



*Alegria is Celebrating  
20 years of service in  
New Mexico!*



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# Alegria News

## From The Mi Via Waiver Manager

We've officially made it to March! We at Alegria look forward to warmer days and all the joys that come with Spring. I would once again like to thank our EORs and providers for helping in the smooth transition to the new VPRs. You will find more detail concerning this here in this news letter, but suffice it to say we appreciate your understanding and quick response in adopting the new form.

I have received so much great feedback from our providers, including from our Spanish speaking Hispanic population, on just how easy it has been to transition to using the digital documentation on line. Many have gone from never using a personal computer at all, to doing all their notes online! This has been a great success and is largely due to the support they have received from our staff, and their own willingness to try new things. I would like to specifically acknowledge Richard Salazar for the patience and support he has shown all our providers during this process. He works diligently on both our digital process and our DDSD training requirements (often assisting EORs with training as well), somehow making what seems difficult and daunting, simple and easy.

DDSD training is another issue that we have seen a great deal of improvement in. This training can be time consuming and sometimes even stressful. I would like to remind all our providers that our staff are here to support them when they have training due. Alegria will make every accommodation to help you complete your training and stay in compliance.

I am looking forward to our 20th anniversary event and having the chance to reconnect with all the consultants, providers , and participants we have not seen in sometime due to Covid. I hope that you will all come out to enjoy some social time, have some refreshments, and maybe even win a prize or two! See you there and happy spring!



### The Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program begins February 15th.

The New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) will begin accepting applications for the 2024 Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) starting Thursday, Feb. 15.

The program, overseen by the state's Women, Infants and Children program (WIC), provides income-eligible seniors and elders a shopper card with a one-time annual benefit of up to \$100 to buy locally grown fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs and honey at participating farmers' markets and roadside stands statewide. Visit [SFMNP](https://shopper.soliportal.com) for a list of locations.

Funding for the program comes from Governor Michele Lujan Grisham's Food Initiative program and the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Native American elders (adults 55 and older) and Non-Native American senior adults (60 and older) who live in New Mexico can, for the first time apply online at <https://shopper.soliportal.com/auth/sign-up>. Paper applications are still available at any DOH public health office/WIC front counter, as well as local senior centers, AAA and AARP offices statewide.



**2024 is a Leap Year!**  
*"Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November,  
February has twenty-eight alone, All the rest have thirty-one;  
Excepting leap year, that 's the time  
When February's days are twenty-nine."*



## Another VPR?

### THE ALEGRIA MONTHLY GIVE-A-WAY.

Alegria Family Services continues to hold a monthly drawing each to thank our providers and EORs for all they do. We would like to congratulate our latest winners!

Our December winners were:

- Gloria Gutierrez—1st place
- Virginia Lujan—2nd place
- Romelia Marquez—3rd place

Due to an administrative error, we regret that no January drawing was held. Our sincere apologies to all.

Our February winners are:

- Lynda Laursen—1st place
- Ashley Carriaga—2nd place
- Tim Wester—3rd place

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

### What do you know about Leap Years...?

The Earth takes exactly 365 days, five hours, 48 minutes and 45 seconds to circle the sun. The occasional Feb. 29 ensures we don't lose six hours every year.

Leap year babies are called "leapers" or "leaplings." You'd get a special name, too, if you had to wait four years to celebrate your birthday.

Lots of people work for free on Feb. 29. Most employees who are paid fixed monthly incomes will work for free on Feb. 29 because their wages are likely not calculated to include the extra day.

The "Leap Year Capitals of the World?" If you want to celebrate this special day in a big way, head to Texas — or New Mexico. Anthony, Texas and Anthony, New Mexico both claim the title "Leap Year Capital," while holding lavish, multi-day celebrations each leap year.

