

Governor's Medicaid plan means better healthcare for McKinley County

Written by By David Conejo CEO of Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services
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New Mexico currently has a shortage of physicians in 32 of its 33 counties. Large swaths of McKinley County lie within the Navajo Nation, the largest Indian reservation in the United States. Nearly 80 percent of McKinley County's 75,000 residents are Native American. New Mexico leads all other states in Medicaid enrollment, with 43 percent of its residents on the program.

The goal of New Mexico's healthcare community is to bridge the gap in rural health and ensure adequate and appropriate care is available to all New Mexican's regardless of their address. Therefore, I support Governor Grisham's plan to increase Medicaid by \$78.5 million for the State of New Mexico.

We need to bolster funding for patients and the providers who deliver care and services to the most vulnerable New Mexicans and help rebuild and protect New Mexico's health care delivery network.

Medicaid rates to physicians and others were not adjusted for inflation by the previous New Mexico administration, resulting in some rates falling to 70 percent of the Medicare fee schedule used to reimburse practitioners.

Rural Health Benefits

In addition to attracting medical professionals, the governor's Medicaid plan will also help rural communities' behavioral health efforts. Many Medicaid-covered behavioral health services are

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not reimbursed by Medicare. The overall average percentage of the behavioral health outpatient rate increase is approximately 30 percent. By raising these payment rates, the state's health services department will bolster its network of behavioral health providers across New Mexico. Outpatient behavioral health services that are currently above 90 percent of the 2019 Medicare fee schedule will remain unchanged.

The anticipated annual fiscal impact for this increase is estimated to be \$58.6 million total in state and federal funds combined, with a state general fund impact of \$12 million.

Another beneficiary to rural residents will be an increase in reimbursement rates paid under the Centennial Care program to New Mexico's not-for-profit community hospitals which are often located in rural areas. This increase will ensure that payments are adequate to help cover certain business and operating expenses, to account for lower economies of scale at these not-for-profit facilities, and to aid these hospitals in reinvesting in the health of their local communities.

Residents and medical professionals can show support for the governor's Medicaid plan at <https://www.hsd.state.nm.us/providers/fee-schedules.aspx>

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