



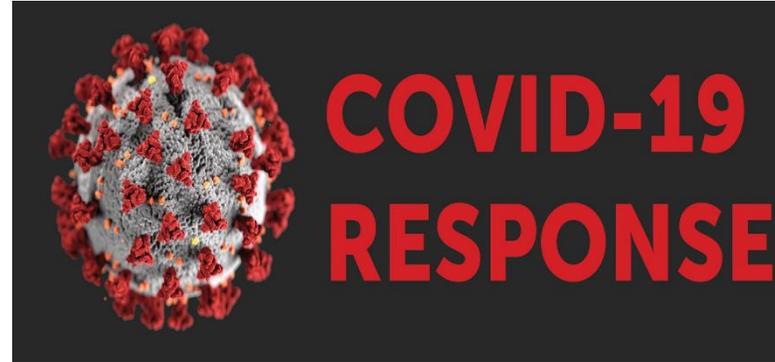
# Re-Opening Guidance for Area Agencies on Aging and providers serving older adults and adults with disabilities



*It takes all of us to protect our most vulnerable!*

April 6, 2021

# Requirements & Guidelines for New Mexico's AAAs, Title III Service Providers, Volunteer Service Providers and State Funded Programs



The New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD) is providing the following guidance to support the state's Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), Senior Service Providers, Volunteer Service Providers and Adult Day Facilities in determining their plans and strategies for reopening in 2021. The purpose of this guidance is to articulate the expectations of ALTSD regarding the planning of re-opening of programs and services for older adults and adults with disabilities. It is essential that service providers follow the New Mexico Department of Health (NM DOH) [county-by-county from "red to green" to turquoise](#) framework to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

As AAA's providers of Older Americans Act (OAA) and State Funded services begin to establish their new normal, they will need to update policies and procedures and ensure that intended populations are being served, while keeping the intent of the OAA, NMAC and any contracts at the forefront of decision making. Providers *must* understand the high-risk factors associated with the population being served. Furthermore, policies and procedures must be consistent with guidance from state and local health departments and emergency management agencies to ensure the safety of the participants, clients and providers of services.

This guidance is built on the New Mexico Medical Advisory Team, Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and relevant research and is intended to help service providers prioritize the health and safety of older adults as senior centers and facilities reopen.

Guidance in this document is subject to change given developments and recommendations from federal and state entities. Please visit the websites for the CDC, the federal Health and Human Services Department (HHS), and its Administration on Community Living (ACL), the State of New Mexico and NM DOH for updates.

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## Introduction

New Mexico state government, local agencies, tribes, pueblos, and nations are continuously monitoring and managing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Aging and Long-Term Services Department is working to understand the implications of the pandemic by closely examining the challenges faced by older adults and individuals with disabilities, providers of service, as well as the long-term impact on the interconnected service systems. We honor our government-to-government relationship with tribal governments, and we respect decisions regarding tribal senior center activity, recommended phased re-opening plans, and recommended COVID-19 testing and vaccination protocols.

During a time of change and flexibility, it is essential that we work together to serve and protect our most vulnerable populations. This helps us contain and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the New Mexico system of senior support services. Ongoing collaboration, sharing of resources and knowledge guarantee a timely response and modification of services as necessary.

The older adult population has been one of the hardest hit demographics when it comes to the impact of COVID-19. This pandemic has resulted in our network becoming a ground zero for COVID-related supports, services, communication and responses for New Mexico older adults. Although essential services (like grab-n-go and home delivered meals) have been provided, many of the critical services for older adults (case management, homemaker services, caregiver respite, adult day facilities and volunteer services) were placed on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic. For older adults to safely return to senior centers and places where services are provided, it is paramount that safe practices are implemented for staff, older adults and volunteers.

Value, effectiveness, and safety are necessary characteristics during a time of change. Collaborative efforts support the triple aim of 1) improving the experience of services and care; 2) improving health; and 3) lowering evident health risks to our older adult populations.

The Aging and Long-Term Services Department and providers of service have collaborated with NM DOH in the effort to register older adults for the COVID-19 vaccine. As one of the first states in the nation to create a vaccine registration portal, New Mexico is demonstrating its commitment to improving the quality of life of its residents. The ALTSD is working with senior centers across the state as well as national and local pharmacies to coordinate and schedule drive-through COVID-19 vaccine clinics. Clinics are located at senior centers or locations with footprints that can accommodate the activity. In the meantime, New Mexicans still need to adhere to the public health order: wearing a mask, social distancing, and avoiding group gatherings.

