



NEW MEXICO HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
P.O. Box 2348  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-2348

Bill Richardson

Bill Richardson  
Governor

Pamela S. Hyde, J.D.  
Secretary

Contact Betina Gonzales McCracken 505 827-6245 or 505 690-2675  
For Immediate Release

## Human Services Department Announces New “EBT” Card Distribution Plan

Mailed Cards Will Be More Convenient, Secure and Cost Effective

*Santa Fe, New Mexico, March 9, 2006* – The Human Services Department (HSD) has begun a new distribution plan for the activation and replacement of its Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. Beginning March 15, 2007, all new or replacement cards will be mailed to the EBT customers. “The mailed cards will be more convenient and secure for the client and more cost effective for the department,” said Pamela Hyde, HSD Secretary.

Each month, over 8,000 New Mexico families visit our 35 Income Support Division (ISD) offices to replace their lost or stolen EBT cards. Another 2,000 new food stamp or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participants also come in to have their new cards activated. “These types of visits will no longer be necessary because the cards will be mailed to our clients and activation will be done from a home telephone,” said Hyde.

The new EBT cards will also be embossed with the client’s name on the face of the card. The current cards contain only a card identification number. “This new feature will be more personal and help ensure the card is being used properly,” said Hyde.

There are more than 350,000 food stamp and TANF families in New Mexico with positive balances in their benefit accounts. Each month, \$26 million in public assistance food and/or cash benefits are transferred to these families’ EBT accounts.

“We anticipate that this will have a positive impact at our field offices, especially our larger ones where activating new and replacing lost cards is a full-time job,” said ISD Director Fred Sandoval. “More significantly, we believe that getting our public assistance offices out of providing banking-type services will cause noticeable decreases in congestion and improve our customer services efforts.”

The current cards will continue to work until replaced. ISD has sent notices to all families with active EBT accounts, advising them of this customer service improvement. All clients who have recently moved are encouraged to notify their local ISD office and provide their new address.

EBT customers with questions about the new EBT distribution plan can call the EBT Customer Service line at 1-800-283-4465.

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