



The Guardian

The Newsletter of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services

www.nmdvs.org

1-(866) 433-8387 toll-free

December, 2020



Season's Greetings

For New Mexico's veterans and their families, the holiday season is traditionally a time for us to gather and spend time with family and loved ones. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has made this year's festive season unlike any other. While we may not be able to engage in our family traditions, let's make new ones that will be just as lasting in the years to come.

Sadly, the pandemic has placed restrictions on travel and visiting our loved ones in nursing home facilities. To help bring some cheer to the residents of New Mexico Veterans Home, we have launched **Operation Holiday Cheer!** You can join us by sending holiday and thank you cards to the residents and staff. A

flyer is enclosed with the details, and please follow the safety precautions.

We know this time of year can be challenging for some veterans and their families with triggers of loneliness and hopelessness. *We want you to know that you are not alone and have included some resources for your wellbeing.*

Please visit our website soon and take a survey related to the pandemic. We want to know how the virus has impacted you and your family. This quick survey will help us to serve you better.

In closing, DVS would like to encourage each of you to stay strong. Here's to a happier and more prosperous 2021.

Happy Holidays,

Sonya L. Smith

DVS Cabinet Secretary-Designate

DVS Urges Veterans At Risk For Suicide To Seek Help This Holiday Season



With the 2020 holiday season well underway, the focus for most veterans—and most Americans—is on family, friends, and times spent together amid holiday cheer.

But for many, the holidays can trigger feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, and loneliness. This year, the nine-month-long COVID-19 pandemic has also created financial hardships for many Americans, adding another layer of isolationism.

All of this may be creating tremendous feelings of despair—to the point where someone may be contemplating taking their own life

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) is asking veterans, their families, and their friends to be aware of signs that may suggest someone may be having suicidal thoughts. Things like isolating, substance abuse, self-harming, overwhelming negative self-view, giving away possessions, not eating—these are all signs that a person may be suffering mentally or emotionally, and may be on the path towards taking their own life.

DVS is asking that if you are feeling any of the above emotions, or know someone who is, *please take immediate action*. There are four resources available for someone to contact in order to get immediate help.

Veterans Crisis Phone Line

1-(800) 273-8255
-press “1”

New Mexico Crisis and Access Line

1-(855)-NMCRISIS (662-7474)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-(800) 273-8255

Crisis Text Line

Text HOME to 741-741

Suicide prevention is, in reality, a year-round endeavor, and that the above resources are available for immediate help 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

There is also year-round mental and behavioral health counseling available from the New Mexico VA Health Care System’s four Vet Centers in New Mexico.

(continued)

Vet Centers are VA-managed community-based counseling centers that provide a wide range of social and psychological services--including professional readjustment counseling to eligible veterans, active duty service members, including National Guard and Reserve components, and their families.

Farmington
(505) 327-9684

Santa Fe
(505) 988-6562

Albuquerque
(505) 346-6562

Las Cruces
(575) 523-9826

Join DVS for a Facebook Live Discussion on Suicide Prevention

On Friday, December 18 at 10am, the DVS Healthcare Division is hosting a Facebook Live Suicide Prevention Awareness discussion with DVS Healthcare Division Director Jemia Warner and New Mexico VA Health Care System (NMVAHCS) Suicide Prevention Case Manager Christina Camacho. This discussion can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/nmdvshealthcare2015>

The focus will be on an overview of the services provided through the NMVAHCS Suicide Prevention program, general information on suicide, tips for suicide prevention support systems, and information about additional local and national resources. For those unable to log on, a video will be posted on the DVS Facebook page shortly after the conclusion of the discussion.

"DVS wants veterans, their families, and their friends to know that they do not have to face a suicide crisis by themselves," said DVS Secretary-Designate Sonya L. Smith. "No situation should warrant the taking of a life. There is help available for whatever it is that's troubling a person. All it takes is one phone call to find a solution."

DVS Launches *Operation Holiday Cheer* to Send Holiday Cards to the State Veterans Home

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) is asking New Mexicans to help it launch *Operation Holiday Cheer* to bring season's greetings to residents and staff of the New Mexico State Veterans Home in Truth or Consequences.