**Katrina Hotrum-Lopez**

Secretary of Aging and Long-Term Services Department



## Guiding Principles

***Re-opening guidance is grounded in the following principles:***

1. Follow the NM DOH county-by-county framework, which permits counties, including businesses and nonprofit entities within their borders, to operate under less restrictive public health measures when health metrics that demonstrate the extent of the virus' spread and test positivity within those counties, are met.
2. Prioritize the health and safety of the older adults, staff and communities.
3. Maximize the flexibility given by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) to provide safe services for older adults and virtual and long-distance volunteerism.
4. Make decisions based on science and data for the safety of the older adults being served.
5. Public health milestones that allow the state to gradually reopen by county have been established. All providers of service will abide by guidelines outlined in this document, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and OSHA, as well as the New Mexico COVID-Safe Practices document titled [“All Together New Mexico: COVID-Safe Practices for Individuals and Employers”](#).

## Baseline Requirements for all Service Providers to Operate

The Aging and Long-Term Services Department's re-opening guidance provides baseline requirements and best practices to support a safe and successful delivery of senior services and volunteer work settings.

The following are minimum requirements for re-opening :

- All service providers and AAAs across the state are permitted to operate strictly according to the COVID-safe practices if the county meets the DOH established public health criteria.
- All service providers must have operating protocols and COVID-19 safe policies and procedures approved by the program's board, commission and/or council and submitted to the overseeing AAA.
- All service providers must work with the AAA and their board, commission and/or council to create a plan for contact tracing.
- Service providers must participate in a surveillance testing program.
- Service providers must restrict large group gatherings.
- All staff, including volunteers and participants of services must be screened on a daily basis, including temperature check and review of COVID-19 symptoms.
- All staff, volunteers, and participants/clients shall follow the [CDC Personal Protective Equipment guidelines](#). [Social distancing](#), [proper hand hygiene](#), [cleaning and disinfecting](#) procedures must also be followed.
- All staff and volunteers must be trained on all issues in the CDC and NM Guidance on Health and Safety Practices.
- Agencies must post signage regarding proper hand hygiene, mask wearing and social distancing.
- Providers of service must follow maximum occupancy guidelines. Maximum occupancy is defined as is the number determined by the relevant fire marshal or fire department. For the purposes of this guidance and for services for older adults and people with disabilities, maximum occupancy shall be limited to the percent occupancy determined for general **business** by the [county-by-county red to green to turquoise framework](#).
- Providers should monitor the CDC website for information and resources, and utilize the NM DOH site for New Mexico specific information and guidance.

## Daily Mandatory screening of participants/clients and staff

Prior to participating in any service, staff will ask participants and staff, at a minimum, the following questions and document within a Health Screening report this **"Daily COVID-19 Questionnaire"**:

- Have you experienced any cough, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, loss of smell or taste, sore throat, unusual fatigue or symptoms of acute respiratory illness in the last 72 hours?
- Have you experienced a fever above 100° F [38° C] within the last 72 hours?
  - Temperature checks should also be conducted (touchless thermometer when possible)
- Have you experienced signs of a fever such as chills, aches and pains, etc. within the last 72 hours?
- Have you had exposure, within the past 14 days, with a lab-confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case patient? "Exposure" is defined as being within six feet of a COVID-19 case patient for fifteen minutes or longer.

If any participants or staff answer in the affirmative or have a temperature reading of 100 degrees or higher than they shall not be given access to the facility until such time as entry is deemed advisable pursuant to relevant public health or OSHA guidance.

Exclude individuals from your center/facility if any of the following are true:

1. They have experienced symptoms of a respiratory illness in the last 14 days.
2. They have been in contact with someone confirmed to have COVID-19 in the last 14 days.

## Service Specific Requirements for Operation

### Congregate Meals/Dining

Dining can be a combination of indoor and outdoor dining.

#### Requirements:

- Tables must be arranged to allow at least 6 feet between participants and 10 feet between tables.
- Appropriate social distancing must be maintained while sitting at tables in dining rooms.
- Following the meal, individuals must leave the center. While leaving or interacting with anyone, individuals must maintain appropriate social distancing.
- Each senior center must follow and complete the [New Mexico Environment Department Reopening checklist following an extended closure due to COVID-19](#).

- Staff must maintain a log of all individuals who participate in a congregate meal that includes name, date and time of meal, address and phone number.
- Develop new policies if outdoor dining will take place. Grab and Go meals shall not be discontinued if outdoor dining occurs. Policies must adhere to the NMED food safety guidelines and the [red to green to turquoise](#) guidelines and address:
  - Social distancing, consider using social pods, plexiglass or other shielding
  - Maximum occupancy
  - Establishment of a fair and equitable reservation system for participation in outdoor dining
  - Safety precautions for participants, i.e., shaded areas during summer heat
  - Consider if the outdoor meal can be a grab and go meal

#### **NOTES:**

If a senior center is in a county determined to be [“red”](#), the senior center shall not be permitted to provide congregate dining and should continue to provide home-delivered meals, grab and go, take-out meals, or meal boxes.

