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For Immediate Release

Human Services and Public Education Departments Partner to Enroll Children in the Free or Reduced School Lunch and Breakfast Program

Santa Fe, August 12, 2005 – The Human Services (HSD) and Public Education Departments (PED) are partnering to ensure New Mexico’s low-income children receive healthy meals during the upcoming school year by simply sharing data. “Children who are already receiving Food Stamps automatically qualify for the free or reduced lunch and breakfast program,” said Pamela Hyde, HSD Secretary. “That’s why, once again this year, HSD is sharing Food Stamp data with PED who work with the schools to automatically sign up their students for free or reduced nutritious meals.”

Since 2003 New Mexico has moved from first in the nation for food insecurity to fifth, and from third in hunger to thirteenth. The Food Stamp and the School Lunch Programs are two USDA programs that are helping in the fight against food insecurity and hunger in New Mexico. “It is this kind of collaboration between state agencies that addresses whole child issues which allow children to be successful in school,” said Education Secretary Dr. Veronica C. García.

Each month approximately 93,000 families are participating in the Food Stamp Program, which allows them to shop at their local stores and purchase food for their families with the simple EBT card, similar to a debit card. “However, there are thousands more families that are eligible for the program, but are just not participating,” said Katie Falls, HSD Income Support Division Director. “This means there are thousands more children who could automatically be signed up for the school lunch and breakfast program, but are not. Those are the families we are trying to reach.”

Families who earn below 130% of the Federal Poverty Level may be eligible for the Food Stamp Program. For example a family of 4 who makes \$2,043 a month may qualify.

**To find out if you qualify for the Food Stamp Program call the Human Services
Department at 1-800-283-4465, or visit the department’s website at
<http://www.state.nm.us/hsd/>.**

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