

# New Mexico Interagency Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative

Collaboration for Recovery, Resilience and Empowerment



Aging and Long-Term Services Department

Administrative Office of the Courts

Children, Youth and Families Department

New Mexico Corrections Department

Department of Finance and Administration

Department of Health

Department of Transportation

Developmental Disabilities Planning Council

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Governor's Commission on Disability

Governor's Health Policy Advisor

Health Policy Commission

Human Services Department

Indian Affairs Department

Mortgage Finance Authority

Public Education Department

PO Box 2348  
Santa Fe, NM  
87504-2348

Contact Betina Gonzales McCracken 505-827-6245 or 505-699-4675

For Immediate Release

## Important Behavioral Health Legislation Approved and Awaits Governor's Signature

### Public Meeting to Discuss Mental Health Issues Planned for the Summer

**Santa Fe, February 17, 2006** - Improving Behavioral Health in New Mexico proved to be an important topic during New Mexico's regular legislative session this year.

A set of duplicate bills that establish mental health advance directives made it through the session and are now awaiting Governor Bill Richardson's signature. HB 459, sponsored by Rep. Edward Sandoval, D-Albuquerque, and SB 234, sponsored by Sen. Mary Kay Papan, D-Las Cruces, will allow people to establish advance directives about their mental health care if they are no longer able to make decisions. Advance directives are legal documents that state a person's treatment preferences or service needs prior to a crisis situation.

"The use of mental health advance directives has widespread support from consumers of mental health services as well as from providers, family members and advocates," said Pamela Hyde, Secretary of the Human Services Department and co-chair of the State's Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative. The bill also allows people to create agent-driven directives that designate someone else as an agent to advocate for their stated interests.

New Mexico will join 22 states that have passed legislation specific to mental health advance directives because they found that more general laws did not address the specific treatment and recovery needs of people receiving mental health treatment.

The legislature adjourned without passing the much-debated Assisted Outpatient Commitment law, often referred to as "Kendra's Law". The Collaborative is planning a public hearing to discuss this and other mental health issues as part of its comprehensive planning process. The meeting will be held this summer. The date, time and location will be announced at a later date.

Three bills that make it easier to attract mental health professionals to New Mexico unanimously made it through the House and Senate and are too, awaiting the Governor's signature. They are all aimed at streamlining licensing requirements, which will help attract and retain greatly needed behavioral health providers to New Mexico. They include:

- HB 253, sponsored by Rep. Antonio Lujan, D-Las Cruces, authorizes temporary licenses, replaces outdated exams with appropriate continuing education requirements and establishes a faster system of reciprocity for experienced social workers from other states.
- HB 331, sponsored by Rep. Larry Larranaga, R-Albuquerque, removes several barriers to licensing, including granting licensure to individuals with master's or doctorate degrees that have practiced in other states for five years and are in good standing.
- HB 341, sponsored by Rep. Nick Salazar, D-Ohkay Owingeh, eliminates unnecessary exams and creates a six-month temporary license and continuing education requirements that are consistent with other behavioral health licensing boards.

The changes also include that all three boards will now be able to ensure cultural competency through Continuing Education Unit requirements, rather than a one-time exam and will have parallel six-month temporary license provisions for professionals moving to New Mexico with a good track record in another state.

(more)

Governor Richardson issued an executive order in November 2004, directing the Department of Health Secretary to lead a task force of state agencies and licensing boards to develop recommendations on how to address New Mexico's shortage of professionals who specialize in mental health and substance abuse care. The bills were a direct result of the task force's recommendations to the Governor.

A number of behavioral health budget initiatives proposed by legislators from all over the state also made it through the session. "It is heartening that behavioral health issues are receiving this kind of attention and are being recognized as an important topic," said Michelle Lujan Grisham, Department of Health Secretary. "I am looking forward to discussing these issues further during the summer and glad that we have a structure through the Behavioral Health Collaborative to address some of these issues."

###