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For Immediate Release

More New Mexico Families Get Help from the State for Home Heating Assistance

December Sees Highest Number of Applications Approved

Santa Fe, January 6, 2006 – More New Mexico families are getting help from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) program than ever before. “The high cost of heating homes this winter has brought more New Mexico families who qualify for LIHEAP into our offices,” said Human Services Department Secretary Pamela Hyde. “And, thanks to Governor Bill Richardson’s special session and approval of \$23 million to the program, we are able to help more families this year with a larger benefit than ever before.”

This week New Mexico learned the federal portion of the LIHEAP funding has been approved at \$9.9 million, of which, \$523,567 are emergency contingency funds.

Through the end of December, HSD has approved 32,653 LIHEAP applications and has distributed \$12.6 million in benefits to 29,486 households, for an average benefit of \$430. “The number of applications approved in December alone is 13,191, the most ever approved in one month,” said Katie Falls, HSD Income Support Division Director.

Last year more than 55,000 households benefited from LIHEAP; however that is only 25% of New Mexico families who qualify for the program. “This year we are seeing new faces apply for energy assistance,” said Falls. Between October 2005 and December 2005, 20% of the households receiving a LIHEAP benefit did not receive a benefit the previous year, while 18% had never received a benefit.

Households qualifying for LIHEAP earn less than 150% of the Federal Poverty Level; for example, a family of three with a monthly income below \$2,011.

LIHEAP applications can be completed at any of the department’s 35 Income Support Division offices. Applicants should bring with them the following information when applying for LIHEAP:

- Proof of household income for the past 30 days;
- Identification of the person filing the application;
- A Social Security Number (SSN) for all household members;
- Statement of citizenship or proof of immigration status for all household members; and

- One of the following from the past 12 months:
 - Highest gas or electric bill for 30 days of service;
 - Account history printout from a propane company, or receipts for two propane fills with the fewest days in between;
 - A receipt for the purchase of firewood; or
 - A disconnect notice, if you have received one, or the cost of starting utility service at your home.

For more information on LIHEAP, please call 1-800-283-4465, or visit the department's LIHEAP website at <http://www.state.nm.us/hsd/liheap.html>.

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