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For Immediate Release

Governor Bill Richardson's *Insure New Mexico!* Initiatives are Working

More New Mexicans Take Advantage of Affordable Health Insurance.

Santa Fe, December 12, 2005 –New Mexicans are beginning to take advantage of health insurance packages now available in the state through Governor Bill Richardson's *Insure New Mexico!* initiative.

"The new State Coverage Insurance (SCI) plan and lower Health Insurance Alliance (HIA) premium rates have helped thousands of New Mexicans get affordable health insurance," said Lieutenant Governor Diane Denish, Chair of the *Insure New Mexico!* Council. "But clearly there are many more of our citizens who are eligible, yet have not taken advantage of these discounted health insurance programs."

More than 3,000 individuals and small employers have applied and are eligible for the SCI plan. "SCI helps mostly working New Mexicans by offering an affordable plan for the employer and employee," said Pamela Hyde, HSD Secretary. Enrollment in the SCI plan began in July and is administered by Lovelace Health Plan, Molina Health Care, and Presbyterian Health Plan.

The SCI plan is a public/private health insurance plan that allows employers with fewer than 50 employees who earn below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to participate. That's a family of three with an income of \$32,180. "Employers pay a small monthly premium, the employee pays an even smaller monthly premium and the state/federally-funded Medicaid program picks up the rest of the tab," said Hyde.

The number of individuals and employers insured through the Health Insurance Alliance also increased. In September, HIA rates were significantly reduced thanks to legislation signed by Governor Richardson earlier this year. "It is clear to us that in addition to HIA not requiring medical screening, the new lower rates are the reason for the increased number of participants in our program," said Joan Rutherford, HIA Executive Director. "Since September we have insured 976 new lives. That's quite an improvement compared to the first eight months of the year, which averaged 85 new lives insured per month."

Other *Insure New Mexico!* initiatives include the Small Employer Insurance Program which will be implemented for employees who have not had insurance the previous 12 months including non-profit organizations with fewer than 50 employees. That program is expected to launch in early 2006. Other options include the New Mexico Medical Insurance Pool, which insures high-risk individuals who have been previously rejected by commercial carriers. Finally, efforts continue to provide outreach to encourage low-income families to enroll their children in the Medicaid *New Mexikids* program.

The *Insure New Mexico!* Council continued to meet throughout the year to generate more options to improve the state's uninsured rate. Those recommendations will be given to Governor Richardson later this month.

Interested employers and individuals are encouraged to call 1-800-204-4700 or visit

<http://insurenemexico.state.nm.us/>.

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