



NEW MEXICO COUNTIES

33 STRONG

2026 Legislative Priorities

Approved by the NMC Board of Directors
August 7, 2025



As we look toward the 2026 thirty-day legislative session, New Mexico's counties remain committed to working with state leaders to strengthen communities across our state. The Board of Directors has identified several priorities that reflect the pressing needs of counties and our shared goal of keeping communities safe, healthy, and resilient.

Counties carry the heavy responsibility of operating detention facilities, with costs projected to exceed \$400 million in FY2025. State reimbursement for housing state prisoners remains a necessary piece of this puzzle, even though it covers only a small portion of the total cost. At the same time, counties continue to face significant staffing shortages in detention, fire, and emergency medical services. These frontline employees are the backbone of community safety, and the requests for workforce support far exceeded the funding appropriation in 2024, underscoring the need for continued investment.

The Board also recognizes the importance of reliable communication when responding to disasters. Seamless interoperability with state and federal partners is essential, yet the infrastructure required is beyond the capacity of counties alone. With state support, we can build the systems needed to protect all New Mexicans in times of crisis. Similarly, the costs of building and maintaining state court facilities has grown beyond what counties can manage. NMC will once again seek state support to share this unfunded burden, which has been placed on county governments.

Counties are focused on programs that lift people up and strengthen communities. The RISE (Reach, Intervene, Support, and Engage) Program has shown great promise in helping individuals transition successfully back into society after incarceration. We believe additional funding through the Human Services Department will allow this program to reach even more people and create healthier, safer communities.

To ensure fiscal stability, counties will reintroduce legislation (HB494) requiring that the veterans' exemptions, approved by voters in 2024, be submitted within existing property tax deadlines. This is vital to helping counties determine the fiscal impact and budget responsibly while honoring commitments to those who served.

NMC remains committed to working collaboratively on reforms to the Inspection of Public Records Act that maintain transparency while addressing the increasing number of requests, overwhelming financial and personnel burdens, and rising costs of litigation.

Together, we can continue building a stronger, safer, and healthier New Mexico. Thank you for your partnership in advancing these shared priorities.

For more information on any of these initiatives, please see the attached background materials or contact me at (505) 660-9629 or jesparsen@nmcountries.org.

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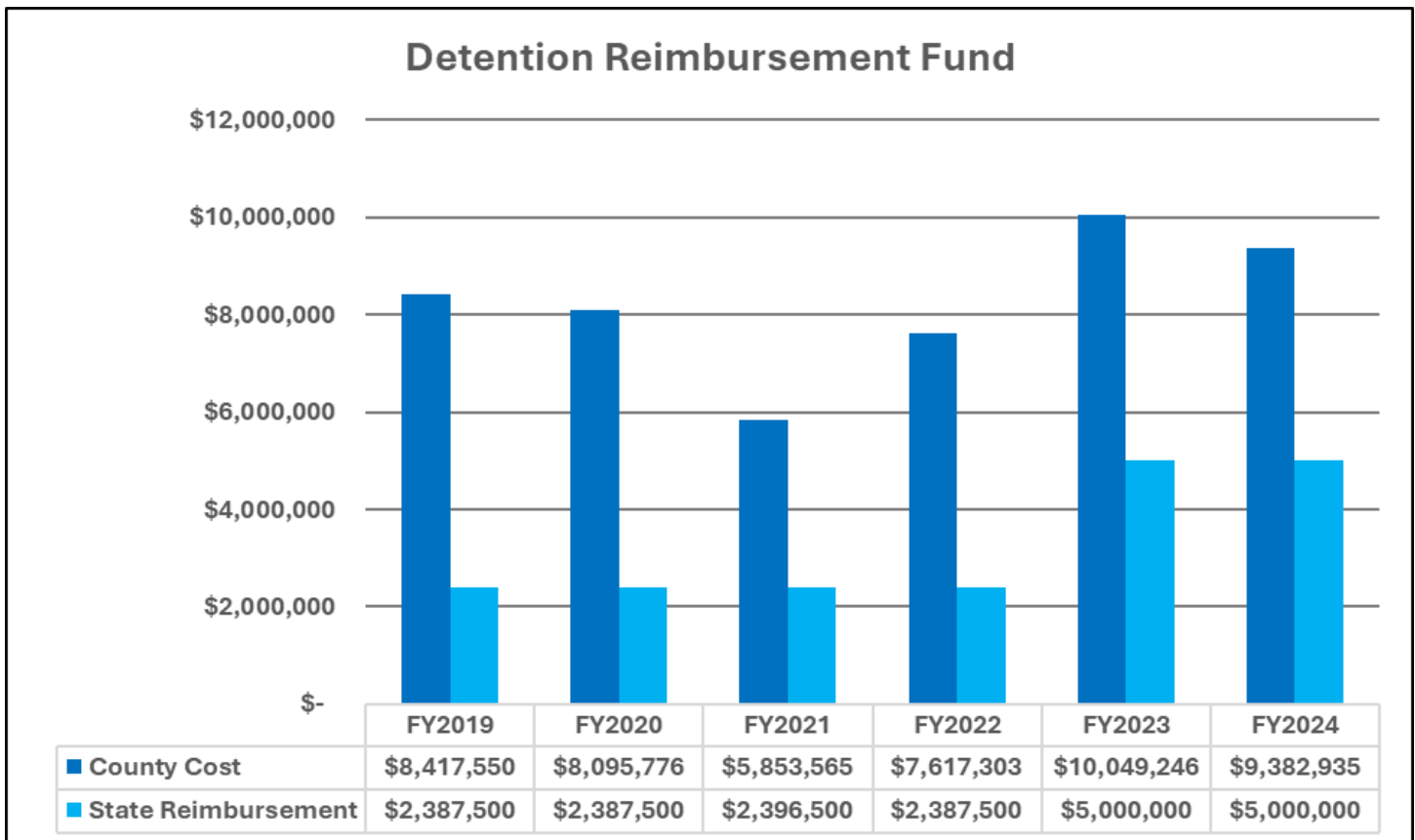
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2026 Legislative Priorities

