



El Diario Sin Nombre

The Newsletter Without a Name

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Four *Insure New Mexico!* Initiatives Become Law

The 60-day 2005 Legislature is history. Although issues like cockfighting, voter registration, the death penalty and pre-kindergarten garnered many of the headlines this year, several bills the department pushed hard to get passed were signed into law without much fanfare. These bills were part of Governor Richardson's *Insure New Mexico!* initiatives aimed at

expanding access to quality, affordable health insurance; reducing the number of citizens without insurance; and increasing the number of employers who offer insurance to their employees.

"I thank all department staff who helped us to get the four *Insure New Mexico!* bills passed this year, and funding for two other Medicaid initiatives including outreach and the State Coverage Initiative," said HSD Secretary Pamela Hyde. "Your efforts now have the potential to provide health insurance to 35,000 uninsured New Mexicans, most of whom are in working families." The four bills were:

Small Employer Health Care Access, HB 523 and SB 271, which implement a small employer insurance program providing more options for small employers (50 or fewer employees) to *voluntarily* buy into the state's health insurance program.

Health Insurance Rates and Alliance Membership, HB 394 and SB504, which remove provisions of the Health Insurance Alliance (HIA) statutes to make health insurance more affordable for small businesses and individuals. The expansion includes changing the premium rate structure to lower costs; changing the composition of the HIA board of directors to include a non-profit representative; and increasing HIA's responsibility for outreach, public awareness and assistance to employers in obtaining and maintaining health insurance for employees.

Health Coverage for Unmarried Dependents, HB 335 and SB 271, which allow unmarried dependents to stay on their parents' health insurance plan until they turn 25 years old. Those between the ages of 18 and 24 are one of the largest groups of uninsured.

Part-time Employee Insurance Coverage, HB 289 and SB335, which require insurers to offer a health insurance plan to part-time employees (over 20 hours per week) working for employers who *choose* to insure such employees.

Two other *Insure New Mexico!* initiatives requiring funding but not legislation are also being implemented by the department in 2005: moving ahead with the State Coverage Initiative (a government, employer, employee health insurance partnership) and increasing outreach efforts to enroll Native American and Hispanic children in Medicaid.

"Access to support and services for more New Mexicans is one of the department's three goals," said Hyde. "The work done this Legislative session and the work that remains to be done in 2005 to implement the new initiatives will, indeed, offer more people access to affordable health insurance."



Governor Bill Richardson signs *Insure New Mexico!* Legislation into Law at the Capitol. Secretary Pamela Hyde is at the far left.

Eyes are on New Mexico and its Efforts to Improve Behavioral Health Services

"People around the country are watching our transformation of publicly-funded behavioral health services from 15 different state agencies to a single state entity," said Leslie Tremaine, HSD's

behavioral health manager. This week the department announced that ValueOptions was the successful bidder to manage the \$300 to \$350 million in funding that goes towards mental health and substance abuse services for about 60,000 people, beginning July 1. ValueOptions has managed programs in other states, such as Colorado, Texas, Connecticut and

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New Mexico Human Services Department Helping Inmates Inside Jail for Success Outside of Jail

“They call us angels,” said Freddie Chavez, of the SW Albuquerque ISD office, after returning from his monthly visit to the Bernalillo County Detention Center west of town. The impetus for the project on which he participates as a volunteer – and a first for the department – was from legislation passed last year in the form of a joint memorial asking state agencies to do more to help parolees reentering society successfully complete their parole.

Now, once a week, Chavez and three other caseworkers: Martin Burkhart, Tracy Steinson, and Danette Webb, take turns going to the detention center to help inmates who will be released from incarceration soon (the average stay is 85 days) to sign up for programs administered by the division. “They have already helped about 25 inmates, who, once released, will simply have to go to one of our four Albuquerque offices, show identification and receive an EBT card activated in their name,” said Katie Falls, ISD Director. This allows parolees to make almost immediate food purchases at grocery stores. (A single person with no other income would receive about \$150 in food stamps each month.) The idea is that if they get food and other services within 24-hours of parole, they are less likely to come back in.

