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For Immediate Release

Legislation to Transfer Portions of the Behavioral Health Services Division to the Human Services Department is Introduced in New Mexico Legislature

Governor Richardson Initiative to Help Continue to Improve Access to Behavioral Health Services Statewide

Santa Fe, January 24, 2007 – Legislation has been introduced in both the New Mexico Senate and the House of Representatives that would transfer portions of the Behavioral Health Services Division (BHSD) from the Department of Health (DOH) to the Human Services Department (HSD).

Senate Bill (SB) 212, sponsored by Senator Mary Kay Papen, and House Bill (HB) 371, sponsored by Representative Edward Sandoval, is a Governor Bill Richardson initiative to help improve access to behavioral health services statewide through HSD. This legislation allows the focus of public health, including substance abuse prevention to be a continued part of DOH.

“This move will help streamline behavioral health services for adults, ensure that mental health and substance abuse services are part of the strategy to close the uninsured gap in New Mexico, and open up more possibilities to maximize Medicaid funding for mental health and substance abuse services,” said Secretary Pamela Hyde, HSD.

HSD is the lead agency for both the New Mexico Interagency Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative (Collaborative) and efforts to close the uninsured gap through *Insure New Mexico!*

The recent Legislative Finance Committee’s performance review of the Collaborative states the proposed move of BHSD to HSD “will provide a good opportunity for the Legislature to further streamline behavioral health administration.”

Both departments will work together to ease the transition, and no full-time employee positions will be lost in the transfer.

SB 212 has been referred to the Senate Public Affairs Committee and the Senate Finance Committee. HB 371 has been referred to the House Health and Government Affairs Committee and the House Appropriations and Finance Committee.

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