–3 p.m., Saturday, February 14.

This is a welcoming, family-friendly event at the State Capitol where ECECD and our partners share resources, celebrate early childhood, and connect with families.

Contact your legislators

Your state senator and representative want to hear from you. Not sure who your legislators are?

Visit: https://www.nmlegis.gov/Members/Find_My_Legislator

How to reach them:

- Call the session switchboard at 505-986-4300 and leave a message
- Email them directly (contact info is on their legislative profile)

You don't need to be an expert—your experience as a parent, caregiver, or community member matters. A short, polite message is powerful:

"Dear [Representative/Senator] [Last Name], I'm a parent in [Your Town] and [issue/bill] is important to my family because [reason]. Thank you for considering families like mine. Sincerely, [Your Name]"

For technical questions about the nmlegis.gov website or for general questions about the Legislature [Contact the Legislative Council Service](#) by sending an email to lcs@nmlegis.gov.

Conclusion

Legislative sessions are always an exciting time for New Mexicans. It's when legislators make big choices that impact you, your children, and your community. We hope this guide helps you feel more comfortable with the process and empowers you to participate. Remember: the lawmakers at the Roundhouse represent you and care about what families have to say. You can watch from home, call your representatives and senators, participate in Early Childhood Day, or even testify at a hearing. No matter what, you and your family are a part of New Mexico's future.