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CSED Director Discusses Division's Plans for Stimulus Money

Child Support Enforcement Division Director, Charissa Saavedra, wants to ensure the funds that the CSED is receiving as part of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) will be used where they



CSED Director Charissa Saavedra wants to use ARRA funds where they will do the most good.

can have the most significant affect on client services. One condition that she and her staff will have to deal with, however, is that the stimulus money must be spent by September 2010.

"After looking at our short and mid-term needs, we determined that most of our offices could use additional staff, including clerks, caseworkers and staff attorneys," said Saavedra. "We are actively recruiting staff statewide to fill, on a temporary basis, 61 field positions and 11 IT support positions." (See https://sharehcm.state.nm.us/psp/nmhp89/EMPLOYEE/HRMS/c/HRS_HRAM.HRS_CE.GBL for these job postings.)

Saavedra said hiring more staff will help the CSED to improve client services by allowing field offices to work new cases more quickly. "Using part of the ARRA funds to increase staffing will help us to improve customer service and satisfy other demands that the nationwide economic downturn is creating," said Saavedra. For example, over the past 12-months, the number of new families asking for child support services has increased by 11 percent to 1,580 new cases per month.

Many of these new cases are created because more single parent families are in need of services from ISD. So by quickly establishing child support obligations and collecting payments that are distributed to single parent households, the CSED may be able to assist the ISD in reducing its caseload as well.

The ARRA funds the CSED will receive will also be used to help restore some child support services that were curtailed by the

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Medicaid Fluoride Varnish Pilot Project Targets Infants and Toddlers in Chaves County

In a March 2009 study by the National Academy for State Health Policy, entitled: *Increasing Access to Dental Care in Medicaid: Targeted Programs for Four Populations*, New Mexico was noted in the report for improving dental care for those with developmental disabilities in 2000. Now Medicaid's Dental Services Manager, Britt Catron is working to address unmet dental needs of infants and toddlers. "Healthy baby teeth are crucial for children to make the transition from milk to solid food," said Catron.

Most people are familiar with "baby bottle tooth decay" and how it can play havoc on young children, so early detection is crucial for preventing this terrible disease. Today the disease is called Early Childhood Caries, which is characterized by fast moving decay that can destroy a child's adult teeth as they emerge.

Unfortunately, many parents believe that early visits to the dentist will not do much good because infants do not have any teeth and toddlers will lose their baby teeth anyway; yet cavity-causing bacteria can be established in an infant's mouth by the time his or her first tooth erupts – between nine months and one year of age, the study noted.

While New Mexico Medicaid was working to improve the dental care for those with developmental disabilities, the report said the state of North Carolina, in 2000, began a dental pilot program to help infants/toddlers focusing first on the rural, western Appalachian region of the state.

The NC program is called *Into the Mouths of Babes*, an early prevention program for children under age three, in recognition of the fact that infants and toddlers typically receive care at the doctor's office far earlier and more often than in the dental office. This led to an effort to train physicians to identify the early signs of oral disease, provide oral health education and preventive services like fluoride varnish and provide appropriate referrals of children with treatment needs to dentists.

Catron and others in the medical and dental community are excited about piloting a similar program for Medicaid clients in Roswell. "Not only are healthy baby teeth crucial for children to make the transition from milk to solid food, but also for developing speech and for the proper emergence of permanent teeth," said Catron. "Additionally, there is great cost and mor-

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division in 2005 when the Deficit Reduction Act took affect. Besides hiring staff to meet the increased demands placed on field offices by the sour economy, the CSED will use ARRA funding to enhance and improve its computer system. These updates include:

- acquiring databases that match custodial and non-custodial parents who have access to employer sponsored health care but who don't have their children enrolled in these benefit plans;
- creating better audit tools for caseworkers to enable them to handle cases more quickly and with increased accuracy;
- modifying the CSES computer system so it can calculate monthly child support and arrears payments on judgment having multiple interest rates; and
- moving the old "COLTS" computer system onto a different platform.

These computer system enhancements will require additional workers in the department's ITD which, too, will meet the intent of the ARRA by creating new jobs.

So what did Saavedra think when she first learned the CSED would be receiving much needed ARRA funding? "When I found out we were getting this money, my first thought was that we would be able to supplement staffing in order to address our dramatically increasing caseload," said Saavedra.

Because many of the staff hired over the next few months may have to leave by October 2010, the CSED had to evaluate how and where this temporary infusion of personnel would do the most good. "What we will do is teach our new workers just one or two parts of the child support process, such as case "establishing procedures" that they can undertake on a repetitive basis," said Saavedra. "By doing this, newly hired workers can become productive team members much sooner than if we attempted to provide them with training in all aspects of child support case work. The more complicated aspects of case work will be handled by our experienced employees who should find they have more time for these tasks because of the assistance provided by the employees hired under ARRA."

Other states' child support agencies are receiving ARRA stimulus moneys too. When Saavedra was asked if New Mexico will use these funds differently than other states, she smiled and said, "What we are doing is right in line with what other states with successful child support agencies are doing." She is right! States like Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut all plan to spend much of their ARRA moneys for the same things as New Mexico: backfilling staff loses and for making small to moderate computer systems changes that will make their programs better in the long term as well.

