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For Immediate Release

Governor Bill Richardson's "Fresh Start" Program for Parents Behind in Paying Child Support Begins in Roswell Area

Santa Fe, New Mexico, October 14, 2005 – Human Services Department Secretary Pamela Hyde announces that Governor Bill Richardson's child support enforcement Fresh Start Program has begun in Chaves and Eddy counties. "This is an opportunity for non-custodial parents — many of whom have been absent in their children's lives, both emotionally and financially — to make a fresh start by working with our Roswell child support enforcement office," said Hyde.

The Fresh Start Program is a first for the state's Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) and includes amnesty-forgiveness as the first of three phases in an arrears management program. "Amnesty-forgiveness is a way of getting non-custodial parents in the doors of child support offices. From there we can begin to negotiate forgiveness of some of the child support owed, restore suspended licenses or, possibly, decrease the interest rate being paid on arrears," said Stephanie Gonzales CSED Director. "Then we can get the non-custodial parent started again on a regular payment plan that he or she can stick with over time."

Chaves and Eddy counties are included in the third phase of the rollout of the Fresh Start Program. Earlier this year, the Las Vegas Child Support Enforcement office began Fresh Start in the northeastern part of the state as a pilot program. Because of its success there the department is extending the program statewide.

In the Roswell area letters have been mailed to over 100 non-custodial parents owing more than \$20,000 in child support urging them to sign up for the Fresh Start Program. "We hope these parents will realize this is truly a great opportunity for them to talk directly with a caseworker who can get them back on track in their child support responsibilities and, hopefully, re-involve themselves in their children's lives," said Gonzales. Overall, there are 2,947 non-custodial parents with child support enforcement cases in these two counties who are not current in their child support payments.

Non-custodial parents living in the Roswell area owing child support and who are interested in participating in the Fresh Start Program may call toll free 1-888-293-0825.

Below is the Fresh Start implementation schedule for the rest of the state:

October 31 – Catron, Grant, Hidalgo and Luna Counties
January 9, 2006 – San Juan, and McKinley Counties
February 6, 2006 – Doña Ana, Lincoln, Otero and Sierra Counties
April 3, 2006 – South Bernalillo, Sandoval and Cibola Counties
May 1, 2006 – North Bernalillo, Socorro, Torrance and Valencia Counties
June 6, 2006– Lea, and Roosevelt Counties

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