



NEW MEXICO HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT
P.O. Box 2348
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-2348

Bill Richardson
Governor

Pamela S. Hyde, J.D.
Secretary

*For further information contact: Betina Gonzales McCracken,
Communications Director, (505) 827-6245*

For Immediate Release

Human Services Department Fatherhood Conference to Focus on Keeping Dads in Kids Lives in Good Times and Bad

Santa Fe, April 27, 2004 – The Human Services Department’s Child Support Enforcement Division is sponsoring a semi-annual Fatherhood Initiative Partnership Meeting in Albuquerque on Thursday, April 29, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at 1015 Tijeras NW. “This is a great opportunity for fathers who want to be a part of their children’s lives to learn ways of doing just that,” said Stephanie Gonzales, Child Support Enforcement Division Director.

Gonzales is one of several who will be speaking at this week’s event. Others include Charles E. Stuart of the National Incarcerated Fathers Program, Robert Pacheco of the Bernalillo County Juvenile Detention Center and Judge Debra Walker of the Second Judicial District Court.

Gonzales will highlight legislation signed by Governor Richardson earlier this year, which takes effect on May 19 and allows the Child Support Enforcement Division to make it easier for non-custodial parents to get on a payment plan and lower the interest rate they are currently paying for past due child support. “Our goal is to make it easier for non-custodial parents, most of whom are fathers, to become more a part of their children’s lives, both emotionally and financially,” said Gonzales. “Some of this legislation is intended to help us to do that.” When both parents are supporting their children financially, it not only benefits the child, but also taxpayers because there is less demand for other social programs like Medicaid, food assistance and childcare and financial assistance.

There are 62,000 parents, most of them custodial parents, using child support enforcement services to locate absent parents, establish paternity and enforce court orders. The division has an arsenal of enforcement tools at its disposal to enforce tough child support cases, such as suspending drivers’, hunting and fishing, and professional licenses; income tax intercept authority; publishing the 25 Most Wanted list of child support obligors in New Mexico; and national new-hire and employee databases.

Last year, child support enforcement collections in New Mexico were \$72 million, up by 12.6 percent from the previous year. The division anticipates collecting \$78 million this year.

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The Fatherhood Initiative Partnership meeting agenda is attached.