To take part in this first-ever operation, DVS is asking New Mexicans to send holiday cards to the home, which will be evenly distributed among residents and staff. The cards need only be addressed with "Dear Veteran," and contain a short message of appreciation for the military service of the veteran. Cards for staff can be addressed, "Frontline Hero", or another term of endearment, along with a brief message of appreciation for providing care for the home's residents.

"Our agency is hoping the veterans home will be flooded with holiday and thank you cards for residents and its staff," said DVS Secretary-Designate Sonya L. Smith. "Due to the pandemic, there are visitation restrictions, so we feel *Operation Holiday Cheer* would be a great way of letting them know there is someone out there who appreciates what they've done for our country or are doing for the home's residents--and that someone is thinking of them this holiday season."



Sponsored by the New Mexico Department of Veterans' Services

Please help us send ***Holiday Cheer*** by mailing cards to residents and staff of the
New Mexico State Veterans Home.

***Mail Cards to:**
The New Mexico State Veterans Home
Attn: Operation Holiday Cheer
992 South Broadway
Truth of Consequences, NM 87901



*The New Mexico Departments of Veterans' Services and Aging & Long Term Services asks that you observe the following COVID-19 safety precautions when mailing cards or letters:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water, or use hand sanitizer, before writing on the card and inserting it in the envelope
- Do not lick the envelope to seal it. Use a paper towel or cloth moistened with water.

Emergency Relief Funds Available for Veteran-Owned Businesses and Service Organizations



December 18 is the deadline to apply for federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act relief grants for small businesses and nonprofit organizations suffering financial hardships by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The grant application window closes at noon.

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and the Legislature directed \$100 million of CARES Act stimulus funds to the NMFA at a November 24 special legislative session. Funds must be distributed by December 28.

The grants provide up to \$50,000 for New Mexico small businesses with 100 or fewer employees. The New Mexico Finance Authority (NMFA) will administer this grant program. Hospitality and leisure businesses will be prioritized, but all affected small businesses are encouraged to apply. Non-profit agencies that focus on assisting military veterans and active-duty personnel are also eligible. Eligible non-profit organizations must be registered as a 501(c)(3), 501(c)(6), or 501(c)(8), or as veterans' organizations described in Section 501(c) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and subject to the provisions of the Nonprofit Corporation Act. For more information, go to www.nmfinance.com/cares-continuity-grants/.

Veteran-owned businesses can obtain additional assistance by contacting DVS Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) Director Rich Coffel at (505) 220-9932 or richardL.coffel@state.nm.us.

Veterans or their eligible dependents needing help with VA or state veterans benefits can contact DVS at (505) 383-2400 or nmdvs.info@state.nm.us.

Additional Financial Assistance

\$194 million - Additional Unemployment Benefits

A \$1,200 benefit is available to New Mexicans who are currently on and determined eligible under an unemployment benefits program, who have recently exhausted unemployment benefits since September 12, or who will enroll in an unemployment program in the coming week. The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions will administer this funding. *Please visit www.dws.state.nm.us or contact DWS at nmdws.communication@state.nm.us for more information.*

\$5 million - Cash Assistance

Cash assistance to assist low-income residents up to \$750 per household that did not receive a federal government stimulus payment; this may include people without a social security number and low-income individuals who didn't have to file taxes and therefore were unidentifiable by the IRS for stimulus checks. New Mexico Human Services Department will administer this funding. www.hsd.state.nm.us for more information.

\$15 million - Emergency Housing Assistance

Additional aid for emergency housing support as well as assistance for the homeless. The New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority will administer this funding. Contact: (800) 444-6880 or info@housingnm.org

\$5 million - Emergency Food Support

Additional funding for emergency food bank services throughout the state to distribute food to New Mexicans in need. New Mexico Human Services Department will administer this funding. *Please visit www.hsd.state.nm.us for more information.*

DVS to Continue Offering Remote/Virtual Assistance

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, DVS will continue assisting veterans and their eligible dependents by phone, email, or video conferencing. DVS VSO's are available from 8am-5pm Monday through Friday to help with filing for or updating VA or state veterans benefits. Assistance is provided on a first-call/contact, first-served basis using the contact information below. ***Please note that veterans can contact any VSO—regardless of a veteran's or VSO's location.*** In-office assistance will resume once the COVID-19 threat has diminished as determined by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and state health experts.

