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For Immediate Release

State Legislature Unanimously Passes Legislation to Increase Access to Substance Abuse Service Providers in Rural and Tribal Areas of the State

Bill to Allow More Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors to Become Providers for Medicaid Services Now Goes to the Governor for Approval

Santa Fe, March 12, 2007 – Tonight the State Senate unanimously passed **House Bill (HB) 713 – Counseling and Therapy Licensure Requirements**, sponsored by Representative Ray Begaye, sending it to the Governor for his signature. “This legislation will help increase access to behavioral health services through Medicaid in rural and tribal areas of the state,” said Pamela Hyde, Secretary of the Human Services Department and co-chair of the NM Interagency Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative (Collaborative).

HB 713 allows experienced and qualified Certified Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (CADACs) to be grandfathered into the system as Licensed Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (LADACs).

Many LADAC services are reimbursable Medicaid expenses, while CADAC services are not. This change will increase access across the state for Medicaid reimbursable behavioral health services for recipients under age 21. Indian Health Service and Tribal 638 providers would also benefit, as the legislation allows them to be reimbursed at the Office of Management and Budget all-inclusive rates.

“By allowing those already certified and working as alcohol and drug abuse counselors to become licensed, New Mexico will increase funding for behavioral health services,” said Secretary Hyde. “This change will help rural and frontier communities of the state, including Native American communities faced with shortages of behavioral health practitioners.”

HB 713 would provide a three-year window for the NM Counseling and Therapy Practice Board to grant licensure to providers who have been certified as CADACs from July 1, 1996 through July 1, 2010. The three-year window begins July 1, 2007 and ends on July 1, 2010.

This legislation is a recommendation of the Governor’s Executive Order Working Group on the Behavioral Health Workforce. The Collaborative, the Behavioral Health Planning Council (BHPC), the Native American Subcommittee of the BHPC, the New Mexico Counseling and Therapy Practice Board and the New Mexico Regulation and Licensing Department all support this legislation.

Duplicate **Senate Bill 494**, sponsored by Senator Phil Griego, also passed the Senate unanimously earlier this month, has since passed the House Health and Government Affairs Committee and is awaiting a hearing before the House Business and Industry Committee.

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