



Alegria News

From the CEO

It's beginning to feel like summer. We here at Alegria wish you and your family a safe and enjoyable summer.

We know you guys had to adjust to quite a few changes coming from DDSD the first part of this year. We are happy to report no new changes for the start of the second half of this year.

We continue our monthly raffle and the winners are announced here.

We do expect audits from DDSD, so we ask you that you please be accurate and timely with your required classes and with you daily documentation. We are graded on these issues by DDSD.

As always, we thank you for being with us on this Mi Via journey. If you have any issues concerning the Waiver, please don't hesitate to call or email us. We will do our best to assist you.

Other than that, we are very happy to report that it's *steady as she goes* for the good ship Alegria, with no expected changes any time soon.

Larry

April 22 is Earth Day!



Be a part of the Mi Via Advisory Committee!

The Mi Via Advisory Committee (MVAC) is now accepting nominations for membership. If you are interested, please email: Elaine.Hill@doh.nm.gov for a nomination form. This is a wonderful opportunity to have your voice heard, advocate for change and improvements to the Mi Via Waiver and to work together in making important decisions that can impact your services and supports. The MVAC meets every 4 months for about 3 hours. The next MVAC is scheduled for Thursday, July 27, 2023 at 12:30 PM. You do not need to be a member to attend. If you would like to know more about MVAC, or simply read the minutes of the last meeting, visit <https://www.nmhealth.org/about/ddsd/coco/acq/mvac/>

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What's good about April?

This month was named for the Greek goddess of beauty and love, Aphrodite. More artworks about Aphrodite survive than any other classic mythology figure. She can be found in numerous works of art, painting, and sculptures, as well as literary works. The Venus de Milo and the Aphrodite de Knidos are some of the most famous.

April 1 is *April Fools Day*, when children and grown-ups play jokes on one another. This silly day is celebrated in 11 counties around the world, and growing.

April 2 is *World Autism Awareness Day* and kicks off World Autism Month! For information on symptoms, diagnostic screening, treatment information, and other resources, go to the CDC's Autism information page at <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism>

April 9 is *Easter Sunday*. Easter is almost always in April, and, with it comes other Christian celebrations such as Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday.

April 5 is the first day of the *Jewish holiday of Passover*. It begins at sundown on Wednesday, April 5th and ends the evening of Thursday, April 13th .

April 22 is *Earth Day* which honors the achievements of the environmental movement and raises awareness of the need to protect Earth's natural resources for future generations. The first Earth Day was held April 22, 1970 .



Meet Damaris Mestas

As Alegria Family Services grows, so does our staff. We are happy to introduce Damaris Mestas, who joined our staff on May 1st as our new office assistant. Damaris is an Albuquerque native and understands the diverse and culturally rich population that makes up our great state.

She is bilingual, speaking both Spanish and English, and is outgoing and easy to talk to. Damaris is currently attending the University of New Mexico where she is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Dental Hygiene, eventually continuing on to a Masters Degree. Working and learning in this type of field has given Damaris great communication skills, as well as the ability to put people at ease, making even stressful situations feel controlled and easy.

The rigors and demands of UNM have given her

the organizational skills needed to monitor accounting payroll reports, assists other Mi Via staff with day to day client, provider, and accounting issues, request new budgets from our consultants and many other duties associated with the complexities of the Mi Via Waiver program.

In between working at Alegria and attending UNM, Damaris somehow finds time to care for her dog, a poodle named Bruno, go to the gym regularly, travel, read and write for pleasure, and spend time with friends and family.

Damaris has proven herself to be a fast learner, quickly grasping an understanding of all the technical aspects that are unique to providing waiver services, making her a welcome addition to the Alegria Family Services family.

THE ALEGRIA MONTHLY GIVE-A-WAY.

As you know, each and every month during 2023 AFS will hold a drawing and give our providers and EORs the opportunity to sign up to win fun and useful prizes. Complete details can be found at both the Spanish and English versions of our AlegriaFamily.com website.

In March AFS gave away three Home Dept. gift cards. Our winners:
Shirley Montoya- 1st place
Vicky Alvidrez—2nd place
Cecilia Velarde—3rd place

In April we gave away three AMC Movie Theater gift cards. Our winners were:
Krissy Romero —1st place
Leeandra Vigil—2nd Place
Unglinda Beliditto—3rd Place

With costs of food continuing to soar, AFS gave away 2 gift certificates to Smiths grocery stores around the state. Our winners were:
Veronica Mestas —1st place
Angelique Baca —2nd Place
Dora Tarango —3rd Place

Our final drawing this quarter will be held towards the end of June so check out our website at alegriafamily.com for full details.