Alamogordo (VSO: Larry Weatherwax)

(575) 491-3127

larry.weatherwax@state.nm.us

Albuquerque (4)

Karen Abeyta

(505) 429-0856

karen.abeyta@state.nm.us

Gordon Schei

(505) 362-9061

Gordon.schei@state.nm.us

Victoria Bader

(505) 225-5253

Victoria.bader@state.nm.us

Johnny Martinez

(505) 274-3609

JohnW.martinez2@state.nm.us

Carlsbad (Dagmar Youngberg)

(575) 988-5900

Dagmar.youngberg@state.nm.us

Clovis (Matt Barela)

(575) 825-9602

Matthew.barela@state.nm.us

Farmington (Beverly Charley)

(505) 327-2861

Beverly.charley@state.nm.us

Gallup (Durrell Tsosie)

(505) 218-0348

Durrell.Tsosie@state.nm.us

Hobbs (Dalton Boyd)

(575) 241-0714

Dalton.boyd2@state.nm.us

Las Cruces (3)

Rosa Bycenski

(505) 216-8782

Rosa.bycenski@state.nm.us

Craig Chumley

(505) 870-1349

Craig.chumley@state.nm.us

George Vargas

(575) 520-263

George.vargas@state.nm.us

Las Vegas, NM (2)

Martín Márquez

(505) 520-5079

MartinM.marquez@state.nm.us

Arturo Marlow

(505) 331-8838

Arturo.marlow@state.nm.us

Roswell (Danielle Thompson)

(575) 416-2284

danielle.thompson@state.nm.us

Santa Fe (Dustin Newsom)

(505) 221-7190

dustin.newsom@state.nm.us

Ft. Stanton, Gallup, and Angel Fire State Veterans Cemeteries; Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire

Interments and the rendering of military funeral honors are also taking place at the DVS-managed Ft. Stanton, Gallup, and Angel Fire State Veterans Cemeteries. Per state COVID-19 public health orders, interment services at these cemeteries are limited to five people. Attendees are required to wear masks and observe six-foot social distancing spacing. Interments will be performed by DVS staff wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). Once normal operations resume, families can schedule full-service interments by contacting the following DVS cemetery supervisors:

Gallup

Gilbert Lopez
(505) 905-9771
gilbert.lopez@state.nm.us

Ft. Stanton

David Flores
(505) 383-4832
david.flores@state.nm.us

Angel Fire

Randy Myklebust
(505) 225-4341
randal.myklebust@state.nm.us

The memorial chapel at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire remains open to the public. Masks are required, and social distancing spacing will be monitored by PPE-wearing DVS staff.

DVS-Managed State Approving Agency Receives Highest Possible Rating

The New Mexico State Approving Agency (SAA), which is managed by DVS, received the highest rating possible of “satisfactory” by a VA Joint Peer Review Board for fiscal year 2020.

Every state has an SAA to ensure the quality and integrity of post-secondary education, licensure and vocational training programs for use by a veteran’s GI Bill® education benefit. SAA’s spend the majority of the year conducting on-site and administrative inspections of these institutions to ensure that strict VA standards are met regarding curriculum, training programs, and the prevention of fraud, waste, and abuse of the GI Bill®.

In its final overall grading of New Mexico’s SAA, the review board praised New Mexico’s SAA for not only exceeding all benchmarks to ensure the integrity of each institution, but also for being able to accomplish this amid the COVID-19 pandemic. A few states did not receive the “satisfactory” rating as they were unable to work around the closures and restrictions posed by school or institution shut-downs—and the inability for any SAA’s to properly carry out their task of conducting typical on-site compliance surveys.

