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**For Immediate Release**

## **Cold Months and Higher Heating Costs Are Here and Many Low-Income New Mexicans can Get Help From HSD**

*Santa Fe, December 6, 2004* – The New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) has been authorized \$8.5 million for the federally funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). “With higher heating costs a reality again this year, we are already helping low-income New Mexicans make ends meet this winter,” said Pamela Hyde, HSD Secretary. “LIHEAP can help families keep healthy and warm by paying up to a full months home energy bill, whether it is for natural gas, electric, propane or wood.”

Since Oct. 1, 2004, 20,284 applications for LIHEAP have been approved by the department’s Income Support Division field offices, which are located throughout the state. “This year, LIHEAP payments have been ranging from \$40 to \$240 depending on a families income, its size, whether or not vulnerable people – children and elderly – are part of the families’ composition, and the percentage of the total household income that goes to paying for home heating, ” said HSD’s Loretta Williams, who administers LIHEAP.

Families earning less than 150 percent of federal poverty can qualify for LIHEAP. This means that a family of three earning less than \$1,959 per month could qualify for energy assistance.

LIHEAP applications can be completed at any of the Income Support Division offices. Families who are already receiving food stamps would qualify for LIHEAP.

Applicants should bring with them the following information when applying for LIHEAP:

- Proof of household income for the past 30 days;
- A photo ID for the person filing the application;
- A Social Security Number (SSN) for all household members;
- Citizenship/resident status
- One of the following from the past 12 months:
  - Highest gas or electric bill for 30 days of service;
  - Account history printout from a propane company, or receipts for two propane fills with the fewest days in between;
  - A receipt for the purchase of fire wood;
- A disconnect notice, if you have received one, or the cost of starting utility service at your home

New Mexico is anticipating an additional \$1.1 million from Congress this year, which will allow the state to help an additional 3,500 families over last year, when 54,434 low-income families were served.

For more information on LIHEAP, please call 1-800-283-4465, or visit the department’s LIHEAP website at <http://www.state.nm.us/hsd/liheap.html>.

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