



State of New Mexico
House of Representatives
Santa Fe

REBECCA L. DOW

R - Grant, Hidalgo & Sierra
District 38

806 Sierra Vista
Truth or Consequences, NM 87901
Cell Phone: (575) 571-1056
E-mail: rebecca.dow@nmlegis.gov

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COMMITTEES:
Commerce & Economic Development
Education

The Honorable Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor, State of New Mexico
490 Old Santa Fe Trail, Room 400
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Dear Governor:

I am writing to request immediate clarification on the guidance your administration has enacted regarding foster parents and their required visitation activities. CYFD staff have been instructed to stay away from the office and public places in order to limit exposure to other people due to the COVID-19 virus. Yet CYFD has informed foster families that they must move forward with scheduled family visits in-person. Further, due to the closure of CYFD facilities, foster parents are being told to conduct these visitations with biological families in public places due to lack of available facilities. Reports suggest field workers telling foster families to host visits in public places, like "UrbanAir," "Sonic," "the mall," and "parks or museums like Explora."

While I understand your administration's desire to protect the wellbeing of CYFD employees by asking them to work at home, the directive of in-person visitations in public places seems completely contradictory to the ongoing advice to all citizens to avoid public gatherings, reduce exposure, and limit social gatherings. If your administration's goal is to limit the spread of COVID-19 by encouraging the public to "desocialize", why are you mandating that foster families host in-person visits?

Since CYFD officials will not be able to supervise all of these visitations, we are shifting an incredible burden to foster families by requiring them to arrange a meeting with biological families without the traditional protections provided by CYFD staff. I believe this new directive places foster families in a potential negative situation; either take the children in their care to public places, which could expose them to the virus, or risk potential incidents in a less public location where CYFD staff is not present.

These are difficult times. The decisions necessary to address this public health crisis are complex and ever changing. However, I encourage your Administration to review every option available in this unique case and reconsider your decision to restrict CYFD's involvement in planned visitations. Many states are opting to conduct visits through technology. I encourage New Mexico to do the same.

Thank you for your immediate consideration of this important matter. I stand ready to assist the State of New Mexico in effectively stopping the spread of COVID-19 and ensuring the safety of our citizens.

Respectfully yours,

Rebecca Dow