DVS SAA Bureau Chief Marilyn “Mandy” Dykman acknowledged the year has been difficult for her and SAA Program Consultant Kathy Snyder, who between them processed more than 3,100 programs from colleges, universities, federal On-the-Job Training (OJT) programs, flight schools, and vocational apprenticeship programs.

“This was unlike any other year for us here at the SAA,” said Ms. Dykman, who is a retired U.S. Coast Guard Lieutenant Commander and helicopter pilot. “But we have a great I-T and administrative support staff here at DVS which provided us everything we needed to carry out our mission. We couldn’t have done this without them.”

GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at www.benefits.va.gov/gibill.



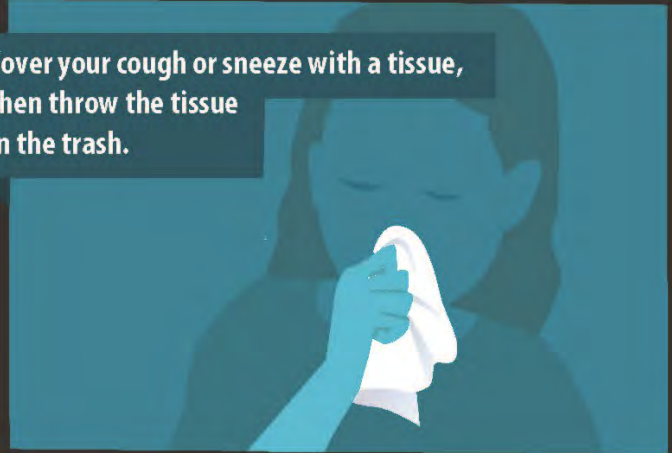
STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

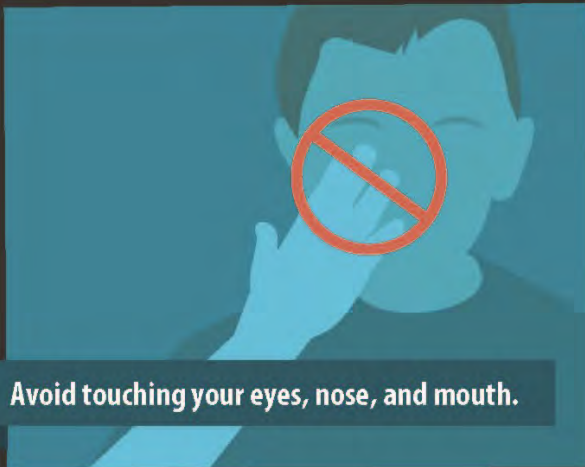
Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



NEW MEXICO
DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH

For more information: cv.nmhealth.org

Social Security Administration Offering Telephone Assistance at all 11 Statewide Offices

The United States Social Security Administration (SSA) wants veterans to know that during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is also open for business. Though local offices nationwide are not open for in-service walk-in visitors, the SSA is also assisting with social security benefits and other vital services via phone or email.

New Mexicans needing assistance can call any of the 11 SSA offices in New Mexico below:

Albuquerque	1-(800) 772-1213
Carlsbad	1-(800) 772-1213
Clovis	1-(866) 931-9945
Farmington	1-(866) 931-7656
Gallup	1-(888) 810-3744
Hobbs	1-(866) 254-2611
Las Cruces	1-(866) 563-9294
Las Vegas	(505) 425-0066
Rio Rancho	1-(800) 772-1213
Roswell	1-(866) 563-9470
Santa Fe	1-(866) 571-8130

New Mexicans can also do the following on the SSA website: <https://www.ssa.gov/onlineservices/>

- Apply for Retirement, Disability, and Medicare benefits
- Check the status of an application or appeal
- Request a replacement Social Security card (in most areas)
- Print a benefit verification letter
- and many more services (*see next page*)

See What You Can Do Online!

Our online services make doing business with us easier than ever.



SocialSecurity.gov



Securing today
and tomorrow



Protect Yourself from Social Security Scams

Be on the lookout for fake calls and emails



Securing today
and tomorrow

Telephone and email scammers are pretending to be government employees. They may threaten you and may demand immediate payment to avoid arrest or other legal action. Do not be fooled!

