



Fourth Quarter 2023  
Volume 3, Issue 4

GOODBYE  
2023  
WELCOME  
2024

# Alegria News

## From The Mi Via Waiver Manager

As another year winds down, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the passing year. We have overcome many challenges and hurdles during 2023 including rapid-fire changes from DDS, new initiatives to prevent ANE issues with participants, changes to budget amounts, training requirements, and even unexpected changes to the roles of the EOR. AFS staff, along with you, the providers, EORs, and participants have weathered these changes with resolve and dedication. Because of the lessons learned in 2023, Alegria will enter 2024 stronger than ever. This is largely thanks to your hard work, and the work of our dedicated staff.

I would also like to take a moment to say a heartfelt and fond farewell to Enzo Gonzales. Enzo had been with AFS for many years, and we all came to love and respect his wonderful contributions to our agency and the families we serve. Sadly, he has moved on to other career opportunities, and we will all miss him very much. Please know that we wish him all the best that life has to offer.

On a happier note, 2024 will also bring with it another milestone. Alegria will celebrate its 20th anniversary providing services to families in New Mexico! You will be hearing more about this in the weeks and months to come as we celebrate this momentous occasion, but for now, let me just say THANKS FOR 20 YEARS NEW MEXICO!

Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year to all our families and those who serve them! We will be here as always next year to continue the good work and services you have come to expect from Alegria Family Services.

Terri

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### SSI Beneficiaries Will See Double Payments in December 2023.

People with disabilities receiving Supplemental Security Income can expect to receive two payments this month, but one will be higher than the other.

The Social Security Administration says that SSI benefits were paid on Dec. 1 and another round will go out on Dec. 29.

Typically, SSI is issued on the first of the month, but if that day falls on a weekend or a federal holiday, the payment is sent in advance. As a result, beneficiaries can expect two checks to arrive this month, **but nothing in January.**

The maximum federal payment for individuals receiving SSI earlier this month was \$914 and \$1,371 for couples.

But, the next check will be larger thanks to an automatic cost-of-living increase taking effect in 2024. As a result, the top federal payment will grow to \$943 for individuals and \$1,415 for couples.



**October 4th is National Taco and National Vodka Day!**

Mark your calendars and celebrate this day each year with your favorite tacos and a Vodka-Rita. This twist on the classic margarita pairs great with tacos and is perfect for this day. 2 oz vodka, 1/2 oz orange liqueur, 2 oz lime juice and 1/4 oz agave nectar. Shake with ice and strain in to a salt-rimmed glass.

## THE ALEGRIA MONTHLY GIVE-A-WAY.

Back in January we at Alegria committed to a having a drawing each and every month of 2023 to thank our providers and EORs. This has been a tremendous success and we would like to congratulate our latest winners!

Our September winners were by coincidence, all EORs:

Alicia Atencio—1st place  
Pam Diaz—2nd place  
Natalie Sanchez—3rd place

Our October winners were:

Ernesto Miramontes—1st place  
Anna Rodriguez—2nd Place  
Martha Mota—3rd Place

Our November winners were:

Grisela Palacios—1st place  
Camille Corley—2nd Place  
Mildred Baca—3rd Place

Our final drawing this quarter will be held towards the end of December so check out our website at [alegriafamily.com](http://alegriafamily.com) for full details.

## The Diverse New Mexico Holiday Season.

*Did you know that from November 1st till January 15th there are approximately 29 holidays observed by 7 of the world's major religions? New Mexico is home to cultures and communities from all parts of the world, and all 7 world religions are represented in our diverse state. While all of these holidays are different and unique, they all share one common idea. Good food, and family gatherings along with meditation, reflection, and contemplation are all brought to bear with the goal to spread Peace on Earth and Good Will Towards Men. No matter what holiday or celebration you may observe...*

**Happy Holidays New Mexico!**

## Disability Advocates Working to End Sub-Minimum Wage.

Dozens of disability advocacy groups are urging the Biden administration to end a more than 90-year-old program allowing employers to pay workers with disabilities less than minimum wage. The American Association of People with Disabilities and other groups have been working quietly at the state level to make changes to this law, and have made some progress, currently 15 states have ended this practice, however; most states including New Mexico continue to pay sub-minimum wages to disabled persons in what is referred to as "sheltered employment".

