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For Immediate Release

Child Support Enforcement Collections Pass \$80 Million Mark for 2004

Santa Fe, July 20, 2004 – Human Services Department Secretary Pamela Hyde announced today that the state’s Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) has exceeded its collections goal by \$10 million. As the CSED closed its books on fiscal year 2004 (ended June 30), the amount of collections reached \$80.7 million. “Strong but fair child support enforcement activities are one of the most effective ways to keep children out of poverty,” said Hyde. “I’m happy to be able to make this announcement, knowing that more children in New Mexico are receiving financial help from both parents.”

Child support enforcement employees have several tools that are helping them do their job better, including: driver’s license revocations, income tax intercepts and wage-withholdings. “We credit everyone involved in child support enforcement from caseworkers to the business community, who withhold money from employee paychecks, to the public who have helped us locate non-payers of child support through our 25 Most Wanted list for owing child support,” said Child Support Enforcement Division Director, Stephanie Gonzales. “I also credit the strong leadership philosophy and expectations the department’s administration has provided staff.”

Recent child support enforcement-related legislation, passed in the 2004 legislative session, will help increase child support collections this year, as well. “I look for these changes to help us do even better this year,” said Gonzales. New child support enforcement legislation gives the division more negotiating options for collecting on past due child support payments, and it provides for lower interest rates that non-custodial parents owing back child support must pay. “I believe this rule change will help more non-custodial parents decide to come into our offices and get themselves on a reasonable payment plan that will benefit their children,” said Gonzales.

The department has 70,000 child support cases in New Mexico. In fiscal year 2005, the department’s child support enforcement collections goal is set at \$82 million, which based on this year’s collections, it expects to exceed by a wide margin as well.

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