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For Immediate Release

Secretary Pamela Hyde Announces New Income Support Offices Now Serving Northwest NM in Time for Native American Heritage Month

New Offices Part of the Native American Outreach and Enrollment Project

Santa Fe, November 2, 2006 – As a part of November’s Native American Heritage Month, Human Services Department Secretary Pamela Hyde is pleased to announce that three new Income Support Division (ISD) offices are now open and assisting people in Northwest New Mexico through three Indian Health Service (IHS) hospitals. “Our partnership with Indian Health Service means we will be able to enroll more Native Americans who qualify for our programs such as Medicaid, but have not applied simply because of an access issue,” said Secretary Hyde.

Governor Bill Richardson recommended funding for the Native American Outreach and Enrollment Project during the 2006 Legislative Session. The project is part of the Governor’s *Year of the Child* initiatives to address the critical health insurance needs of New Mexico’s children.

The three income support offices are located at the IHS hospitals in Shiprock, Crownpoint and Gallup. They are open 8-5, Monday through Friday. Native Americans applying for public assistance in these offices will be assisted with Medicaid and Food Stamp services. “This is a great example of federal and state partnerships coming together for the people,” said Sen. Leonard Tsosie, who represents a large portion of the Navajo Nation and supported the outreach and enrollment project. “This project helps break down the barriers many Native Americans face in obtaining health insurance.”

A 2004 survey found that Native Americans are disproportionately uninsured in New Mexico: 28 percent compared to 11 percent of non-Hispanic whites. The survey also found that Native Americans in the Northwest part of the state have among the highest rates of uninsured. “For these reasons, we knew we had to do more to reach Native Americans in New Mexico and get them the health insurance and other services people need to be successful in life,” said Hyde.

A pilot project between HSD and the Gallup Indian Medical Center (GIMC) began in January 2005 established a full-time eligibility worker on site at GIMC. “This has been a successful project, as both Medicaid and Food Stamp enrollment has increased among the Navajo population in this area,” said Terrelene Massey, HSD’s Native American Liaison. “Having staff on site who speak both Navajo and

English has been very helpful in our outreach efforts, something we hope to continue with the new offices,” said Secretary Hyde.

HSD is looking to expand the Native American Outreach and Enrollment Project to further include other New Mexico Indian Tribes and Pueblos.

People interested in scheduling an appointment with one of the Native American ISD offices can call 1-800-231-6667.

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