Today, the Subminimum wage in New Mexico must be at least 50% of the standard minimum wage. The number translates to a requirement of at least \$5.75 per hour, or \$6.05 in Santa Fe County, while it's \$5.25 in Las Cruces. There are several categories of employees who can be paid at an even lower rate.

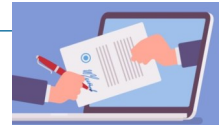
"The practice of paying disabled Americans subminimum wages is unfair, unjust and only further discriminates against our community

that faces so many challenges already in our daily lives," said Maria Town, president, and CEO of the American Association of People with Disabilities. "People with disabilities deserve to be paid a fair wage regardless of their work environment. This practice has endured for 90 years. It's time for it to end."

Advocacy groups acknowledge that ending the subminimum wage program would require "time and resources to ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to successfully transition to their next step, and in a published statement, The Arc New Mexico said in part "[Arc NM] understands that some individuals who have been enrolled in "sheltered" programs earning less than minimum wage for decades will have challenges in transitions and are not advocating for immediate closure or discontinuation of those programs for those individuals until required by federal law and only then with careful transition planning."

If you would like more information contact The Arc of New Mexico at [arcnm.org](http://arcnm.org).

## A reminder from Alegria Family Services.



*EORs must have their signed and dated VPRs into our office no later than 9:00am each Monday to avoid interruptions in payments to providers. Also, if you provide CCSI (Navigation), and your notes are on paper, they must be in the office by 9:00am each Monday to be submitted on time for payment. Lastly, if you are like most CCSI providers, you are submitting your notes digitally using the AFS digital documentation process. Remember that weeks run from Sunday at 12:00am to Saturday at 11:59pm. You must have your notes digitally signed and submitted by Saturday night at 11:59pm. AFS will process your notes and submit them for payment by the Monday 9:00am deadline. To ensure the best possible results, your notes should be entered and updated into our system daily, as services are provided. This will always insure the most accurate and timely reporting. Thank you. ~ AFS ~*

## Thanksgiving in New Mexico

We at Alegria Family Services hope all the families we serve had a wonderful and love filled Thanksgiving this year. New Mexico has always put our own twist on this favorite of holidays by adding our own flavors and unique cultural touches to the classic Thanksgiving fare. Of course red and green chili are present on most New Mexico tables. And how about Roasted Turkey with Green Chili Gravy, Chorizo Stuffing, Pepita Crusted –Green Chili Stuffed Pork Loin, Sumac Navajo Leg of Lamb, and even New Mexico Apple Pie with Green Chile and Pinon Nuts or Pumpkin Flan for desert. The many splendid sights, sounds and smells of New Mexico have always made this fall holiday truly unique. But no matter what's on the table, it is the gathering of family and friends, the laughter, the conversation, and the warmth that makes it great. We here at AFS hope yours was truly a special and memorable day this year. **Happy Thanksgiving Alegria Families!**



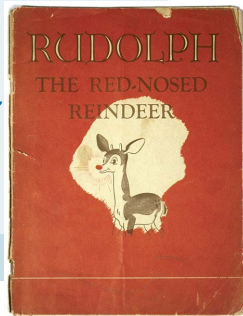
## The truth about Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

*Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer first appeared in 1939 when Montgomery Ward department store asked one of its copywriters, 34-year-old Robert L. May, to create a Christmas story the store could give away to shoppers as a promotional gimmick.*

*The retailer had been buying and giving away coloring books for Christmas every year; and it was decided that creating its own book would save money. In the first year of publication, 2.4 million copies of Rudolph's story were distributed by Montgomery Ward.*

