

**The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services**

**Michelle Lujan Grisham** *Governor*

**DVS Resumes Its Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program**

**SANTA FE--**The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) has resumed its *Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program* offering free round-trip rides to veterans to and from their home and any U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or

VA-approved medical appointments.

The free round-trip rides are available to any veteran living in the following 15 New Mexico counties that VA categorizes as “highly rural”*—*counties with no more than seven veterans per every 1,000 residents: Catron, Cibola, Colfax, De Baca, Guadalupe, Harding, Hidalgo, Lincoln, Mora, Quay, San Miguel, Sierra, Socorro, Torrance, and Union.

The program was halted this spring due to issues discovered in the quarterly reporting to VA. The issues have been resolved, and the grant has been renewed by VA.

“We’re excited to once again provide this free transportation service for veterans to use for their VA medical appointments, “ said DVS Healthcare Coordination Division Director Diane Mourning Brown. “Lack of transportation options should not be a reason for a veteran to neglect their health care needs. So we encourage veterans in these 15 counties to contact us and make an appointment for their free round-trip rides.”

**Reservations Are Required**

DVS has contracted with four transportation companies to provide the round-trip rides.

Veterans must contact DVS to make a reservation by calling the Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program reservation number at (505) 429-5906 Monday- Friday from 9 a.m.- 5 p.m.

Reservations must be made at least three (3) days before a scheduled appointment at a VA or VA pre-approved medical facility***.***

One of the contracted transportation companies will contact the veteran 24-hours before the pickup date to confirm the reservation. On the day of the appointment, the driver will remain at or in the vicinity of the scheduled medical facility for the duration of the appointment.

“DVS is very aware that many veterans in other counties, even in our larger non-rural counties, also do not have transportation options available to them for their medical appointments,” said Mourning Brown. “We are working on solutions, both legislatively and through other partnerships, to address this.”

For more non-reservation-related information about the DVS Highly Rural Veterans Transportation program, contact Connie Vargas at connie.vargas@dvs.nm.gov or (505) 372-8804.

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