Yes, it seems that DDS and PALCO, in their never ending quest to develop the perfect VPR (Vendor Payment Request), have once again issued a new version of the weekly VPR form. The new form will be given to Providers and EORs (Employee of Record) when they come to the Alegria Family Services office while engaged in their normal business activities, and AFS is also in the process of sending out email messages with the new VPR attached. Also, a small number of EORs will receive this new form via regular mail. EORs should destroy all previous revisions of the VPR and begin using the new VPR on and after March 1st.

If you are observant, you may notice that the VPR version number did not change with the publication of this new

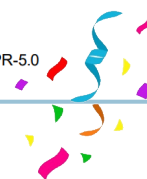
form. It still reflects version 5.0. This seems to be an oversight by DDS and PALCO, and it may cause some confusion when deciding which form to use. To clarify, the new form will have the addition of an "EOR Printed Name" line at the bottom of the form. After March 1st, this is the form to be used. If you have not received a VPR for your Mi Via waiver participant, please contact the Alegria Family Services office at 505-489-3034.

By signing this form, I attest that the vendor is qualified to receive and received consistent with the Approved Budget Period. I understand that I must retain a receipt for this form.

EOR Printed Name: EOR Printed Name Here

EOR Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Vendor Payment Request Form - VPR-5.0



### GET YOUR TAXES DONE FOR FREE

<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1706896132/apsedu/trhcnxqczwesbvfpv1e/TaxHelp.pdf>

Free in-person tax preparation is available at many Albuquerque City senior and community centers with an appointment. Call 311 to schedule.

If you make \$65,000 or less, you qualify for free in-person or online preparation with Tax Help New Mexico. Call 505-750-3885 or go to [TaxHelpNM.org](http://TaxHelpNM.org). Do your own taxes online for free at [MyFreeTaxes.com](http://MyFreeTaxes.com), [GetYourRefund.org](http://GetYourRefund.org) or [taxaide.aarpfoundation.org](http://taxaide.aarpfoundation.org).

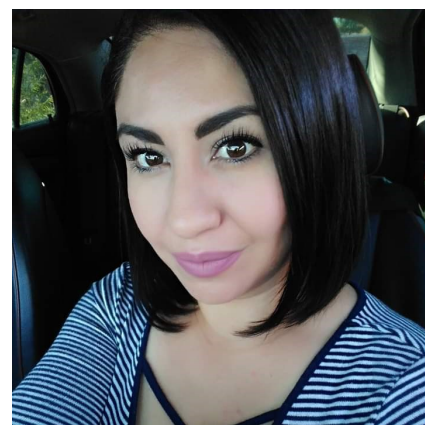
# TAX TIME



## Meet Anna Olivas

If you regularly come to the Alegria Family Services offices, you may have already been greeted by Anna Olivas. She started with AFS on February 1st, 2024 and now occupies the reception area desk. She is the first person many of you will see when entering the office and she will be frequently interacting with providers and families as part of her daily duties as the new Administrative Assistant.

Like most of the employees at AFS, Anna is bilingual, speaking both Spanish and English. Born in Chihuahua Mexico, Anna migrated to New Mexico as a small child, eventually making Albuquerque her home. Anna graduated from Brookline College in 2014 with an Associates Degree in Criminal Justice, and worked for the state of New Mexico as a Customer Services Rep at the Unemployment Department for several years. The skills she has picked up in these past endeavors have prepared her well for working with Alegria. Anna is will spoken, hard working, and organized. She is a fast learner, quickly grasping the complexities of the Mi Via waiver and her willingness to help has made her a valuable asset to our offices. Take a moment to say hello to Anna during your next visit to our office. You'll be glad you did!



## A Small Change in AFS Policy.

For some time now AFS has excepted Navigation notes in a variety of different formats to make it easy for providers to submit there notes each week. There are several digital options and some even walk there notes into the office each week.

Some providers have chosen to take a photo of their hand written notes and submit them via text message or email. Unfortunately, quite often this has resulted in unreadable notes and a delay in payment. Lighting, camera angle, the quality of the camera, and even hand writing can distort the image and make it unusable. This is simply inefficient and unsuitable. We would like to offer some other options for consideration.

