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For Immediate Release

Human Services Department Secretary Announces More Children with Disabilities Benefiting From Increased Medicaid School-Based Services

Santa Fe, March 29, 2004 – Nearly 2,000 more students are being served by the Human Services Department's (HSD) Medicaid School-Based Services (SBS) than last year. "We have made a concerted effort to get more school districts across the state signed up for Medicaid SBS," said Pamela Hyde, HSD secretary.

Medicaid SBS pays for direct health services such as physical, speech and occupational therapy for disabled children in a school setting. So far this year, \$4.1 million in federal Medicaid dollars have gone to 46 school districts and collaboratives participating in the program. These dollars match \$1.2 million in General Fund dollars spent by schools on these services. "These are important services that allow children with disabilities some of the same opportunities as other children by allowing them to more fully participate in the education process," said Carolyn Ingram, HSD's medical assistance division director.

Under the Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA), federal law requires schools to provide disabled children the same access to education as other kids. The Medicaid SBS program helps and is now serving 11,427 children. "We are dedicated to ensuring that all children eligible for these services get them," said Hyde.

More schools are now signing up for Medicaid SBS since the program was renamed and the rules in the joint powers agreement between HSD and school districts will be changed. The Portales school district has recently joined and Española is awaiting approval of its application. "I am delighted that reinstatement of administrative activities will soon be afforded to our school districts," said Department of Education Secretary, Dr. Veronica Garcia.

Under the Johnson Administration, HSD eliminated the administrative claiming option for schools in the Medicaid in the Schools Program. This option is being reinstated by the Richardson Administration and will again allow Medicaid to pay for administrative services like outreach and coordination of care. In the meantime, Medicaid is helping schools pay for more direct health care services for children.

The department is awaiting approval by the federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to reinstate administrative services. "We hope to have coverage of administrative activities in place by fall when the school year resumes," said Hyde.

Reporters interested in contacting a school participating in the School Based Services program should contact Betina Gonzales McCracken at (505) 827-6245.

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