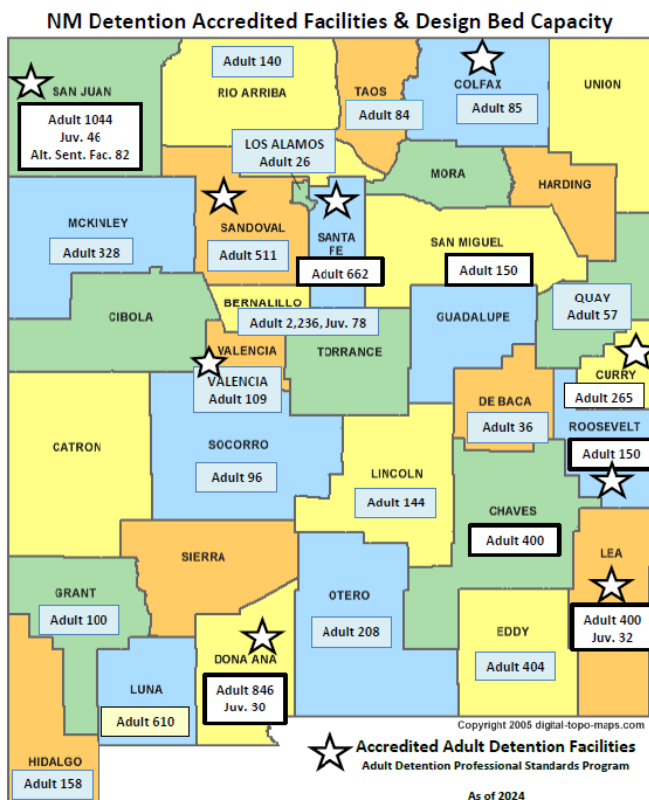
Detention Reimbursement Fund

New Mexico Counties requests that the legislature appropriate **\$9,382,935** which is the amount calculated by the NM Sentencing Commission that is required to fully fund the County Detention Facility Reimbursement Fund, (NMSA 1978 §33-3B-4), to reimburse counties the actual FY24 cost for housing felony offenders who have been sentenced to confinement in state correctional facilities.

The County Detention Reimbursement Fund was **created in 2007 with a \$5 million** appropriation following litigation which resulted in a NM Court of Appeals decision holding that the state is required to pay counties for the **actual cost** of housing state inmates. The fund diminished to less than \$2.5 million over the next decade. The Legislature **restored it to the 2007 amount of \$5 million** in 2022 but the actual cost to house New Mexico Corrections Department inmates has been calculated by the New Mexico Sentencing Commission to be millions more.



