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For Immediate Release

Legislation to Increase Access to Substance Abuse Service Providers in Rural and Tribal Areas of the State is Introduced in New Mexico Legislature

Bill Will Allow More Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors to Become Providers for Medicaid Services

Santa Fe, January 31, 2007 – Legislation has been introduced in the New Mexico House of Representatives and Senate that increases access to behavioral health services through Medicaid in rural and tribal areas of the state.

House Bill (HB) 713 and duplicate Senate Bill (SB) 494 – Counseling and Therapy Licensure Requirements is sponsored by Representative Ray Begaye and Senator Phil Griego. This legislation would implement a recommendation of the Governor’s Executive Order Working Group on the Behavioral Health Workforce, by allowing experienced and qualified Certified Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (CADACs) to be grandfathered into the system as a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (LADACs), increasing access for Medicaid reimbursable behavioral health services for recipients under the age of 21 across the state. Indian Health Service and Tribal 638 providers would also benefit allowing them to be reimbursed at the Office of Management Budget (OMB) all inclusive rate.

Rural and frontier communities of the state, including Native American communities, face compounded shortages of behavioral health practitioners, which continue to be a deterrent to improving behavioral health services.

“Governor Bill Richardson has called for an increase in access to mental health and substance abuse services in this legislative session,” said Secretary Pamela Hyde, Human Services Department and co-chair of the Behavioral Health Collaborative (Collaborative) “This legislation will move New Mexico toward that goal by helping those already certified and working as alcohol and drug abuse counselors become licensed.”

HB 713 and SB 494 would provide a three-year window for the NM Therapy and Counseling Board to grant licensure to providers who have CADAC certification from July 1, 1996 through July 1, 2010. The 3-year window begins July 1, 2007 and ends on July 1, 2010.

The Collaborative, the Behavioral Health Planning Council (BHPC), the Native American Subcommittee of the BHPC and the New Mexico Counseling and Therapy Practice Board all support this legislation.

HB 713 has been referred to the House Business and Industry Committee and the House Health and Government Affairs Committee. SB 494 has been referred to the Senate Public Affairs Committee and the Senate Judiciary Committee.

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