Most of the inmates Chavez sees are people with mental health disabilities that could potentially make them eligible for General Assistance (financial aid in the amount of about \$185 per month) as well, until they qualify for social security disability,” said Jerry Patton, SW Albuquerque County Director. “It saves a lot of time if we can get the ball rolling on getting them qualified for GA while they are incarcerated and their medical records are easily accessible.”

While food stamps and general assistance are the most common programs for which many parolees can qualify, there are other services such as housing and employment that inmates can learn about from ISD caseworkers, just like in the ISD offices. The program also offers ISD volunteers an opportunity to get out of the office for a while: “I actually have fun out there,” said Chavez. “Often the interviews are done in communal areas, so other inmates inquire about what’s going on – many think I’m some sort of lawyer – but when they find out what I’m doing, they become interested and try and get

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Albuquerque ISD ROM Rita Espinosa supports the inmate program as another way for her offices to reach out to those in need.

“Secret Pals” Popular in MAD

Morale committee rep Kimberly McGrath was somewhat surprised when the “secret pals” morale builder event became so popular she had to offer a second round for the Medical Assistance Division staff who didn’t get in on the first round. “This is actually a lot more fun than I thought it would be,” she said. “After the first round, staff saw others routinely receiving gifts from their secret pal, and wanted to know if it was too late for them to get in. So now we have 30 people participating.”

Secret pals started in the Las Vegas child support enforcement office, as reported in HSD E-news a couple of months ago. That’s when the department’s morale committee thought it would be a good idea to offer it to other staff as well.

In MAD, those who volunteer complete a form listing the things they like. Then a secret pal is assigned to him/her, and soon little gifts begin arriving – delivered mostly by none other than designated secret delivery gal, Lori Peña, to ensure secret pals remain secret. “When people see Lori coming everyone lights up to see if they are getting a gift,” said McGrath. The person receiving gifts also becomes the secret pal to someone else. However, the rules are that no two participants can exchange gifts with each other. “People receive things like afternoon snacks, plants, balloons, Easter baskets and even gardening tools,” said McGrath. “You have to give something once a week, but most people enjoy the giving part so much they are being secret pals more than once a week.”

“I was a late joiner,” said Liz Martinez. “After I saw how much fun everybody was having, I joined the bandwagon and it has been great for me ever since. Like today, I walked into the office worried about the day ahead, and I had a present of diet soda and popcorn sitting on my desk delivered from my secret pal. It made all the difference in the world.”

“I’m participating in secret pals because I thought it would help my morale, which it did,” said Desbah Tsosie. “I’ve received a lot of things, including a stuffed duck, but I enjoy the giving part more—figuring out what your secret pal wants and then making sure he/she gets the gift without finding out



Secret pal runner Lori Peña (right) delivers a cookie cutter set to Virginia Alcon, who said, “If my secret pal only knew that I don’t cook!”

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signed up for when we visit again.”

Most of the inmates Chavez and the others see are middle-aged men with substance abuse problems. “After talking with them, you know they need help and they don’t know where to go to get it,” said Chavez. “It makes you feel good to be able to help this group of people.”

“The program has also helped the detention center workers who have daily contact with inmates. There are so many programs out there administered by us and other departments that they, too, get confused when it comes to offering accurate referrals to inmates,” said Patton. “They really appreciated it when our trainer, Shannon Roberson, visited and gave them a short class on what the department offers to the public.”

The division will measure the success of the project in Bernalillo County to see if it helps to reduce recidivism there,” said Falls. “If it does make a difference, then we will determine if it can work in other counties as well.”

Management Change!

None of us like change. But in the department’s continuing efforts to make each other successful, effective today, all ISD and CSED county directors and ASD, DoIT, MAD and OIG bureau chiefs will trade job positions. Additionally, the lawyers in the Office of General Council and all CSED attorneys will simply switch offices within their respective buildings – we understand this may be difficult.

