



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*

**For Immediate Release**

## **Secretary Pamela Hyde Announces Medicaid Outreach Partnership to Reach Native American Children**

*Santa Fe, September 9, 2004* –The Human Services Department (HSD) is getting the word out about changes in the Medicaid program in an effort to ensure rural Native American children continue to get the health benefits they need. “Recent administrative changes shouldn’t keep eligible children from getting health care through the Medicaid program,” said Secretary Hyde. “However, parents do need to know about the changes and keep their cases updated.”

Beginning in July, recertification for income-eligible Medicaid children and their parents changed from once a year to every six months. Parents are encouraged to know when their recertifications are due, watch for notices in the mail from HSD and notify the department immediately of an address change. “Because Medicaid is such an important source of health care coverage for Native American children, our Native American Liaison is working with tribal and pueblo governments, advocates and health care providers throughout the state to inform parents and families of the changes,” said Carolyn Ingram, State Medicaid Director.

Among the events planned to get these important messages to Native American communities are radio announcements, training for Indian Health Service eligibility workers and Tribal community health representatives and visits by HSD, the New Mexico Covering Kids and Families Native American project and the New Mexico Primary Care Association to tribal and pueblo communities. “Collaboration between the Human Services Department and the Primary Care Association is essential in reaching out to the rural communities and ensuring New Mexicans get the care they deserve,” said David Roddy, NMPCA Executive Director.

Legislators have been following the changes in Medicaid closely, and they encourage the community visits. “Health care continues to be a serious issue among Native Americans and we’re glad to see that the Human Services Department is going the extra step to ensure our Native Americans are informed of the changes that could affect their coverage,” said State Representative James Roger Madalena, 2002 Medicaid Reform Committee Co-Chair.

**In an effort to avoid loss of Medicaid benefits, parents of Medicaid clients or Medicaid clients themselves are asked to contact the Medicaid Client Services Bureau at 1-888-997-2583.**

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