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## School-based Health Celebrates Its 30-Year History



Angela Medrano enjoys working in the School-based Health Center arena.

School-based health administrators and workers were given the opportunity to meet in Albuquerque for three days in April during the 2010 *Head to Toe Conference*. The April 13-15 event, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, not only highlighted the important work being done in 85 public schools, located in 30 of the 33 counties in the state, it also celebrated 30-years of School-based Health Services in New Mexico.

The School-based Health Center (SBHC) Program today is a partnership among public schools, local governments, the Human Services Department's (HSD) Medicaid Program and the Department of Health's (DOH) Public Health Division. The department's participation in the program that historically has focused on DOH priorities like reducing teen pregnancies,

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## SNAP Participation Increase Efforts Focuses on Local Office Initiatives

Today more people in New Mexico qualify for the already popular Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) because of recently approved changes to the program. The income qualification standards have been raised from 130 percent of poverty to 165 percent of poverty (a family of three can now earn \$2,518 a month and qualify, an increase of \$534 per month over the previous 130 percent standard); the \$2,000 resource limit has been eliminated, there is a new semi-annual client review and an easier-to-complete application.

These changes could bring tens of thousands more people into the program over the next year, but communicating these policy benefits changes to the public so they understand what it means to them can be tricky. To meet this challenge the Department and the Income Support Division (ISD) are taking a fresh approach by challenging county offices to come up with their own plans for getting families to consider applying for SNAP, and, so far, many offices are vigorously embracing this challenge.

It all began several months ago when ISD Acting Director, Helen Nelson met with the five ISD Regional Operations Managers (ROMs) and bureau chiefs to ask them to work locally to make more people aware of the program's new eligibility rules. She placed Food and Nutrition Services Bureau Chief, Mary Oleske in

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## Colorado and New Mexico Team Up to Improve Kids' Health

Not since the Civil War Battle of Glorieta have New Mexicans and Coloradoans worked so closely together and on such a grand scale. Back then, it was New Mexico infantry and Colorado cavalry combining to stop an invading column of some 3,000 Texans in March of 1863, just east of Santa Fe.

Today, the two states' health and human services agencies joined forces to write a winning 70-page CHIPRA Grant netting a five-year, \$7.7 million in federal funding. The grant's purpose is to look at ways to more fully address the health care needs of school-aged children and adolescents and expand the understanding of how School-based Health Centers (SBHC) contribute to the overall health care system in each state.

The NM Human Services Department has been designated as the project lead for New Mexico and will facilitate the partnership of stakeholders in the state, while Colorado is the overall lead agency for the grant. Other priorities the grant will be used for here are developing a prototype for SBHCs as a true partner in the medical home approach to health care delivery and improving the delivery of care within SBHCs through increased screenings, preventive services, management of chronic conditions, education of adolescents and encouraging them to become more involved in their own health care and follow-up with primary care providers.

Today – unlike the aftermath of the Glorieta victory when the New Mexicans and Coloradoans were only too happy to just keep a watchful eye on the retreating Texans as they snaked their way back home down the Rio Grande – the real work for both HHS agencies begins now, as they work to make the CHIPRA Grant a complete and total success.

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charge of coordinating the regions' efforts to increase participation rates at the state level.

"It makes sense to help eligible families access SNAP," said Oleske, and I am happy to be part of this effort, which exemplifies HSD's mission. The county directors and their staff are very motivated and enthusiastic about this new push to increase SNAP participation now that the changes have been made."

To kickoff the outreach campaign, HSD Communications Director Betina Gonzales McCracken and the ISD Management Team developed generic outreach materials for counties to use to promote their local efforts. These include sample news releases for newspapers and radio stations and flyers that can be localized in each county, in English and Spanish. "The outreach materials are incredibly helpful because they offer a cohesive message, not just in our region but throughout the state; the news media materials freed up the field offices to focus on creating and participating in the actual events," said ISD Region IV (Southeast NM) ROM Van Horner.

Horner's Artesia office can be singled out for taking "creating" to a new level when it comes to this SNAP outreach effort. "Sarah McArthur [Artesia office director] is promoting her office to the community not as your typical "welfare office," but as a community resource center," said Oleske. "She has invited 30 local community organizations to participate in an event there on June 18."

"I believe what Sarah is trying to do is to promote her office to the community to get people interested in going there to see what is available for them to better their lives; she's re-making it into a welcome place to be in Artesia," said Horner. "Her office's effort is our test case; we're waiting to see how it goes on June 18."