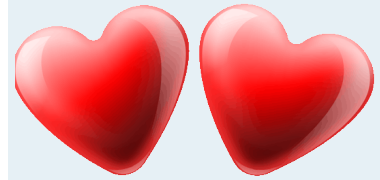
The most efficient way to submit notes would be to use the online Alegria Digital Documentation system. We have been successfully encouraging our navigation providers to use this system for some time now and it works quite well. If you would like to begin using the online system, please contact Richard at our office and he will set you up with login instructions and assistance

in learning the system.

We also offer Acrobat pdf documents that can be typed directly into and submitted via email each week. Many providers prefer this method and it has been in use for a few years without issues. Please contact Annette Martinez or Richard if you would like to begin using this approach.

If using a computer for your notes is not appealing, you can try a number of different scanning apps for the phone that work much better than using just the camera for a photograph. Apps like Adobe Scan, Tiny Scanner, Clear Scan and Genius Scan (to name but a few) are all free pdf scanners for your phone that automatically line up your documents, focus and adjust aspects of the document, and make a clear and usable image that can be texted to AFS each week.

Please try one of the options listed when submitting your weekly Navigation notes to ensure timely processing of your payments.



**Valentine's Day is popular in** the United States as well as in Britain, Canada, and Australia, and it is also celebrated in other countries, including Argentina, France, Mexico, and South Korea.

**Although most Muslim countries** forbid the celebration of Valentine's day, the practice did spread to Turkey almost 20 years ago, where it is called "Darlings Day" or "Lovers Day". All the traditions of gift giving and love are practiced on February 14.

**In Colombia and Bolivia, Valentine's** Day is celebrated in September instead of February. Traditions of gift giving and festivities are similar to other countries, however, Colombia celebrates on September 20 and Bolivia celebrates the following day on September 21.

### Alegria Federal Bank Holiday Office Closures

As most of us know, Alegria has always recognized certain holidays, Christmas and New Years Day for example, by closing its offices for those days. Since moving into our newer office where the Bank of Albuquerque also holds their offices, we have encountered a new issue concerning holidays—Bank Holidays. Banks traditionally close there doors during all federal holidays, leaving the security doors and elevators at 2500 Louisiana Blvd. electronically locked. This has caused no small amount of interruption and inconvenience to our business and our providers. Due to this issue, AFS will be closing our offices in recognition of all Federal Bank Holidays effective January 1st, 2024.

If you typically drop off your time-sheets and paperwork by hand to our offices, please plan accordingly and schedule your visit's around these holidays.

## Alegria is Celebrating its 20th Year Serving New Mexico!

You may have already heard the **BIG NEWS!** Alegria is celebrating its 20th year serving waiver participants and their families in New Mexico. Over the coming months we will be acknowledging some of the providers and participants that have been with us since our first years in business, as well as all the remarkable people that helped make Alegria Family Services great.

Come out and join us for our Open House, located at our office, on **April 18th and 19th from 11:00 am to 3:00pm.** We will be having refreshments and prizes, and it is open to all Consultants, Providers, EORs, and Waiver Participants associated with AFS. Our friendly and knowledgeable staff will be on hand to answer questions and listen to your feedback on how Alegria can better serve your needs. If you have family or friends that may have questions on how Alegria Family Services might help them, please feel free to bring them along. Alegria is here to help!

"Alegria Family Services began serving families back in 2005, and after more than 20 years in New Mexico we have remained true to our beliefs, ideals and ethical standards. Alegria Family Services knows that each person is inherently valuable and that each person has dignity and worth." We at AFS have used these words to describe our organization for many years, and they will always hold true to us. We hope you will come and help us celebrate this momentous occasion.

It is often said that without you, our company could not exists. With you, we will be here for many more years to come.

