



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 or 505-699-4675
Or Melody Wattenbarger at the New Mexico Food Bank Association
505-247-2052 x100 or 505-417-9163*

For Immediate Release

New Mexico Gets \$835,000 for Food Stamp Outreach

(Project to focus on increased food stamp participation, which equals more money for New Mexico's economy)

Albuquerque, July 8, 2004 –New Mexico Human Services Secretary Pamela Hyde and New Mexico Food Bank Association President Melody Wattenbarger announced today that New Mexico has been awarded a federal grant totaling \$835,000 to help increase food stamp outreach efforts. The goal is to target New Mexico families in three counties—Bernalillo, Socorro and Rio Arriba—who may be eligible for food stamps and don't realize it. "It is the Human Services Department's mission to fight poverty and help eliminate hunger in New Mexico and this grant is a good first step in helping us reach that goal," said Hyde.

The federal grant will help HSD in partnership with NMAFB increase hunger-fighting efforts that began last October during the Governor's Hunger Summit, which was a collaborative of public, private non-profit and private business organizations. "We are working hard to create high-wage jobs and lift New Mexicans out of poverty," Governor Bill Richardson said. "We eliminated the harmful tax on food. This grant gives us the ability to find those New Mexico families who need, deserve and are eligible for extra help."

Last year, \$215 million dollars in federal food stamps was brought into the state, helping some 87-thousand families put food on their tables each month, while also supporting the state's economy. The USDA reports that for every five-dollars of food stamps spent the state gets an additional \$9.20 pumped back into the economy.

Cooperation between several state agencies along with several public agencies is one of the reasons New Mexico was chosen to receive the grant. "The three counties were chosen for this project because of the strong partnership between public and private organizations which is key in making this a community-based project," said Melody Wattenbarger, NMAFB President.

The Income Support Division (ISD) has begun working with the USDA to simplify the food stamp application itself in an effort to increase overall participation in the program among eligible families. "We know there are thousands of New Mexico families that are eligible for food stamps, but are not participating in the program," said Katie Falls, ISD Director. "We hope a simplified application, along with outreach workers in local grocery stores, food banks and churches will help get more eligible families on board."

-More-

The following details eligibility guidelines for participation in the food stamp program.

Family Size	Maximum food stamp eligibility Gross income/per month (130% of Federal Poverty Level)	Maximum food stamp amount/per month
1	\$973	\$141
2	\$1,313	\$259
3	\$1,654	\$371
4	\$1,994	\$471

The USDA will present the \$835,000 check to the NMAFB and HSD next week in Albuquerque. Work on the project will begin immediately and continue through June 2007.

###