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More Immigrant Children to Benefit from State's Food Stamp Program

Santa Fe, New Mexico – September 24, 2003 – Beginning in October, federal eligibility for families receiving food stamps in New Mexico changes, allowing legal immigrant children, regardless of their date of entry into the United States to participate in the program. “We’re not sure how many more families will apply for food stamps because of this rule change for immigrants,” said Katie Falls, director of the Income Support Division, which administers the Food Stamp Program. “We do know that thousands of legal immigrant children living here are now eligible to participate, and we want to get the word out to their parents regardless of their legal status in the United States.” Families can complete food stamp applications now and begin receiving benefits as early as next month.

There is a direct correlation between poverty and hunger. Currently New Mexico has the highest rate of child poverty in the nation, the highest rate of food insecurity in the nation and the third highest rate of hunger in the nation. The Food Stamp program is one program that helps these families put food on the tables. In August, 77,431 New Mexico families benefited from the 100% federally funded Food Stamp Program, an increase of 13% from last year. However, that is only 66% of all of those eligible. HSD would like to see that figure increase over the next year to 80%. “To accomplish this goal, we’ve begun outreach efforts to get more eligible families enrolled, especially the elderly, individuals visiting food pantries and soup kitchens and families where only Spanish is spoken in the household,” said Falls.

Each month, \$16 million in benefits help supplement low-income families’ food budgets. On average, eligible families in New Mexico receive \$330 per month in food stamps. Immigrant families could receive up to \$100 each month for each child (under 18-years-old), depending on how much money they earn. “The Food Stamp Program is a major program for relieving hunger, and food stamps can also help families meet their other obligations, such as medical and housing needs,” said Falls.

For more information on the food stamp rule changes please call 1-800-283-4465 or visit your local Human Services Department Income Support Office.

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