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For Immediate Release

Child Support Enforcement Director to Detail Success of Governor Bill Richardson's "Fresh Start" Program Before Welfare Reform and Oversight Committee Wednesday

Santa Fe, New Mexico, August 30, 2005 – Human Services Department's Child Support Enforcement, Director Stephanie Gonzales will testify before the Welfare Reform and Oversight Committee tomorrow morning at 11 a.m. in Santa Fe at the State Capitol, Room 307.

Director Gonzales has been asked to detail Governor Bill Richardson's "Fresh Start" Child Support Arrears Management Program, which is currently being expanded across the state. "Our pilot project during the months of April through June in northeastern New Mexico was quite successful and brought in \$402,331 in child support arrears to New Mexico's families," said Gonzales. "We're looking forward to increasing this success to New Mexico families as we expand the program across the state."

The Fresh Start Program is a first for the state's Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) and it includes amnesty as the first of three phases in an arrears management program. "Amnesty is a way of getting non-custodial parents in the doors of child support offices, where 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 Gonzales.

The pilot project targeted child support cases from Colfax, DeBaca, Guadalupe, Harding, Mora, Quay, San Miguel, Taos and Union counties. The program expanded August 1 to include Santa Fe, Los Alamos and Rio Arriba Counties. The program will then be unveiled across the state through June 2006.

- September 14, 2005 – Chaves, and Eddy Counties
- October 31, 2005 – 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, Eddy and Roosevelt Counties

Parents interested in participating in the Fresh Start Program may call toll free 1-800-293-0825.

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