



# News & Chews



## Resource Guide

### Supporting San Juan County Families – March 2026

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## Federal News: Help for “Downwinders”

For many years, the U.S. tested nuclear bombs in the West. Dust from these tests carried radiation across **all of New Mexico**, including San Juan and McKinley Counties. Some people later got cancer or other serious illnesses.

## What Is the Downwinder Program?

The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) is a federal program that gives a **one-time payment of \$100,000** to people who got certain cancers after being exposed to this radiation. It is not a loan, and it does not have to be paid back.

## Who May Qualify?

You may qualify as a “downwinder” if:

- You lived, worked, or went to school **anywhere in New Mexico** for at least 1 year between **September 24, 1944 and November 6, 1962** (or for the whole month from June 30 to July 31, 1962).
- You were later told by a doctor that you have one of the cancers covered by the program, such as leukemia (not chronic lymphocytic), many lymphomas, or primary cancers of the thyroid, breast, stomach, colon, lung, brain, and several other organs.

If the person who got sick has already died, **family members may still apply** and share the \$100,000 payment. This can include a spouse, children, or sometimes grandchildren or parents.

## What Does the Payment Affect?

- The \$100,000 is **federal, tax-free money**.
- It **does not count against** Social Security or Medicaid eligibility.
- RECA is a **cash payment only**. It does not provide health insurance or medical care.

## What Documents Will I Need?

To apply, you will need:

- Proof that you lived, worked, or went to school in New Mexico during the covered years (for example, school records, tribal records, utility bills, tax records, or old letters showing your address).
- Medical records that show your cancer diagnosis and the date you were diagnosed.

If you are applying for a family member who has died, you will also need records like birth certificates, death certificates, and marriage records to show how you are related.

## How Do I Apply?

You can apply in two main ways:

- **Online:** Use the U.S. Department of Justice **RECA Claim Portal** to file a claim electronically and upload your documents.
- **By Mail:** Download and print the “Downwinder Claim Form” from the RECA website, fill it out, and mail it with original or certified copies of your records.

You **do not have to hire a lawyer** to apply. Some private groups will offer to help for a fee, but many families can complete the forms themselves or with free help from community or state partners.

## Where Can I Get Free Help?

- UNM RESEP (Radiation Exposure Screening and Education Program) main page: <https://hsc.unm.edu/resep/>
- UNM RESEP eligibility (who can get screened, including downwinders): <https://hsc.unm.edu/resep/eligibility.html>
- New Mexico State Library – RECA Downwinder resource page (how to prove where you lived, documents, etc.): <https://libguides.nmstatelibrary.org/c.php?g=1388435&p=11130684>

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## State News: Universal Childcare Here to Stay

SB241, the **Child Care Assistance Program Act**, passed the 2026 NM Legislature, putting universal child care into state law to provide families reliable, no-cost access. It funds the program via annual appropriations from the Land Grant Permanent Fund and other sources, with built-in fiscal safeguards.

### Key Provisions

- **Eligibility & Access:** Free child care for all eligible children under 13 (or 19 with disabilities), removing prior income caps—already serving 13,000+ new families since Nov 2025.
- **Copayments:** Sliding scale only triggers for families >600% FPL (e.g., \$19,720/person) **if oil prices < \$50/barrel, enrollment surges 3%, or revenue drops; max 3-7% income, none below threshold.**

- Waitlist: Prioritizes at-risk kids, disabilities, <400% FPL during capacity shortfalls; biannual reporting to legislature.
- Provider Support: Mandates cost-based reimbursement model, transparency dashboard, and anti-supplantation rules.
- Impact for Parents -This locks in ~\$12K-\$14K annual savings per child, stabilizes supply in areas like San Juan County, and pairs with SB96 (zoning reforms) for more local options.