“Renew NM: It’s time to Renew NM”

On April 1st 2023 the federal government ended the Medicaid continuous coverage requirement that was established during the COVID-19 pandemic, the end of this flexibility means all 978,207 New Mexicans covered by Medicaid will have to renew their coverage when their renewal applications are due. HSD customers will receive their renewal application in a turquoise envelope by mail when it is time for them to renew. To reach all Medicaid customers across the state, HSD is conducting a massive statewide public awareness and multimedia, multilingual campaign called “Renew NM: It’s time to Renew NM,” which will run for the next 12 months (the time granted by the federal government to process all Medicaid renewals). The Renew NM webpage can be found at <https://renew.hsd.nm.gov/> with links to both English and Spanish instructional videos.

If you or someone you know loses their Medicaid coverage go to the official New Mexico health care marketplace at BeWellnm.com. You can also reach them by phone at 1-833-862-3935. The BeWellnm office will be hosting a FREE, in-person event June 24th where you can get your questions answered. Join them for games, prizes, and access to all the qualified health plans on the marketplace. This is insurance you can rely on from names you trust, Presbyterian, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Molina and others!

“We encourage all New Mexicans who will be losing their Medicaid coverage to contact us to see if they qualify for low-cost or no-cost health insurance because being insured can save them thousands of dollars in the event of an emergency or serious diagnosis,” said Bruce Gilbert, CEO for beWellnm. “In fact, beWellnm is so committed to improving the health of New Mexicans, individuals who are no longer eligible for Medicaid may qualify to have their first month’s premium paid by us. That means they would owe nothing for the first month — residents should act quickly though to ensure there is not a gap in their coverage.”



MEMORIAL DAY

Monday, May 29, 2023

Memorial Day is a federal holiday in the United States for honoring and mourning the U.S. military personnel who have died while serving in the United States armed forces. It is observed on the last Monday of May. It has been observed in the US for 155 years.

Understanding the New Vendor Payment Request Forms.

There have been many new changes occurring on the Mi Via waiver for the last few months, each one causing potential confusion for providers, EORs and even Consultants and Vendors. One such change is the new Vendor Payment Request Forms (VPRs). The new version 4 was announced on April 24, 2023 and was required to be in place by May 1, 2023, only one week later.

The most striking change was the inclusion of a second page for the signature, while the majority of the relevant information concerning the payment request was kept on the first page. This was the cause of immediate concern for our EORs and Providers and we at Alegria wish to thank all of you for reaching out to your consultants and to our organization with your questions and concerns. This flow of information allowed for a much smoother transition.

Due to the rush to implement this new form, a few of the key elements may not have been

explained as clearly as needed, so we would like to provide some clarification now.

1. The EOR must submit each VPR by Monday of each week. They must be signed by the EOR and submitted **one per week**.
2. Each VPR must be dated for the Monday they are being submitted to AFS for payment. Even if you fill out your VPRs on a weekend day for your own convenience, make sure it is dated with Monday's date. We cannot except mis-dated documents.
3. VPRs must be submitted to Alegria no later than Monday at 12:00 PM (noon). Late documents may result in a disruption of payment.

Your efforts to work within these guidelines will be greatly appreciated, and make the process work more efficiently.

“May” is likely named after the Roman goddess Maia, who oversaw the growth of plants.



Mi Via Provider Training Update

If you read our last quarterly newsletter, you will recall that DDS had temporarily halted training requirements for Consultants, Employer of Record, Direct Support Professionals, In-home Living Supports and others working on the Mi Via waiver program. During this time, we required only ANE (Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation).

In mid April we were informed that DDS had completed their review and new training requirements were established. Mi Via providers, including navigation providers fall under this policy. According to the revised policy, “All staff (Consultants/Employer of Records/Direct Support Professionals) are required to take the following trainings to work with any Mi Via participant”:

1. Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation
2. Introduction to Waivers
3. Keys to Health
4. Intro to Person Centered Planning

Of course the good news is that this is fewer trainings than was previously required, but we have a limited time to complete all provider

trainings and a DDS audit may be imminent. A DDS audit will look at completed trainings by providers, and if found to be out of compliance, reimbursement of paid funds may be required.

You will, or may have already received emails from Richard with instructions for completing your required trainings. Please be on the lookout for these messages, and follow the instructions for completing your training. For a complete list of required trainings, along with a brief description and link to each training, please visit our website at www.alegriafamily.com and choose the Employment/Training menu item.

The complete training requirements policy can be found at <https://www.nmhealth.org/publication/view/policy/3387/>.

Please remember that ANE continues to be **required annually to provide any service on the Mi Via waiver**, so if it has been longer than one year since taking ANE, please contact Richard or visit our website for recertification.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month.