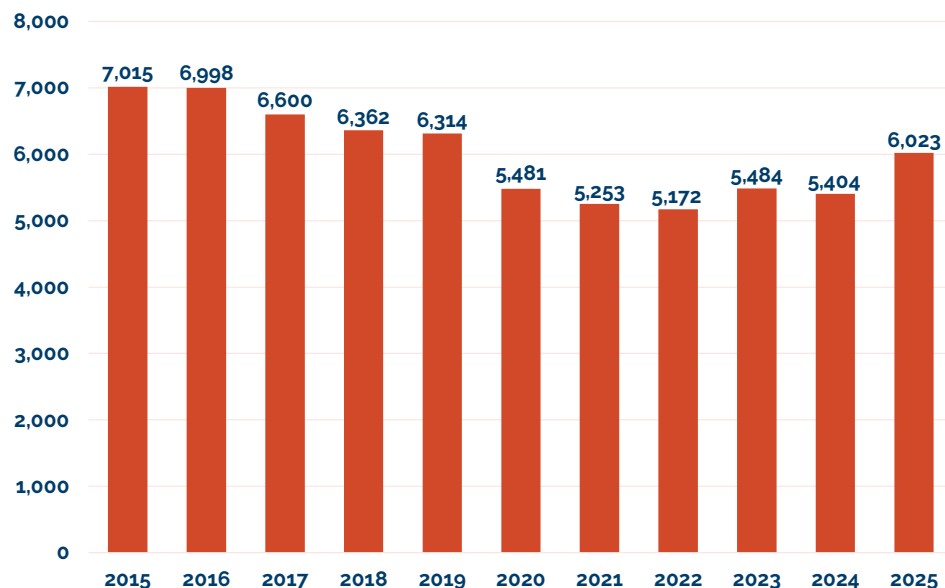
NM County Detention Facilities' Design Bed Capacity & Accreditation Status