### **Adult Day Services**

The following information identifies the required provisions in the resumption of Adult Day Program Services in a congregate setting. These provisions are applicable to Adult Day Services and are meant to protect both employees and participants/clients.

The Aging & Long-Term Services Department and DOH continue to encourage Service Providers to provide Day Program Services in alternative locations and/or use technology to ensure continuity of service to meet the needs of their clients. However, the ALTSD and DOH acknowledge that clients may need to receive services in-person and in the Adult Day Program Setting rather than through virtual means.

Service Providers who wish to resume providing services must comply with the following requirements:

Prior to accepting clients to reconvene/convene participating in Day Services, providers will ask and document mandatory daily screenings with an intake report.

#### **Adult Day Program Guidance**

- Social Distancing Requirements must be implemented and followed, keeping 6 feet of physical distance between all people at all times, with exception of caregivers providing direct support for ADL/IADL needs of clients.
- Staff shall wear a mask or face covering:
  - For staff providing direct ADL/IADL services, proper PPE, which is identified as medical-grade mask, gloves used at all times when handling personal care for a client, and anytime there may be contact with body fluids, mucous membranes, or non-intact skin, or when state-regulated. They are also to be used when handling dirty linen or tissues.

- For staff not providing direct ADL/IADL services, this covering does not need to be medical-grade but must be in place while rendering services.
- Clients must be able to safely get to/from the setting. Clients/participants must be able to practice social distancing when transporting to and from the setting; if Non-Medical Transportation (NMT) is utilized to access the setting, only one member is allowed in the vehicle at a time.

### **Adult Day - Mandatory Service Provider Operating Protocols**

- Develop plans for:
  - Maintaining PPE levels during crisis supply periods – strive for multiple supplier sources
  - Advising and referring direct care workers for medical attention when they exhibit fever, sore throat and/or respiratory symptoms, including cough and/or shortness of breath
  - Continuing client care should a large proportion of staff become sick or need to be absent for other COVID-19 related reasons
  - Addressing the emotional health of your direct care workers
  - Addressing hiring, orientation and training in a virtual environment
- Develop/update/maintain the following policies:
  - Addressing how the Service Provider will respond to an employee with a communicable disease (with reference to COVID-19 as well as other diseases)
  - Care and management of a client with a communicable disease
  - Emergency preparedness plan (and/or emergency management plan)
  - Infection prevention and control policies
  - Telecommuting policy for non-direct care staff

## **Transportation Services**

### **Improve ventilation**

- Providers of Transportation Services should improve the ventilation in the vehicle if possible — for example, by opening the windows or setting the air ventilation/air conditioning on non-recirculation mode.

### **Participant social distancing**

- During travel, try to keep at least 6 feet (2 meters) from other people being transported.

### **Participants/Riders avoid touching surfaces**

- Avoid contact with surfaces frequently touched by passengers or drivers, such as the door frame and handles, windows, and other vehicle parts. In circumstances where such contact is unavoidable, use a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol as soon as possible afterwards.
- Use touchless donation mechanisms when possible and available.

## Sanitation of vehicles

At a minimum, clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces in the vehicle at the beginning and end of each shift and between transporting passengers. Ensure that cleaning and disinfection procedures are followed consistently and correctly, including the provision of adequate ventilation when chemicals are in use. Doors and windows should remain open when cleaning the vehicle. When cleaning and disinfecting, individuals should wear disposable gloves compatible with the products being used as well as any other PPE required according to the product manufacturer's instructions.

- For hard non-porous surfaces within the interior of the vehicle (such as hard seats, arm rests, door handles, seat belt buckles, light and air controls, doors and windows, and grab handles) clean with detergent or soap and water if the surfaces are visibly dirty, prior to disinfectant application. For disinfection of hard, non-porous surfaces, appropriate disinfectants include:
  - [EPA's Registered Antimicrobial Products for Use Against Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2external icon](#), the virus that causes COVID-19. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for concentration, application method, and contact time for all cleaning and disinfection products.
  - [Diluted household bleach solutions](#) prepared according to the manufacturer's label for disinfection, if appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.
  - Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol.
- For soft or porous surfaces, such as fabric seats, remove any visible contamination, if present, and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. After cleaning, use [products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19external icon](#) and that are suitable for porous surfaces.
- For frequently touched electronic surfaces, such as tablets or touch screens used in the vehicle, remove visible dirt, then disinfect following the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products. If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol to disinfect.

Gloves and any other disposable PPE used for cleaning and disinfecting the vehicle should be removed and disposed of after cleaning; [wash hands](#) immediately after removal of gloves and PPE with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. If a disposable gown was not worn, work uniforms/clothes worn during cleaning and disinfecting should be laundered afterwards using the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely. Wash hands after handling laundry.