Mental Health Awareness Month has been observed in May in the United States since 1949. The month is observed with media, local events, and film screenings designed to raise awareness and educate the public about mental illnesses. MHA month was started in 1949 by the Mental Health America (MHA) organization (then known as the National Association for Mental Health). During this month, consider the following:

- 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. experience mental illness each year, and less than half of them receive treatment.
- A major factor in treatment discrepancies is that 55% of U.S. counties do not have a single practicing psychiatrist.
- Mental illnesses can affect people of any age, race, religion, or income. A mental illness is a medical condition that disrupts a person's thinking, feeling, mood, and ability to relate to others and daily functioning.
- Members of LGBTQ+ community are almost 3 times more likely to experience a mental health condition such as major depression or generalized anxiety disorder.
- Common signs of mental health issues include: extreme mood swings, changes in eating habits, excessive worrying or fear, problems concentrating, and avoiding friends or social activities.

This year the Mental Health Month theme is “Look Around, Look Within”. Many factors come into play when it comes to mental health. Take some time to look around and make note of your surroundings and look within to see how they might be affecting you.

Mental Health America offers a free Mental Health Month outreach toolkit for download at <https://mhanational.org/mental-health-month/toolkit> along with several free online screenings, and access to many helpful resources. Mental health conditions are real, and treatable.

New Mexico Adaptive Programs (part 3 in series)

Cloud Dancers Therapeutic Horsemanship Program

A recreational horsemanship program that offers instruction in general horsemanship, riding and vaulting. Our goal is to provide individuals with an opportunity for a unique therapeutic, recreational experience in a fun, safe environment. Ages 5 through adulthood – individualized lessons to meet needs.

www.cloudancersthp.org



Easter Seals Camp New Mexico

Is an over-night, week-long summer camp for youth and adults with disabilities. Camp is designed to be barrier-free and accessible to everyone, allowing campers to discover and explore their interests, values and talents through a variety of fun, traditional summer camp activities. Camp is offered for individuals of all types and levels of ability ages 8 +, Contact camp director **Bill Fales** for camp dates @ 641-831-9326.

Expressions of Joy

Is a non-profit organization that provides the opportunity for adults, ages 17 & up, with developmental disabilities and/or other special needs to participate in choral music. Rehearsals are Tuesdays at 7:00pm, except holidays at Asbury United Methodist Church in Albuquerque. Expressions of Joy – A Community Through Music (abqjoy.org)

“
IN EARLY JUNE THE WORLD
OF LEAF AND BLADE AND
FLOWERS EXPLODES, AND
EVERY SUNSET IS DIFFERENT.
”

– JOHN STEINBECK

New Changes in Mi Via

As we all know, many new changes are being implemented by DDSD to insure the safety and overall security for all individuals who participate on the waiver programs. Most recently the focus of these changes have been on ANE (Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation). We realize that DDSD changes are often abrupt and implementation may happen quickly. We at Alegria strive to keep you informed, and provide for easy transition to any new requirement as they arise.

One such change has been the addition of Face-to-Face visits. If you are a provider you likely have already received a visit, but this is an ongoing program that will continue for the foreseeable future. Consultants are doing monthly face-to-face visits with participants, and will continue to do so each month according to the Mi Via website. Staff from DDSD have also been making home visits with Mi Via participants and their families, however it is unclear how long this may continue.

An additional change is the distribution of the ANE brochure. This brochure outlines the responsibilities of providers to report all ANE violations along with contact information for reporting. As an agency, Alegria is required to ensure each provider has received a copy of this brochure, and returned a signed receipt for our records. If you have not received your copy, or you forgot to send in your receipt, please contact the AFS office.

In New Mexico, the law requires you to report abuse ANY TIME you suspect or know about any kind of abuse. More importantly, we must always strive to do the right thing, so if you see something, say something. If you are not sure where to report abuse call:

The Division of Health Improvement (DHI): 800-445-6242

Adult Protective Services: 866-654-3219

Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) 800-797-3260

One final change. Providers are now required to renew the Caregivers Criminal History Screening every 3 years. Alegria staff will be reaching out to you for a renewal screening when you are due.

Tax rebate checks to be sent on June 16

Tax rebate checks approved in the 2023 legislative session will begin to hit bank accounts on June 16, 2023. The state Taxation and Revenue Department will send \$500 rebate checks to single filers and \$1000 rebate checks to couples filing jointly. There is no application to receive the rebates if you filed your 2021 tax return. NM Residents who received their 2021 refund by direct deposit will get their rebate deposited directly into the bank account listed on their 2021 tax return. All others will receive rebates by check.



June 2 is National Gun Violence Awareness Day! Thousands of Americans will wear orange on this day to remember the communities shattered and the lives lost to gun violence.

June 19 is Juneteenth. Juneteenth is a federal holiday in the United States commemorating the emancipation of enslaved African Americans.

Thanks for Reading!

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