Adult Detention Average Daily Population 2015 - 2025



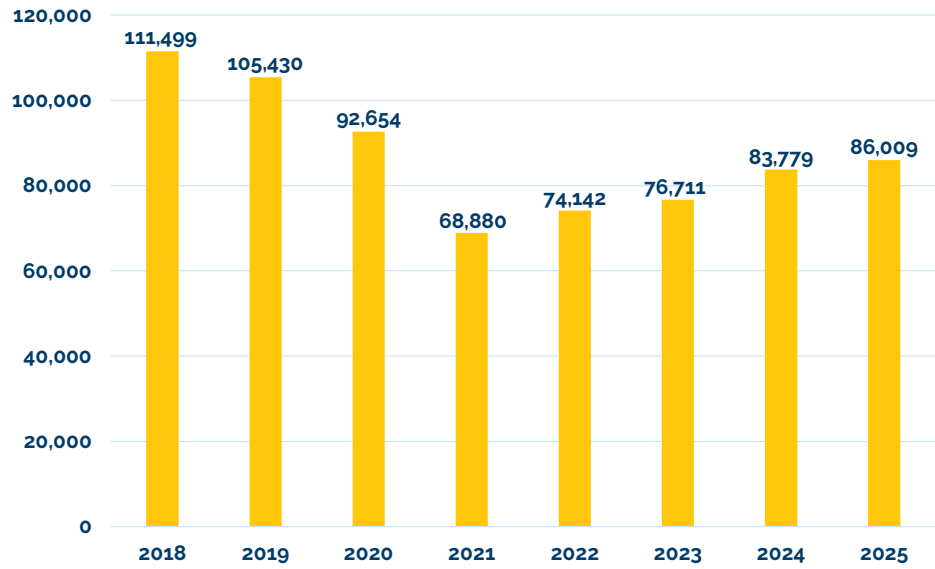
Adult Detention ADP



Statewide Detention Bookings 2018-2024



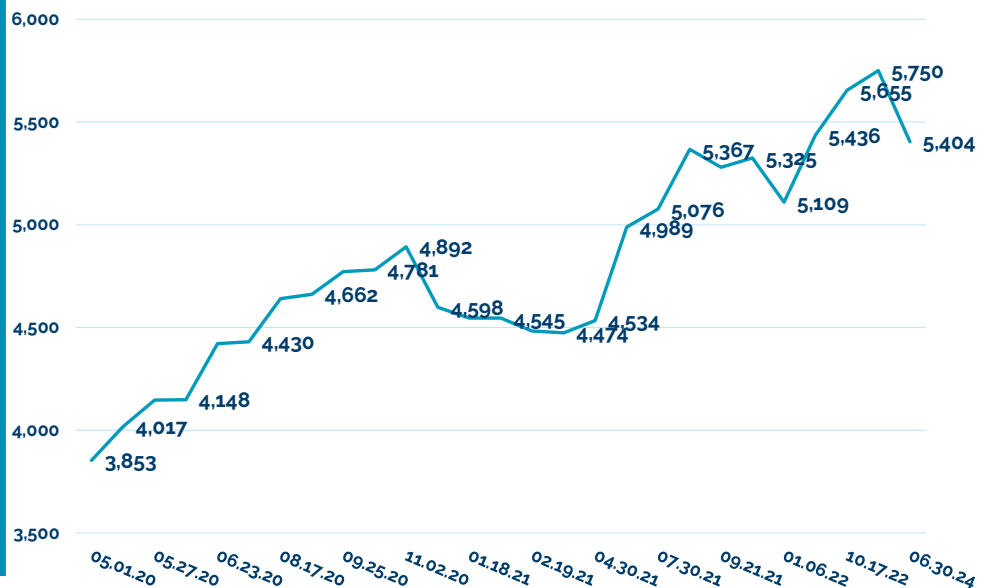
Detention Bookings



Statewide Detention Population May 1, 2020 - June 30, 2024



Detention Population - May 1, 2020 - June 30, 2024



Courthouse Funding

New Mexico Counties requests continued funding to the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) for the construction and renovation of state district courthouse complexes. State district courts no longer reflect a single judge residing at a county facility the way the territorial statute first intended. State courthouse complexes can reach well over \$50 million in construction costs, and the **addition of a single judge can cost a county \$2-\$3 million** for renovation and increased operational support. Counties maintain that courthouses are a state responsibility and that the rising costs of construction, security, and IT necessitate a shared revenue stream.

In preparation for the 2026 Legislative Session, a county survey identified approximately **\$114 million** in additional infrastructure funding needed to address district courthouse improvements. Funding requests included upgrades for courthouse staff office space, roof repairs, lighting upgrades, parking lot paving, HVAC improvements, as well as planning and design for the replacement of outdated courthouses that can no longer meet the needs of their communities. These requests **do not** include the additional costs for state District Attorneys that are also placed on county governments.

NMC requests that the Administrative Office of the Courts return to the practice of providing matching funds for these critical needs.

Historic Increases in District Court Judges							
JUDICIAL DISTRICT	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
1st	9	9	10	10	10	10	10
2nd	27	27	29	29	30	30	30
3rd	8	8	9	9	9	9	9
4th	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
5th	11	11	11	11	12	12	12
6th	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
7th	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
8th	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
9th	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
10th	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
11th	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
12th	4	4	5	5	5	5	5
13th	8	8	8	8	9	9	9
TOTAL	94	94	99	99	102	102	102

700 MHz Radios

New Mexico Counties requests **\$6 million** in continued funding to the Department of Information Technology for use in FY2025 to fund the payment of subscriber fees for the digital trunked radio communications system for municipal, county and tribal public safety agencies that provide law enforcement, fire, medical or other emergency services.

Detention Recruitment

Detention & Corrections Workforce Capacity	
Awarded Entities and Departments	# of Officers
Acoma Adult Temporary Holding Facility	4
Bernalillo County Metropolitan Detention Center	23
Bernalillo County Youth Services Center	10
Bernalillo County Youth Services Center (Juvenile)	10
Colfax County - Vigil Maldonado Detention Center	4
Curry County	7
Eddy County Detention	10
Grant County Detention Center	4
Hobbs Detention Facility	3
Luna County	10
New Mexico Corrections Department	46
Otero County Detention Center	4
Quay County Detention Center	3
Rio Arriba County Detention Center	4
Roosevelt County Detention Center	3
San Juan County Adult Detention Center	10
San Miguel County Detention Center	5
Sandoval County Detention Center	6
Santa Fe County	7
Sierra County	2
Socorro County Detention Center	4
Taos Adult Detention Center	5
Valencia County Detention Center	5
TOTAL	189

New Mexico Counties requests an additional appropriation for the Detention and Corrections Workforce Capacity Building Fund established by the legislature in 2023 (NMSA 1978 §9-6-19). The Fund was created to assist counties with critical detention officer vacancy levels in county facilities notwithstanding significant pay increases, to attract and retain employees.