Up north, Region II has focused on reaching the rural counties of Colfax, Rio Arriba and San Miguel. "We have aggressively conducted outreach activities in small communities, such as Mosquero, Roy, Clayton and Mora," said Lorelei Almanzar, Region II ROM.

ISD's Region II *left no county behind* in their SNAP outreach efforts – not even affluent Los Alamos County. "Española decided to run with their outreach idea in the Los Alamos area by visiting several agencies providing information and inquiring where the need is," said Almanzar. "Since their first inquiry, they now visit Los Alamos once a week, including the Los Alamos County Independent Center, to conduct eligibility screenings."

Finally, over in Farmington, County Director Roger Burton continues to use his outreach van to penetrate deeper and deeper into the Navajo Reservation. "Radio broadcasted public service announcements in English and Navajo to inform the public about the SNAP program, the existence of the outreach sites and the time and location of where the outreach van will be," said Burton.

In September, the ISD will look at new SNAP enrollments and evaluate which of the literally hundreds of outreach initiatives were most effective in making the ISD office the place to be this summer!



**Artesia ISD Office Director, Sarah McArthur has managed the Artesia office's eight staff for four years and has worked in the ISD for nine years.**

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## ITD's Application Support Bureau Makes it Happen

The Information Technology Division's Application Support Bureau (ASB) has been super busy lately making important information and management changes via the Internet for both clients and staff.

"Over time, HSD's website homepage had become quite long, causing people to do too much scrolling to get to where they wanted to go for information," said ASB Bureau Chief, Carol "Cat" Thomas-Gravel. "Now it is more pleasant to the eye, and people don't have to go on forever when looking for a document."

Some of these changes, as reported in the May 27 HSD E-news, included moving some well-used links right on to the homepage, such as applications for assistance in English and Spanish; the YES-NM website link that offers an on-line tool to help people learn if they qualify for nutrition, medical, cash, and child care assistance; the fraud reporting and fair hearings requests links; poverty guidelines and information about federal health care reform. Also now readable with a click of the mouse are the most recent news

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releases affecting the department.

One thing unique about the HSD website is that ever since websites became required public information/management tools back in the mid-1990's, the department has relied on its internal staff to maintain, upgrade and modify it. It has come a long way since its infancy when the website was just one long, long page with no links to other sites, information or documents.

Besides this fresh campaign to improve the department's public website, the ASB has also done much work on internal HSD IT applications. "With the help of bureau staff member's Anupama Kodali, Teresa Henke and Gordon O'Brien, we are helping to make life easier for thousands of people working in HSD," said Thomas-Gravel.

One promising project is the Income Support Division's (ISD's) Client Tracking System (CTS), which was piloted in Albuquerque and going statewide this month. "This is an internal application, so any ISD worker can enter in and/or find up-to-date information on what a client's status is," said Thomas-Gravel. "We continue to work on upgrading this program because staff are asking for even more enhanced information to make finding information that much quicker."

"Carol and her team have been so accommodating from the beginning, and they have continued to respond immediately when asked," said ISD's Rochelle Radloff, Albuquerque's SE office director. "They accepted our pencil drawings explaining what we wanted them to do without panicking; then bridged the communication barriers that sometimes exist between IT and non-IT staff. This software has been a huge help to our offices and the upgrades have made the work we do so much easier."

The ASB has also updated the old ISD's Incapacity Review Unit's (IRU) database, making it user-friendly and more secure for the eleven ISD workers in central office who work on applications for the General Assistance Program.

In the Fair Hearings Bureau, work was done to update an antiquated case tracking system. "The Fair Hearings Bureau recently updated its own Case Tracking System," said Louise D. Schaeffer, Fair Hearings Manager. "These enhancements have greatly improved support staff efficiency, workflow and the generation of useable statistical reports. Gordon O'Brien did an excellent job fine tuning the system for us, and I thank him for his great work."

Other systems the ASB is working on include the Office of Inspector General's (OIG's) investigation's database and Administrative Services Division's Joint Accounting System's (JAS) database – the new Fixed Assets Management System (FAMS). Both systems should be in place in the next couple of months.

Not only does the ASB work well with computers, as you now know by now, they can also actually work quite well with humans! Here's another example of this: Because the Medical Assistance Division's (MAD) server is on a different network than the rest of the department, the 160 people in the MAD aren't able to complete MS Office 2007 training courses directly from their personal computers. To fill this void, HSD's Office of Human Resources Trainer, Cheryl Thompson sought out Thomas-Gravel's assistance.

