

New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops



Archdiocese of Santa Fe, Most Reverend John C. Wester, M.Div., M.A.S., M.A.

Diocese of Las Cruces, Most Reverend Oscar Cantú, S.T.D.
Most Reverend Ricardo Ramirez, Emeritus

Diocese of Gallup, Most Reverend James S. Wall

P.O. Box 3243 * Los Lunas, NM 87031 * (505) 319 – 3334

June 30, 2015

We stand with the many New Mexico's families who live in poverty and experience hunger. Our state has among the highest rates of hunger and poverty and it is very alarming that more than 30% of our children are experiencing hunger. The SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) is an important way to fight hunger by making nutrition assistance available to eligible families. The unemployment rate in New Mexico remains high and job opportunities are lacking across the state. Given these statistics it is unfortunate that the NM Human Services Department is again proposing administrative regulations that would require parents with children over the age of six to participate in unpaid work activities in order to receive SNAP benefits. These regulations are not required by federal law. It is unwise to expand our state's SNAP work requirements when there is no evidence that HSD's current work program helps SNAP participants get jobs or attain job skills since the outcomes of the program are not tracked making it difficult to know if the program is successful. Expanding these requirements will result in more bureaucratic barriers for our families who need SNAP to feed their children. Many questions must be answered and the answers to those questions must be focused on what are the best ways to help low-income New Mexicans move to family-sustaining income. Where are the jobs? Where is the job training? What is community service and how will it be administered? It is doubtful that HSD or SL Start, the work program contractor, has the capacity to manage the thousands of participants that must now be added to the caseload. Where is the child care? How will the many other barriers to employment addressed? These are among the many questions that have not been answered and must be answered. We fear that participants will simply be pushed off of SNAP and lose the nutrition assistance that they need. We urge the Human Services Department not to move forward with these proposed regulations.

Allen Sánchez

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen Sánchez".

Executive Director
505-319-3334