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For Immediate Release

New Mexico's Uninsured Rate Moving in the Right Direction Despite Rapidly Rising Healthcare Costs

U.S. Census data shows New Mexicans held onto
health insurance coverage in 2005

Santa Fe, August 29, 2006 – The U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS) released this morning shows that the percentage of New Mexicans without health care coverage in 2005 statistically remained the same and now stands at 21.1 percent, while nationally the uninsured rate increased. “Today’s report shows that nationally people are losing coverage, while New Mexico as a whole is not losing ground and with new initiatives more New Mexicans will get health care coverage,” said Secretary Pamela Hyde, Human Services Department

New Mexico’s rate for the 2003-2005 three year average decreased by .2 percent to 21.1 percent or about 402,000 people without health insurance. “I am pleased with our accomplishments over the past few years to help New Mexicans keep or obtain the health insurance,” said Governor Bill Richardson. “But we will not stop until all New Mexicans have access to health insurance coverage.”

CPS defines uninsured as not having insurance at *any* given time during the prior twelve months. “New Mexico’s 2005 uninsured rate does not take into effect all of the new *Insure New Mexico!* solutions that have been implemented over the past year,” said Secretary Pamela Hyde, Human Services Department (HSD).

Over the past three years, the Richardson administration implemented solutions to help uninsured New Mexicans including:

- Several initiatives through *Insure New Mexico!* - a public/private partnership to help small employers with affordable health insurance;
- The state has also changed Medicaid eligibility for children, ages zero to five, so more children qualify;
- Created the Premium Assistance Program for those children up to age 12 whose family income is too high to qualify for Medicaid; and
- Allowed Medicaid recipients to recertify every 12 months instead of every six months.

“There is no reason a child under age 12 should be without health care coverage. We are working very hard through our outreach efforts to enroll more children in Medicaid and other public programs,” said Hyde.

Earlier this year Governor Richardson announced his Five Point Plan to insure even more New Mexicans. The plan includes:

1. Require that companies that do business with the state must offer health insurance benefits to their New Mexico employees by July 2007,
2. Pinpoint the number of state employees who decline health coverage to get an accurate picture of the coverage gaps and target outreach to get as many state employees covered as possible,
3. Maximize the Medicaid program to help low-income adults up to 100% of the federal poverty level, leveraging millions of dollars in additional federal funding and help cover tens of thousands of New Mexicans,
4. Fund an expansion of the State Coverage Insurance program to help cover more working adults and asking the federal government to raise the federal poverty requirement to 300% with cost-sharing based on income. This program will also leverage federal funds.
5. Create the Health Coverage for New Mexicans committee to analyze health coverage models and make recommendations on across-the-board coverage solutions for New Mexicans.

The Health Coverage for New Mexicans Committee, appointed by the Governor and the Legislative leadership held its first meeting earlier this month. The committee is charged with determining three to five models of health coverage to see which might work to cover more New Mexicans given New Mexico's unique needs.

The CPS was conducted in February and March 2006 for the calendar year 2005. During that time respondents were asked whether or not they have had health insurance at any period during the previous year. If the answer is yes, that person is considered "insured." Medicaid and Medicare are considered insurance, however individuals who rely on the Indian Health Services, free clinics, and/or the emergency room are considered "uninsured."

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