In 2024, the Legislature appropriated \$25 million to the Department of Finance & Administration (DFA) for grants to bolster public safety. This significant investment is designed to help offset the cost of new detention and correctional officer salaries for three years. DFA received requests for over **850** positions. Final awards included **189** new officer positions to provide critical support to 22 local entities and the New Mexico Corrections Department. It is evident in the number of requests that the need is greater than the funding provided and consideration for an additional appropriation is a priority for New Mexico counties.

Firefighter & EMS Recruitment

New Mexico Counties requests an additional appropriation for the Fire & Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Recruitment Fund. New Mexico's counties rely heavily on volunteer personnel for fire, EMS, and emergency management services. In many counties, paid staff is limited to one or two individuals. Increasing the number of paid firefighters and EMTs will improve response times, department capacity, and Insurance Services Office (ISO) ratings.

In 2024, the Legislature appropriated \$25 million to the Department of Finance & Administration (DFA) to help offset the cost of fire and EMT salaries for three years. DFA received 64 requests for over **330** positions. Final awards included **190** new positions to provide critical support to 59 local entities. It is evident in the number of requests that the need is greater than the funding provided and consideration for an additional appropriation is a priority for New Mexico counties.



RISE Funding

New Mexico Counties requests that the Legislature continue funding for the Reach, Intervene, Support and Engage (RISE) Program in the Human Services Department Behavioral Health Services Division budget. RISE is a partnership between the state and selected counties to provide behavioral health, MAT, housing, vocational and other services to people in detention.

RISE is being implemented in Bernalillo (through UNM), Colfax (through Krossroads Integrative Health and Recovery Solutions), Doña Ana, Eddy (through Lifehouse Inc.), Grant, Lincoln, Luna, Roosevelt, San Juan, Sierra, Socorro, and Valencia counties. San Miguel and Curry counties were awarded planning grants for RISE programming. An increase in funding would provide sustainability and enable expansion of this very successful program.

Inspection of Public Records Improvements

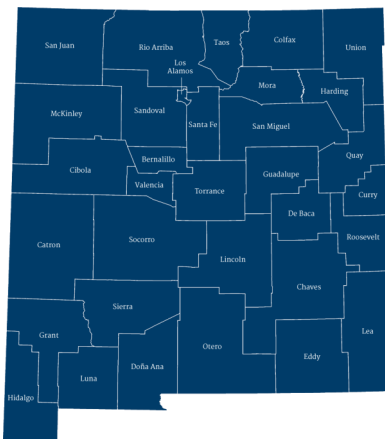
New Mexico Counties seeks to amend the Inspection of Public Records Act (IPRA) to exempt from disclosing specific information and **prohibit certain requests used to compromise and obstruct critical local government services**. IPRA was intended to provide government accountability and transparency. Instead, overwhelmingly burdensome and often frivolous requests have been submitted solely for the purpose of interfering with vital services such as elections and public safety.

During the interim, NMC continues to work with multiple stakeholders to refine this proposal and identify solutions that do not interfere with the original intent of the Act. In 2023, HB232: Disclosure of Certain Information amended IPRA by enacting changes for the protection of critical IT systems, undercover law enforcement, and restricting certain proprietary technical and business information. It was the first time that IPRA had been amended since its enactment.

Property Tax Exemption Deadline for Veterans

New Mexico Counties seeks to set the filing deadline for the Disabled Veterans' Property Tax Exemption to 30 days following the official mail-out date of the Notice of Value. Veterans may also request an exemption for an additional 180 days if they are awaiting final certification. This will equalize the exemption deadline for all veterans. This will also better allow counties to budget for the year. In 2025 HB 494 addressed this issue.

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