*May's brother-in-law, songwriter Johnny Marks, decided to adapt the story of Rudolph into song.*

*Marks' musical version of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" was recorded by Gene Autry in 1949.*



## IHLS Progress Notes Important Documentation for the Mi Via Waiver

Your progress notes are the single most important documentation completed each month. When done properly, they provide the justification for billing each day's services, create an accurate record of the daily life of the participant, and help ascertain what future needs the participant may require in the upcoming budget years. Unfortunately, because of the very nature of caring for participants on the Mi Via Waiver, details are often overlooked, and repetition becomes standard when recording daily progress notes. This creates an unclear and often incomplete record of the participants' life and their involvement with providers. As with all New Mexico waivers, DDSD audits can and do happen on the Mi Via Waiver. Taking care to give accurate and detailed progress notes each month can help avoid findings by DDSD that could result in expensive reimbursements of funds.

Currently Mi Via notes do not require time in and time out entries, however your notes should describe your days interactions with your individual with enough detail to easily depict 4 or more hours of assistance by the provider per day. We understand that daily routines are often repetitive by nature, but far too often we see notes that simply repeat the same sentence or phrase for each day, with little or no variation. This is because we do the same thing each day for our participants, and since their lives do not vary much, our progress notes do not vary much. So how do we break the monotony of our daily

notes? How can we give a more comprehensive and complete picture of our daily involvement with our participants? This question is asked more often than most people would think. We hope to offer some ideas for consideration.

If you regularly provide assistance with mealtimes, medications, or hygiene, pick any one of these tasks and focus on the details of what you did. What assistance did you provide? Did you help your participant with the cooking, or did you do it yourself? If you helped, does your participant enjoy cooking with you? Was the meal enjoyable for the participants and you? How much time was spent doing this task? Change the focus on tasks daily, choosing one to discuss each day.

Always give complete details on doctor or therapy visits and any other out of the house activity. Our participants often need more support during these out-of-routine events. What was needed from you to make this event go smoothly? Give details and include who, what, where, when, and how to the narrative.

With practice, patience, and care, your notes will always pass any scrutiny that may come. In the long run this benefits your participant and your associated agencies as well as yourself. You can always contact Alegria Family Services for help and guidance when completing your notes.

## Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Alegria Family Services



As we come to the end of another year and another holiday season serving families throughout New Mexico, we at Alegria Family Services would like to express our gratitude to all our providers and families for your continued support. Although it is often said, we truly could not succeed without you.

2024 brings with it Alegria Family Services 20th year in business. That is 20 years of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years celebrations, and 20 years of sharing your joys and sorrows. We look forward to many more years serving you and our community.

Our entire staff wishes you and your family a wonderful and safe holiday season. Have a warm and love-filled Thanksgiving, a joyful Christmas, and no matter how you celebrate, may the year that will soon come, be better and brighter, than the year that will soon pass! All of us at AFS look forward to a continued and lasting relationship with all our providers and participants.

### The Last Word...

Training is a vital requirement for providing services on the Mi Via waiver. Please, if you believe your training is not in compliance, or if you receive notice from AFS concerning any training, contact Richard for instructions and help in completing this requirement. If you do not have a PC at home, Richard can schedule a time to you to come to the Alegria office to complete your training.

### Winter Solstice Thursday, December 21, 2023

*Since prehistory, the winter solstice has been a significant time of year in many cultures and has been marked by festivals and rituals. It marked the symbolic death and rebirth of the Sun; the gradual waning of daylight hours is reversed and life begins to grow again. For this reason, our modern calendar (based on the early Roman standard) begins the new year to coincide closely with the Winter Solstice. Cultures and religions worldwide continue to recognize the shortest day and longest night of the year with festivals and feasts to mark the end of one year and beginning of a new year.*

You can find past issues of our newsletter at  
<https://www.alegriafamily.com/news-letter-archive>