## In-Home Services

When possible, agencies providing in-home services should call the client, before the assigned worker's scheduled arrival time, and screen client with the Daily COVID-19 Questionnaire. When possible, the same worker should be assigned to same clients to reduce risk of transmission to a

greater number of people. If the need for in-home services is greater than the ability of the agency to provide, consider prioritizing services for seniors who live alone and couples who live together and both receive services.

### **In-Home Services Program Guidance:**

- Staff shall wear a mask or face covering:
  - For staff providing direct ADL/IADL services, proper PPE is identified as medical-grade mask and gloves used at all times when handling personal care for a client, and anytime there may be contact with body fluids, mucous membranes, or non-intact skin, or when state-regulated. Proper PPE is also to be used when handling dirty linen or tissues.
  - For staff not providing direct ADL/IADL services, this covering does not need to be medical-grade but must be in place while rendering services.
- Staff shall perform hand hygiene, washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or with alcohol-based hand sanitizer with greater than 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available
  - Wash hands or use hand sanitizer, if soap and water are not available, at these key times:
    - Immediately upon entering a client's home
    - Before, during and after preparing food
    - Before eating food
    - Before and after physical contact with a client
    - Before putting on and after touching or removing masks
    - After using the restroom
    - After blowing nose, coughing or sneezing
    - After touching animals or pets, their food, or supplies
    - After changing a diaper
    - After caring for someone who is sick
    - After contact with surfaces frequently touched by multiple people
    - After leaving a client's home
    - After leaving a public place
  - Perform hand hygiene between steps if hands become contaminated and immediately after discarding PPE.
- Staff shall:
  - Put on PPE outside the home or soon as entering the home, and put on face protection first
  - Ensure six feet of distance from others in the home, both when putting PPE on and when providing services
  - Ideally, remove PPE outside the home and discard it in an external trash can
  - Remove face protection last

### **Office of Indian Elder Affairs, IAAA and Navajo Nation DOH-DALTSD**

The New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD) strongly supports the All Pueblo Council of Governors Request in establishing safety protocols that protect our most precious vulnerable tribal elders. The guidance in this document is designed to help senior centers and other providers of service to maintain standard health and safety requirements and physical distancing directives, while providing much-needed services for our elders. It is important to note that while the ALTSD, DOH, and IAD can offer guidance to address COVID-19 issues, we are required to work within the guidelines established by NM DOH and the Governor's Executive Orders in our direction. We honor our government-to-government relationship with tribal governments, and we respect that decisions--regarding tribal senior center activity, recommended phased re-opening plans, and recommended COVID-19 testing protocols—belong to our respective tribal leaders in our tribal communities.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/tribal/index.html>



## Resources

[NM Department of Health \(NMDOH\)](#)

[NM COVID-19 Screening and Testing Sites](#)

[New Mexico's COVID-19 Hotline Call: 1-855-600-3453](#)

[Non-Health Related COVID-19 Questions Call: 1-833-551-0518](#)

[New Mexico's Crisis and Access Line Call: 1-855-662-7474](#)

[Information for Workers Affected by COVID-19](#)

[Workforce Solutions General contract information](#)

[Best Practices on Use of Face Coverings \(CDC\)](#)

[Food Safety and Coronavirus \(FDA\)](#)

[Handwashing Video \(Ecolab\)](#)

[Handwashing 101 \(ServSafe\)](#)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

<https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020-06-13-Surveillance-testing-FAQs.pdf>

<https://cv.nmhealth.org/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/other-at-risk-populations/rural-communities.html>

[https://ltcombudsman.org/omb\\_support/COVID-19](https://ltcombudsman.org/omb_support/COVID-19)

<https://nutritionandaging.org/covid-19/>

[Guidance Archive | ACL Administration for Community Living](#)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/using-transportation.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/in-home-social-services.html>

<https://cv.nmhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/EPI-COVID19-Containment-Policies-2.24.21.pdf>

<https://cv.nmhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/022421-PHO.pdf>

<https://cv.nmhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/022621-PHO.pdf>

<https://cv.nmhealth.org/public-health-orders-and-executive-orders/red-to-green/>

[Recommendations for Long-Term Care Facilities \(CDC\)](#)

[Steps Healthcare Facilities Can Take Now to Prepare for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) \(CDC\)](#)

[FAQs for Healthcare Providers Regarding Medicare Billing and Payment \(CMS\)](#)

[Coronavirus Preparation and Response Toolkit \(Argentum\)](#)

[Interim Health Care Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients Under Investigation for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) \(CDC\)](#)

[AHCA/NCAL \(American Health Care Association / National Center for Assisted Living\)](#)



The New Mexico Aging & Long-Term Services Department would like to thank the New Mexico Public Education Department for their state exemplar and kind sharing of resources.

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