



Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor
David R. Scrase, M.D., Secretary

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Governor Lujan Grisham proclaims August Child Support Awareness Month
New Mexico kicks off initiatives to promote more parent participation

Santa Fe, N.M. – The New Mexico Human Services Department announced on Wednesday that Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has proclaimed August of 2019 Child Support Awareness Month, saluting all New Mexico parents who support their children and encouraging those who have difficulty meeting or are failing to meet their child support obligations to reach out for assistance.

“My administration is committed to supporting New Mexico families and establishing the tools to create a better path to economic security and stability,” said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. “Ensuring that the workforce has greater access to job training and career support enables parents to provide for their families and builds a better foundation for New Mexico children.”

The Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) is in the process of implementing federal modernization initiatives that have shown to be effective in securing more consistent payments on which families can rely as a regular source of income, transitioning the program to family-centered strategies as opposed to debt-driven enforcement.

“Assessing the reason why payments have not been made is often the first step in turning a non-paying case into a paying case,” said David R. Scrase M.D., Human Services Department cabinet secretary. “If we can refer them to services they need, including employment options in their communities, that can result in payments for some of New Mexico’s most vulnerable children.”

In August, CSED is kicking off a work-oriented pilot program in collaboration with the Department of Work Force Solutions.

“The STEP-UP project: supporting, training, and employing parents is an opportunity for CSED to refer under-employed or unemployed parents to the Workforce Solutions Department for assistance in building a resume and making connections for potential employment opportunities,” said Jeremy Toulouse, acting CSED director. “The goal is to get them a job, begin a payroll deduction for child support payments, become compliant with their child support order and better their own financial situation.”

STEP-UP will begin in the Sandoval County CSED office before expanding statewide next year.

CSED collected \$137.5 million in child support collections during state fiscal year 2019, 66 percent of which came through employer wage withholding.

“Employers are a very important partner in the child support program, and they deserve a big thank you and recognition for doing their part to ensure consistent payments are coming in,” added Toulouse.

During the month of August, parents who have been issued a bench warrant due to unpaid child support will have an opportunity to come into one of the 14 CSED field offices and settle by paying the bond without fear of arrest. If an individual is unable to pay the full amount of the bond set by the court:

- A negotiated, reduced bond payment or a payment plan toward the amount of past due child support may be worked out:
 - With the consent of the parent to whom the support obligation is owed and,
 - The approval of the court that issued the warrant.
- Non-custodial parents with a written job offer may also request to negotiate a lower bond payment with successful wage withholding payments.

People coming into the CSED offices during the month of August will also have an opportunity to celebrate by putting their child’s name on a poster that will decorate the lobbies of offices.

“Getting financial support to the kids of New Mexico so they can grow up being kids is what this program is all about,” said Scrase.

Individuals having questions about any of the Child Support Enforcement Month activities may contact the CSED Customer Service Center at 1 (800) 288-7207.

A copy of the governor’s August Child Support Awareness Month Proclamation can be found at https://www.hsd.state.nm.us/uploads/PressRelease/2f473c14ee654f868b5a25b3cfd15a6d/Child_Support_Awareness_Month_Aug_2019.pdf.

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