**These are the annual gross income thresholds that equal 600% of the Federal Poverty Level in 2026.**

- 1-Person Household: \$95,760
- 2-Person Household: \$129,840
- 3-Person Household: \$163,920
- 4-Person Household: \$198,000
- 5-Person Household: \$232,080
- 6-Person Household: \$266,160
- 7-Person Household: \$300,240
- 8-Person Household: \$334,320

## Local News: The Bloomfield “HUB”

The Better Bloomfield Community & Family Resource HUB (also called **The HUB – Helping Unite Bloomfield**) is a safe, welcoming place that helps students and families with everyday needs so kids can do well in school. It is run by Bloomfield School District and serves Bloomfield and nearby communities like Blanco, Nageezi, Huerfano, Haa naa dli Community School/Dormitory, and the Dzilth-Na-O-Dith-Hle area.



### Who the HUB Helps

The HUB supports students from Pre-K through 12th grade and their families. It gives extra help to families who are dealing with money problems, housing worries or homelessness, foster care, lots of missed school, or big social and emotional challenges.

### What the HUB Offers

At the HUB, families can:

- Get basic supplies and emergency items, such as clothing and other essentials.
- Use washers and dryers to do laundry.
- Take showers in a private, respectful setting.
- Use computers for job searches, schoolwork, and important online forms.
- Get connected to other community agencies and regional support services.

All visits are by appointment so staff can give each family private, one-on-one support.

## How to Get Help

Families can call the HUB directly or ask a teacher, school staff member, or social worker to make a referral. Staff will set up a time to meet, listen to what you need, and connect you with the right resources.

### Contact:

- **Melodee Velasquez, School & Family Liaison**  
Bloomfield School District – The HUB  
325 N. Bergin Lane, Bloomfield, NM 87413  
Phone: 505-632-4369  
Email: [mvelasquez@bsin.k12.nm.us](mailto:mvelasquez@bsin.k12.nm.us)
- **Bethany Ray, Attendance Liaison**  
Bloomfield School District  
325 N. Bergin Lane, Bloomfield, NM 87413  
Phone: 505-634-3476  
Email: [bray@bsin.k12.nm.us](mailto:bray@bsin.k12.nm.us)

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## Simple Recipe: Chews - 🌱 “Green Awakening” Bowl

### 🥄 Base (per bowl)

- ½ cup cooked brown, white rice, or cauliflower rice
- ¾–1 cup cooked/canned beans or lentils
- 1+ cup vegetables

### 🌿 Veggie Ideas

Use what you have in any fun combination (fresh, frozen or canned):

Spinach and zucchini • Cabbage and carrots • Tomatoes and cucumbers • Broccoli and peas •

### 🔍 Cooking

1. **Veggies:** If using raw vegetables, chop to equal sizes and sauté (if needed) in a nonstick skillet to your desired consistency. Season to taste with salt, pepper, onion powder and garlic powder (optional) and add to one section of the bowl. Keep in mind that different vegetables cook at different times, so cook the harder vegetables such as broccoli first before adding softer ones like zucchini.

\*If using canned vegetables, drain and season, if needed (most cans are high in sodium unless otherwise specified), then warm in a nonstick pan before adding to the bowl.

\*If using frozen vegetables, thaw/cook in the microwave, season and add to the bowl.



2. **Rice:** Cook rice according to package directions, season and add to the bowl, next to the vegetables.

3. **Beans:** If using dry beans, soak overnight before cooking according to package instructions and then season using the same seasoning as the rice. If using canned beans, drain and rinse, then season and heat up in a nonstick pan before adding them next to the rice and vegetables in the bowl.

Optional Toppings:

Fried Egg or tofu • Canned tuna or chicken • Fresh herbs, seeds or nuts • Salsa or sliced jalapeno • Plain yogurt or sour cream and a squeeze of lime juice.

### **BONUS CHEWS: Lime Layered Whimsy Cups**

- 1 box family size lime Jello (sugar free optional)
- 1 cup chopped fruit (fresh, frozen or canned) (optional)
- 1 cup vanilla yogurt

Directions: Make Jello according to package directions; if adding fruit, do so after Jello has chilled for 1-2 hours.

Once chilled, cut or scoop out the desired shape and layer with yogurt into small, clear plastic or glass cups



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