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For Immediate Release

New Mexico's Medicaid Helping More Children with Disabilities Obtain Services at Schools Across the State

More than 16,000 New Mexico students received health care through the program during the past school year

Santa Fe, May 24, 2005 –New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) Secretary Pamela Hyde is pleased to announce the ever-increasing success of the Medicaid School-Based Services (SBS) program, as an additional 2,000 children, many with special education and health care needs, have received services this school year. “Medicaid-funded school-based health care is now in nearly every school district in the state, helping New Mexico’s children and youth access the health care services they need,” said Hyde.

More than 16,000 children and youth have received services through the SBS program this school year. That’s 2,000 more than last year, and almost 7,000 more than 2003.

Medicaid SBS pays for services such as physical, speech and occupational therapy for disabled children and youth in a school setting. “Medicaid payments for school-based health care services are expected to increase to more than \$10 million, compared to \$3.7 million in 2003,” said Carolyn Ingram, State Medicaid Director. Schools are also benefiting from the reinstatement of administrative costs, which help schools educate students and parents about Medicaid eligibility. This change is bringing in an additional \$500,000 to New Mexico schools.

The school districts that have made the greatest gains in providing services are Santa Fe Public Schools, Las Cruces Public Schools, Zuni Public Schools, Gadsden Independent Schools and Roswell Independent Schools. “These mostly rural-area school districts urged their students to take advantage of health care services available to them in the school setting,” said Kari Nordby, Medicaid School Health Office Director. The Medicaid School Health Office is also reaching out to charter and alternative schools to bring them into the program.

Medicaid-funded health services will continue to grow next year with Governor Bill Richardson’s school-based health center (SBHC) expansion, which was announced last year. Currently, there are 34 SBHCs across New Mexico, but the Governor wants to double that number to 68, ensuring at least one in every county. Many of the current SBHCs are a part of the *Salud! Comes to your School*, a project that links SBHCs with New Mexico’s Medicaid managed care program.

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