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For Immediate Release

Human Services Department Secretary Pamela Hyde Encourages Low-Income Families Who Have Not Yet Applied for Energy Assistance to Do So

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program Average Benefit is \$430

Santa Fe, February 1, 2006 – Since October 2005, the Human Services Department (HSD) has approved 45,169 applications for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), with an average benefit of \$430 for each household. “New Mexico families are seeing a larger benefit this year, thanks to Governor Bill Richardson’s approval of \$23 million in state funds to this program, which is normally only federally funded,” said Pamela Hyde HSD Secretary.

Last year the program helped more than 55,000 households with their energy bill; however that number only represents one quarter of the families in New Mexico who qualify for the energy assistance. “With the additional state funds we know we can reach more families, who are finding it hard to make ends meet this winter due to the high cost of natural gas,” said Katie Falls, HSD Deputy Secretary of Programs. Approximately \$17.7 million in LIHEAP funds has been distributed to New Mexico families who qualify for the once-a-year benefit from October to September of each year.

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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