"Cat (Carol) and Teresa have been incredibly supportive of OHR's training operation, showing this support in many ways. They act as liaisons of information from OHR to ITD regarding the HSD IDEAL-NM Blackboard online training; they were actively supportive of TeachUComp MS Office 2007 online training and were essential in seeing that the computer lab at Plaza San Miguel was made operational so that employees without access to TeachUComp are able to take the courses."

Thompson said Teresa Henke continues to act as the point of contact and a resource for employees needing the training lab for this purpose; and she credits Anupama Kodali for her reliable work responding to requests for updates to the HSD Working at HSD, Employee Area Website. "I can definitely say that ITD reflects an internal customer-friendly attitude with the ASB team looking for ways to support HSD divisions' needs, both for our clients and for staff," she said.

"Cat and her group have been working hard to do great things for our customers, said Kristina Lawson, ITD's Deputy CIO for Software Engineering. "I know I speak for the management team in ITD when I say that we appreciate Cat's leadership, the dedication of her team and everything that they do to support the work of the HSD."



**ITD's Application Support Bureau's Anupama Kodali (front), Cat Thomas-Gravel, Teresa Henke and Gordon O'Brien are proud of the work they have done to help HSD staff.**

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childhood obesity, diabetes and substance abuse and suicide prevention didn't begin until 2004.

"Medicaid's participation as full partners in the health care delivery system began with the implementation of the School-based Health Center Pilot Project, *Salud! Comes to Your School*," said Mary Kay Pera, who is retired from HSD/Medicaid where she was the first director of the Medicaid School Health Office and continues to be active in the program.

At the close of the department's project in 2004, the original five pilot sites were participating in Medicaid; today there are 47 SBHCs in public schools that are also participating in Medicaid. "That is progress, especially for the children and youth who have been and are being served today," said Pera. "As for me, I am deeply honored to have been a small part of this progress."

Today, the Medicaid portion of the program is administered by Angela Medrano and three other MAD staffers. Medrano said they help the DOH conduct site reviews in participating schools across the state. Counties like Bernalillo, San Juan, Santa Fe and Doña Ana have several participating schools, but 14 other counties have just one participating school and all participating schools don't have a Medicaid component to their SBHC. "It is hard for us to determine just how much our part of the program costs because most of the kids' receiving health care in the schools are in Salud! managed care," said Medrano. "The MCO's pay the schools from a portion of what we pay them each month. Other money comes from the public schools, local governments and grants to pay for the school nurses."

Like most HSD programs, the SBHC Program has evolved over its 30-year life span. "I believe that SBHCs have come a long, long way," said Medrano. "I remember working with schools that didn't get the concept of SBHCs; now they understand the program's intent, understand the lingo and get the whole process."

UNM's Jane McGrath was on the ground when the SBHC concept was introduced to public schools in the early 1980's, and she agrees with Medrano about the then, I was a medical school of the early SBHCs were lo-said McGrath.

When asked why SBHCs McGrath said, "SBHC got country primarily because of number of teenage pregnancies to the doctor's office dropped

The first SBHCs were in Acoma Laguna High School, Grande High School. Over the include those offered today,

services, and the number of participating schools have increased as well. McGrath credits MAD Director Carolyn Ingram for her work, then as a bureau chief, in getting language into the Salud! MCO contracts ensuring that Medicaid SBHC services would be an option for schools.

Medrano said the future of the SBHC Program looks bright: Last year, for example, 16,000 students made 45,000 visits to SBHCs. She noted too that while the typical school nurse's function of dealing with students' cuts and bruises and the sniffles remains integral in all schools, the coming of health care reform allows SBHCs to continue to focus on providing comprehensive health care to more students by making these school-based centers a primary care medical home for more students.

**— Medrano has not only been busy with her daytime job as a SBHC Administrator for HSD, recently she and others worked with the State of Colorado to win a joint Chi-pra Grant where New Mexico and Colorado will share in a five-year \$7.7 million grant from the Children's Health Insurance Program to improve the SBHC programs in both states. "Interestingly, in NM we have always focused our SBHC work in our middle and high schools," said Medrano, "While Colorado has traditionally focused their efforts in the elementary schools." —**

program's early days: "Back student and remember that some cated in school storage rooms,"

came about in the first place, their start here and across the the big concern over the growing and the fact that children's visits off dramatically after age five." Albuquerque High School, Española High School and Rio years, services were expanded to including behavioral health ser-



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