



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## **State agencies partner with Vitalant to combat blood shortage**

*Blood donations in New Mexico have plummeted due to COVID-19, with Vitalant cancelling more than 1,600 blood drives during the pandemic*

**Santa Fe, NM** – Every two seconds someone in the United States needs blood. And while the COVID-19 pandemic has caused blood donations to decline by anywhere from [30% to 70%](#) in most developed nations, U.S. hospitals have also seen a [significant rise](#) in trauma cases, organ transplants, and other surgeries that require blood products. As a result, the United States is experiencing a severe blood shortage that is limiting access to critical care in hospitals nationwide.

Here in New Mexico, the pandemic has forced Vitalant, formerly United Blood Services, to cancel more than 1,600 blood donation events. And while New Mexico's high school students typically account for 30% of Vitalant's blood donations, in-school donations have essentially dropped to zero with most students learning remotely.

"It takes over 300 blood donations a day to meet the needs of area patients and to be ready for emergencies," said **Pascen Booth, Senior Manager for Vitalant**. "We all expect blood to be there for us if we ever need it, and with this decline in donations we are currently at critical need."

To combat this shortage, the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) and the Department of Health (DOH) have partnered with Vitalant to raise awareness of the critical need for blood donors, highlight donation events across the state, and recruit ambassadors among the state's health and emergency management professionals to amplify this message in their communities.

## August's Blood Drives

This month alone, Vitalant is hosting more than 40 blood drives across the state (see attached list).

## COVID-Safe Practices

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the U.S. Surgeon General and Federal Emergency Management Agency have designated blood donation as an essential activity. And to ensure the safety of donors, patients, and staff, Vitalant donation centers and blood drives have consistently observed rigorous precautions, including:

- Taking donors' temperatures upon check-in
- Requiring face masks for both donors and staff
- Disinfecting donor-touched areas after every donation
- Practicing social distancing

## How to Donate

To learn more and schedule an appointment to donate, please visit [vitalant.org](https://vitalant.org) or call **877-25-VITAL** (877-258-4825) or the local number at **505-246-1457**. Residents can also click [here](#) to access Vitalant's donations portal, where you can search for donation events based on your zip code.

"NOW more than ever, it is important that we help out our fellow New Mexicans," said **DOH Deputy Secretary Dr. Laura Parajon**. "Giving blood is easy. If you qualify, please consider donating today. You could save a life."

"This pandemic doesn't change the fact that every day, thousands of people in the U.S. have accidents, injuries, and illnesses that require blood donations in order to survive," said **DHSEM Secretary Bianca Ortiz-Wertheim**. "Please consider donating blood at an event near you. The process is safe, and your donation could save the lives of our friends, family, and neighbors who need our help."

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