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bidity associated with dental reconstruction in toddlers."

The objective of the pilot program is to allow primary care providers to deliver preventive oral health services to high-risk children from the time of tooth eruption until their third birthday. "Decay in primary teeth, particularly in molars, is a predictor of decay in permanent teeth because oral bacteria persist in the mouth as permanent teeth grow in," added Catron.

Karen L Carson MD, FAAP of BCA Medical Associates, in Roswell, said, "The dental varnish plan was presented by the NM Pediatric Society at a council meeting in November 2007 after NM Pediatricians showed interest in national efforts." The NM Pediatric Council serves as an intermediary between physicians, state health officials and health insurance company representatives – including the Medicaid Salud! MCOs. "Over the past 18 months, the Pediatric Council along with state health officials and legislators worked very hard towards the goal of payment for dental varnish application to primary medical care providers."

Beginning in July, primary care providers in Chaves County will begin offering dental varnish application as a preventive care service during well child checks. So far, seven pediatricians have received training from local dentists and completed online training. Dental varnish will be applied to every child from age six months (or first tooth eruption) up to the age of three. Primary care providers could administer about 20 varnish applications each day.

Catron said fluoride varnish offers several advantages over other professionally applied fluorides: "Children easily tolerate it, it can be swabbed directly on the teeth in less than three minutes and sets within a minute of contact with saliva, it's safe and poses less risk of an adverse reaction because only a small amount is used and less is swallowed and it can be applied in any setting and does not require the use of dental equipment or instruments."

"Data trends are beginning to demonstrate that Medicaid-covered children receiving this procedure have fewer caries-related treatments in dental offices (as much as 39 percent reduction in care) than enrolled children not having preventive services," said Catron, who is hoping the Fluoride Varnish Pilot Project in Chaves County will produce similar results.



Britt Catron has been with HSD since 2002. She is responsible for planning, implementing, evaluating, and oversight of all activities related to the NM Medicaid oral health program, such as changes in benefits and services, provider pay schedules and utilization review requirements.

Human Services Department Night at the Isotopes



(HSD Night at the Isotopes Ball Game Brings Over 200)

HSD families from as far away as Clovis came to watch the Isotopes play Omaha on June 19 where everyone paid discount prices for great reserved seat seating. “We had a whole bunch of people living in Santa Fe purchase tickets for the game,” said Steven Randazzo, HSD Legislative Liaison and Special Projects Coordinator, who organized the event.

“My family and I had a wonderful time at the game,” said BHSD’s Suzanne Pearlman. “My four-year-old son JJ keeps talking about the game and all of the nice people he got to meet that night.”

Jeanette Gurule in MAD said, “My two kids and I had a great time at the game, and it was perfect weather on top of that! We love going to the Isotopes at least four times during the season.”

MAD Deputy Director, Bob Beardsley was a little more vibrant with his remarks about the event, “It’s great to have the opportunity to interact socially and informally with people you see everyday in the workplace. Meeting your fellow workers’ spouses/partners/kids brings a better understanding of who they are. And what better way than at a game at Isotopes Park!”

HSD had its IT contingent (some say computer geeks) at the game, including ITD’s Mike Ricklin, who speaking for his division said, “It was a fun evening at a great ball park: Myron Noodleman provided comic entertainment between innings.”

From Clovis, ISD Line Manager Patsi Martinez said, “I want to extend my appreciation for the tickets and especially for the great seats! My family thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and it was a great that the HSD offered such a bargain price.”

Finally, David Klumpenhower, ISD County Director in Grants, spoke like he actually watched the game, “If anyone thinks HSD people don’t know how to have fun they should’ve been there with us. Only two regrets: no foul balls came close to where we were sitting and the Isotopes lost.”

Southeast Albuquerque ISD Office Holds a Luau and Much More

It has been a longtime in the planning, but finally on June 24 the large Southeast Albuquerque ISD office presented their new office to the public as a combined staff appreciation/open house. The theme was a Luau, but there were other happenings as well, like a slide show of the old ISD office, moving day and the new ISD office. Patio activities included popcorn, cotton candy and ice cream. The catering was provided by TANF clients attending a NMSU job training program named, the New Mexico Works Culinary Arts Class.

“We had many retired Southeast staff attend and others who started out in HSD at the Southeast office but moved onto to other offices,” said County Director, Rochelle Radloff. “For these folks we hung pictures from the old Southeast office in our conference rooms so they could reminisce and talk about the old days.”

Among the retirees attending the event was long-serving SE ISD County Director Kathryn Karnowsky (she loves HSD so much now she works for the Medical Assistance Division.). “The new building is beautiful, the record storage area is a work of art and staff deserve every piece of their beautiful furniture,” she said.

Karnowsky said many very old timers attended the open house, like Joe Barela, Helen Salazar and Helen Vigil. “I overheard several of them say they were treated as honored guests. It was a wonderful event.”

The ISD moved into the old SE ISD office 35 years ago, in 1974. Armando Griego was the new county director back then when, according to Karnowsky, in Albuquerque there was only a satellite SW ISD office, the new SE ISD office, one NE/NW ISD office. There was no state-run child support enforcement program back in 1974.



People enjoyed the SE ISD office open house/employee appreciation .



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Happy 4th of July!