If you receive a suspicious call:

1. **HANG UP**
2. **DO NOT GIVE MONEY OR PERSONAL INFORMATION**
3. **REPORT THE SCAM AT [OIG.SSA.GOV](https://www.oig.ssa.gov)**



What to look out for



The caller says there is a **problem** with your Social Security number or account.



Any call asking you to pay a fine or debt with retail gift cards, wire transfers, pre-paid debit cards, internet currency, or by mailing cash.



Scammers **pretend** they're from Social Security or another government agency. Caller ID or documents sent by email may look official but **they are not**.



Callers threaten you with arrest or other legal action.

Be Alert

Social Security may call you in some situations but will **never**:

- » Threaten you
- » Suspend your Social Security number
- » Demand immediate payment from you
- » Require payment by cash, gift card, pre-paid debit card, or wire transfer
- » Ask for gift card numbers over the phone or to wire or mail cash



Be Active

Protect yourself, friends, and family!

- » If you receive a questionable call, hang up and report it at [oig.ssa.gov](https://www.oig.ssa.gov)
- » Don't return unknown calls
- » Ask someone you trust for advice before making any large purchase or financial decision
- » Don't be embarrassed to report if you shared personal information or suffered a financial loss
- » Learn more at [oig.ssa.gov/scam](https://www.oig.ssa.gov/scam)
- » Share this information with others

The Federal Trade Commission, AARP Sound the Alarm About Scams Targeting Veterans

Story courtesy of Carol Kando-Pineda/Attorney, FTC Division of Consumer & Business Education, and Gary Williams/AARP New Mexico Associate State Director for Community Outreach



Over the past four years, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) logged more than 378,000 reports from military veterans—nearly 161,000 of which were fraud-related. More than 24,000 of these fraud cases reported a loss, with total losses of \$205 million. Veterans had a median loss of \$755, compared to active duty service members who reported a median loss of \$500 over the same period.

For both veterans and active duty personnel, imposter scams were among the top five scams causing a loss. Imposters pretend to be someone veterans trust to try to convince them to send money. These scammers use all kinds of angles to make their stories sound believable. The FTC and AARP New Mexico offer some tips (and provide video links) for spotting imposters and scams.

Government

Scammers pretend to be officials from the IRS or other government agencies to get your money. They even rig caller ID to make their call look official. They play on your fears and threaten to take your driver's license or sue, arrest, or deport you, if you don't pay. If you suspect you're getting one of these phone calls, hang up—legitimate government officials won't threaten you or insist that you pay with a gift card, a wire transfer, or cashier's check.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4nCy6Xs6R8&feature=youtu.be>

Business

Some scammers are “phishing” for your personal information and pretend to be from legitimate businesses, including popular online shopping websites. A caller may claim to be from Amazon.com—they say your credit card has been charged a large amount of money for an order. Then, they'll give you the “Amazon Support” phone number and tell you to immediately call if you didn't make that order. Don't do it. That's not really Amazon. The scammers want you to call their number so they can ask for your passwords, credit card number, and other sensitive information to get your money. For more information: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2020/07/hang-business-imposter-scams>

Online Romance

You meet someone on a social networking site. They seem like a perfect match, but soon enough they ask you to send money. That person pretending to be your virtual sweetheart is a scammer. If an online love interest asks you for money, don't send it.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlXWxH0mgU8>

Tech Support

Scammers pose as big-name companies and call or send pop-up messages to scare you about the security of your computer. They run scans to show you what's wrong with your computer. But the truth is, they aren't finding and fixing problems. They just want you to pay for software or tech support services you don't need. Don't give out your financial information, and don't let anyone that you did not authorize take control of your computer. Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6nSP_cnipTY

Goodwill Industries of New Mexico Offering Critical Community Services for Homeless Veterans

New Mexico's veterans, family members and other state residents experiencing hardships during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic can get help with numerous services online through Goodwill Industries of New Mexico.



Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program

Focuses on placing veterans that are experiencing homelessness, or who are at risk of becoming homeless, into long-term employment. Other social services are also available. <https://www.goodwillnm.org/veteran-employment.html>

Supportive Services for Veterans and Families

Helps stabilize housing for very low-income veterans and their families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. <https://www.goodwillnm.org/veteran-housing.html>

Veteran Family Services Program

Provides job development services, job training, and comprehensive case management for veterans and their family members. <https://www.goodwillnm.org/veteran-family-services.html>

Unemployed New Mexicans

Goodwill career specialists are standing by to help with local job leads, improving job skills, creating a resume, learning interview skills, or getting help now with finding a job. <https://www.goodwillnm.org/career-specialist.htm>

For more information about Goodwill Industries of New Mexico, go to www.goodwillnm.org

Other Agencies Offering Assistance for Veterans

New Mexico Veterans Integration Centers

The New Mexico Veterans Integration Center is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded in 2005. More than just a homeless shelter for veterans, "the VIC" provides a multitude of services including multiple housing assistance options, peer support, food and nutrition, and case management services to help veterans get back on their feet again and re-integrate into the community. <https://nmvic.org/>

New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions strives to be a leader in improving employment and poverty rates through workforce development, enhanced services for employers, and ensuring fair labor practices and workforce protections for New Mexicans.

<https://www.dws.state.nm.us/en-us/>

DWS can assist veterans with all aspects of looking for a job: Résumé preparation, interviewing skills, job-finding assistance, and many more helpful programs.

<https://www.dws.state.nm.us/Portals/0/DM/VC/Vets-Emp-Guide-Web.pdf>

Veterans Community Bulletin Board

NOTICE: The following informational flyers are offered for your convenience. Their inclusion in the The Guardian does not constitute an endorsement by DVS of the organization, content, products, services or information contained therein.

DVS invites service agencies and non-profit service organizations to send flyers or news releases announcing an upcoming or ongoing veteran-related event. DVS will post these notices in *The Guardian* as a public service courtesy to the veteran community.

- 1) Flyers and news release must have the name of a point-of-contact from that organization...and the contact's phone number or email address.
- 2) DVS is not responsible for the accuracy of any content, products, services or information contained in these notices.
- 3) Views expressed in these notices are the independent views of the authors/ owners of the third-party entity that created them and do not reflect the views of DVS.
- 4) To the maximum extent permitted by law, DVS expressly denies liability for any and all losses suffered by any persons or organizations, who in their independent discretion and reliance, either directly or indirectly rely on content, products, services or information offered by these independent third-party organizations.
- 5) DVS reserves the right to decline requests .



AMERICAN GOLD STAR MOTHERS

NM CHAPTER

AGSM JEWELRY FUNDRAISER

NOVEMBER 1, 2020

ONLINE ORDERS

gsmnm.square.site

Allow 2-4 weeks for delivery based on demand

Free shipping in the U.S.

Finding Strength Through Service

www.gsmnm.org

Donations always graciously accepted.

non-profit 501 © 3 FEIN 83-1144164

Questions feel free to contact Joyce Paulsen

healthyjoyce@gmail.com



We have several types of jewelry options for guys and gals. These would make great gifts and would proudly support the American Gold Star Mothers NM Chapter.



Zipper pulls in traditional AGSM logo and there is a NM Zia style as well. Great for jackets, pullovers, gym bags etc. \$15

Key Chain, the picture shown is the NM Zia style and this comes in the traditional AGSM logo too. \$20



Earrings which are simple and elegant. Style shown is the traditional AGSM logo and this also comes in the NM Zia style. \$20

Pendant comes with a chain. Picture shown is the traditional AGSM logo style. Yes it is available in the NM Zia style. \$15



This charm is great for bracelets. The picture shown is the NM Zia style. This also comes in the traditional AGSM logo as well. \$15

Great thanks to our jeweler Diego Jones in Albuquerque, NM, who donated his time in creating these jewelry pieces to give back to the American Gold Star Mothers Organization.