**Congratulations Alegria Family Services!**

| 2024 Holiday Schedule  |                                      |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Monday, January 1      | New Year's Day                       |
| Monday, January 15     | Birthday of MLK, Jr.                 |
| Monday, February 19    | President's Day                      |
| Monday, May 27         | Memorial Day                         |
| Wednesday, June 19     | Juneteenth National Independence Day |
| Thursday, July 4       | Independence Day                     |
| Monday, September 2    | Labor Day                            |
| Monday, October 14     | Columbus Day                         |
| Monday, November 11    | Veterans Day                         |
| Thursday, November 28  | Thanksgiving Day                     |
| Wednesday, December 25 | Christmas Day                        |

## March Celebrates Two Colorful Holidays

Everyone in America knows that **March 17th is St. Patrick's Day** and is the time for "the wearing of the green"! But did you know that

March celebrates an even more colorful holiday, **Holi – The Festival Of Colors**. Holi is a popular and significant Hindu festival celebrated as the Festival of Colors, Love, and Spring. The Hindu holiday will be celebrated this year on **March 25**, and will be filled with color and fun. The day commemorates the triumph of good over evil, and people throw colored powder and water on each other during music filled celebrations.



## HOUSE BILL 395 and the collection of Demographic Data

During the first session of the 2023 New Mexico legislative session, HOUSE BILL 395 was introduced and passed. This bill requires the collection of demographic data/information for "DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES DIRECT SUPPORT PROVIDER AGENCY EMPLOYEES". As defined in the bill, we as an agency **must** collect this information and submit it to DDSD no later than April 1st of each year, beginning in 2024. In keeping with this directive, Alegria Family Services has developed a quick survey for all IHLS and Navigation providers to complete. This was announced via a mass email message to all providers the first week of February, shortly after we at AFS receive the news.

Many of our providers have been quick to respond and, at the time of this writing, over 50% have completed the Demographic Survey. We will be reaching out to the remaining providers via phone and direct contact over the next few weeks to get the remaining data collected.

It is important to stress that the data collected in this survey is submitted anonymously and without any identifying information. The New Mexico state legislature mandated this process to all agencies and we will do our best to comply. If you have not already done so, you can still access the brief online survey at <https://nmdd.alegriadigdoc.com/alegia/providerUpdateSelect.asp>

If you would like more information, the complete house bill 395 can be found at the link above, or you can contact our office during normal business hours at 505-489-3034.



### Are your DDSD training requirements current?

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. Email [Richard@alegrafamily.com](mailto:Richard@alegrafamily.com)

## March is Woman's History Month

Women's History Month is an annual observance in March to recognize the accomplishments, contributions, and historical significance of women. This month-long celebration is an opportunity to highlight the achievements of women across various fields, from science and politics to arts and business, and to inspire future generations. Women's History Month also encourages reflection on the progress made in gender equality while acknowledging the ongoing challenges women face worldwide.

Coinciding with International Women's Day, observed on March 8th, the National Women's History Project successfully lobbied Congress in 1987 to designate all of March as National Women's History Month. Since then, it has become an annual observance in the United States and globally. Women's History Month 2024 theme is "Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion."

## Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month 2024

Every March, the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) and its partners collaborate to lead Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month (DDAM). The annual campaign highlights how people with and without disabilities come together to form strong communities. DDAM raises awareness of the inclusion and contributions of people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life and serves as a time to explore the work still needed to remove barriers.

NACDD's 2024 theme, **A World of Opportunities**, focuses on people working together to remove obstacles to building communities where everyone can do well and succeed. The campaign hopes to showcase the excellent work that is being done to celebrate and improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities. If you would like to contribute ideas, resources, materials, or just want more information, you can contact the NACDD at: <https://nacdd.org/>.



### The Last Word...

Do you enjoy reading the AFS newsletter? Do you have comments, suggestions, or ideas that might make it better? Please send your comments to [info@alegriafamily.com](mailto:info@alegriafamily.com). We at AFS look forward to hearing from you.



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