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**For Immediate Release**

## **HSD Secretary Pamela Hyde Announces Additional Food Available to Help the Fight Against Hunger and Food Insecurity in New Mexico**

*Santa Fe, January 21, 2004* - The Human Services Department (HSD) and the New Mexico Association of Food Banks (NMAFB) are providing more food to more people more often. This is after the department began a partnership with the NMAFB to improve its' USDA surplus food program. "More food is now available to New Mexicans than just four months ago when we began our partnership with the food bank association," said Katie Falls, director of HSD's Income Support Division. "We also appreciate the understanding and patience of so many people and food providers as we made necessary modifications to the program to make it even more effective in combating hunger."

Previously, the department was solely responsible for delivering USDA surplus food to about 100 sites such as homeless shelters, community centers and faith-based institutions once every other month. Now the seven food banks deliver this same food plus other food collected by their association to more locations throughout New Mexico.

"The addition of USDA food is helping us provide a surplus of foods to our inventories," said Melody Wattenbarger, president of the board of the NMAFB. "This large new food supply will be a powerful tool in the fight against hunger since it will provide a consistent, year-round source of food to help the food banks and their member agencies feed thousands of people each month."

The NMAFB is an association of seven food banks that collect and distribute excess food, mostly from large food companies. Each year, they distribute more than 17 million pounds of food through a statewide network of more than 600 food pantries, shelters and soup kitchens ranging in size from the small La Casa de la Hope in Tucumcari – serving mostly transients along I-40 – to large soup kitchens in Albuquerque like the Albuquerque Rescue Mission on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Southwest that serves hundreds of homeless families each day.

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Low income families interested in finding out where to go to receive food distributions in their community may access a new HSD Website listing participating organizations at <http://www.state.nm.us/hsd/foodlocations.html>. This Website will be updated as more organizations are added to the program.

This new partnership with NMFBA is just one of the efforts that the Human Services Department is undertaking to combat hunger. Aggressive food stamp outreach now has 82,222 families participating in the program, which is a 12 percent increase over December 2003, when there were 72,495 families in the program. Plans for a more simplified food stamp application should attract even more families to the program this year. Also, the Governor's Hunger Summit (held last October) and follow up meetings have generated additional groundwork for combating hunger in 2004.