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**For Immediate Release**

## **The Human Services Department Looks to Coordinate With Other Work Programs to Improve Services for Welfare Recipients**

*Santa Fe, March 25, 2004* – The Human Services Department (HSD) and the new Office of Workforce Training and Development (OWTD) have formed a partnership for administering the department's TANF/NMWorks program in the eastern part of the state. "We want to coordinate work-related efforts to erase duplication and provide broader services to our clients who must find employment," said Human Services Department Secretary Pamela Hyde.

By advancing a pilot program in as many of the eastern OWTD region counties as possible (Union, Harding, Quay, Guadalupe, De Baca, Curry, Roosevelt, Lincoln, Chavez, Lea, Eddy, and Otero) the department is moving forward in meeting the requirements of an executive order signed by Governor Richardson creating the OWTD. The OWTD is responsible for administering the federal work program grants under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. They also coordinate work-training activities throughout the state to enhance the job skills and employability of people to foster sound economic development.

"The transformation of state welfare and workforce systems has prompted us to assess the relationship between welfare reform and workforce development in New Mexico," said Len Malry, OWTD's deputy executive director. "The way it is now, welfare and work programs are essentially two separate systems with limited communication and coordination. Our vision is a single workforce system with simplified access for all and stronger linkages between those seeking work or education and training programs."

"It makes sense for us to look at placing our Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) clients, who face time limits and mandatory work requirements, under the umbrella of the OWTD," said Hyde. "Because WIA services are often provided through local, one-stop offices, our TANF/NMWorks recipients may be afforded better access to other agencies that provide support services like domestic violence and substance abuse counseling, child care, transportation and education and training."

Currently, five educational institutions (New Mexico Highlands University, New Mexico State University, the University of New Mexico, San Juan College and Eastern New Mexico University at Roswell) and the Commission on the Status of Women have contracts with the department to administer the state's TANF/NMWorks program. About 9,300, mostly single parents are provided services to help them become work ready and find employment. Last year, \$14.2 million in TANF block grant money was funded for the TANF/NMWorks program.

Plans call for the eastern OWTD to begin providing services to TANF/NMWorks clients in July.

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