



STATE OF NEW MEXICO

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## NEWS RELEASE

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## **More college students now eligible for SNAP food benefits through Coronavirus relief**

SANTA FE – Thousands of New Mexico college students might be eligible for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits, commonly known as food stamps, announced the New Mexico Human Services Department and Higher Education Department.

“The pandemic has created many economic challenges particularly for college students and families with limited resources,” said Cabinet Secretary David R. Scrase, M.D. “Jobs for college students are scarce. College students have either had their hours reduced or lost their job altogether, making it difficult to meet their basic needs. We look forward to working with the Higher Education Department to spread the word and extend food benefits to New Mexico college students and urge congress to make this a permanent change.”

"Food insecurity should never be a barrier to academic success," said Acting Higher Education Department Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez. "It is our job to reflect the needs of students during this pandemic and beyond, and action is vital to ensure that no student goes hungry. We're working with our partners at colleges and universities across the state to raise awareness about the expansion of SNAP benefits for college students and their families."

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, [temporarily expands](#) SNAP eligibility to include students enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education, who either:

1. Are eligible to participate in state or federally financed work study during the regular school year, as determined by the institution of higher education, or
2. Have an expected family contribution (EFC) of \$0 in the current academic year.

Beginning on Jan. 16, 2021, [students](#) who meet one of the two criteria outlined above may receive SNAP if they meet all other financial and non-financial SNAP eligibility criteria. This eligibility will remain in place until 30 days after the public health emergency ends. Since the Biden Administration has advised that the declaration will most likely remain in place at least

until the end of 2021 and states will have 60 days-notice before it ends, this policy change will more than likely be something that can help families for the remainder of the crisis.

New Mexico college students who would like to apply should visit: [www.yes.state.nm.us](http://www.yes.state.nm.us)

According to the 2020 University of New Mexico [Basic Needs Insecurity Research Report](#), food insecurity can impact academic success and student health and wellbeing. Food insecurity is associated with lower grades and a greater likelihood of students withdrawing or otherwise deferring or suspending their studies. Students who are food insecure are less likely to report a sense of belonging, more likely to feel they are not welcome to engage with faculty, and less likely to access campus services. Overall, at the University of New Mexico, the prevalence of food insecurity among students is 32 percent, with American Indian students at 52 percent, and Hispanic students at 35 percent.

In New Mexico, the rate for food insecure households is 16.9 percent. Many institutions of higher education are working on the issue:

- The University of New Mexico, New Mexico State University, New Mexico Highlands University, Western New Mexico University, Santa Fe Community College, and Northern New Mexico College have implemented food pantries.
- University of New Mexico's food pantry began in 2014 and has served over 8,700 students by providing free groceries once a month. New Mexico State University's food pantry distributes food bags twice a week. New Mexico Highlands University gives pre-boxed packages to students, faculty and staff twice a month and Santa Fe Community College's students may visit their food pantry once a week. Northern New Mexico College's includes access to locally grown produce with their farm to food pantry programs.

A January 2019 Government Accountability Office [report](#) found that at least one in three college students do not always have enough to eat. Additionally, 71 percent of college students today do not fit the model of a "typical" college student and may be financially independent, work at least part time, enroll in and stay in college at a later age, or have dependent children. These factors, when paired with other challenges students face like cost of tuition, lodging and/or transportation, books, and supplies, can create significant barriers to making ends meet. The report includes a literature review of 31 studies of college hunger and indicated there was a range of 9-50 percent of students who experienced food insecurity on campuses but that in 22 of these studies, food insecurity was estimated to be above 30 percent of the students surveyed.

The Human Services Department provides services and benefits to more than 1 million New Mexicans through several programs including: the Medicaid Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Child Support Program, and several Behavioral Health Services.

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