The procedure is rather simple, so there’s no real reason to get excited: each manager will find another agreeable counterpart manager to switch jobs with, but by not later than 5:00 p.m. today. Once this is done, inform your new Region Operations Manager and HR of the agreed upon change. Then on Monday, April 4, simply report to your new place of work and introduce yourself to staff.

You will work in your new office setting, making your counterpart successful for three months, or until further notice.

If, by chance, there is an odd manager out, he or she will report to either Catron or De Baca county and begin the process of opening a new county satellite office.

Good luck managers!

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Massachusetts.

However, the system created here is unlike any other.

So how did all of this come about? The Interagency Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative (the Collaborative) RFP evaluation process was quite thorough, balancing the need for broad input with a focused formal evaluation process and in keeping with procurement guidelines: The four

companies that bid on the contract had their proposal reviewed first by a group of 45-50 people representing all facets of mental and substance abuse services in the state. This group did not rate/score the proposals, but rather looked at the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal and then provided their specialized input to a five-person evaluation team.

The smaller evaluation team carefully went through the information from the reviewers and produced an initial formal evaluation of the proposals. From this they chose two companies (ValueOptions and United Behavioral Health) for oral presentations. Using the information provided from the oral evaluations, the team recommended to the permanent 17-member Collaborative – comprised primarily of members from the 15 state agencies now providing BH services – that the state enter into contract negotiations with ValueOptions. All of this was done over about a six-month period.

“In terms of the evaluation process itself, there was tremendous interest,” said Tremaine. Why? Because in choosing one partner to help in integrating BH services, the state is signaling a major change – and one recommended by a 2002 President’s New Freedom Commission’s study that reported major problems with publicly-funded BH programs. These included fragmented services, financing, administration and planning.

Now, there is tremendous national interest in evaluating New Mexico’s Collaborative to see how effective such an

Scheduled Behavioral Health Public Meetings

April 8, 10 – 2 p.m., Corbett Center, NMSU, Las Cruces

April 12, 9 – 12-noon, Apodaca Hall, PERA Building, Santa Fe

April 14, 1 – 4 p.m., Civic Center, Farmington

April 21, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m., Embassy Suites, Albuquerque (Native American)

April 27, 9 – 12-noon, Sheraton Uptown, Albuquerque

May 5, 9 – 12 noon, Roswell Library Auditorium, Roswell



Leslie Tremaine is a point person in coordinating the Interagency Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative.

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approach can be in improving services, access and value. “We are engaging with several researchers who want to work with us to study how these changes affect consumers, families, providers and state staff as we move forward,” said Tremaine. “They include major organizations like the MacArthur and Robert Wood Johnson foundations, the National Institute for Mental Health; and, locally, the McCume Foundation,” said Tremaine.

“Each group has a particular research interest area, ranging from cost/benefit to outcomes to processes,” said Tremaine. “To meet researchers’ needs we are pulling together a single team to help them achieve their goals. Their findings, I believe, will be very helpful for us as well, as we will have an incredibly rich source of information to evaluate what kind of effect a single provider is having delivering these important services to so many.”

Most importantly, however, there are public meetings scheduled this month in Albuquerque, Farmington, Las Cruces, Roswell and Santa Fe to inform people about the upcoming BH transition process so that it will be as smooth as possible for consumers, their families and providers across the state. Primary state agency participants in the meetings will be the DOH, CYFD ALTSD, and the department.

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who the secret pal is.”

McGrath said a lot of new friendships could result when the secret pals reveal themselves at the end of 10 weeks, in May. “My secret pal has already sent me a message that he/she wants to take me to lunch,” she said.



HSD Morale Committee member Kimberly McGrath (center) with two other MAD secret pal participants: Cindy Wilson (left) and Rosemary Medrano. Neither participant has any idea who their secret pal is! Hmmm!



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April Fool's Day or All Fool's Day, holiday of uncertain origin, known for practical joking and celebrated on the first of April. Prior to the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1564, the date was observed as New Year's Day by cultures as varied as the Roman and the Hindu. The holiday is considered to be related to the festival of the vernal equinox, which occurs on Mar. 21. The English gave April Fool's Day its first widespread celebration during the 18th century.