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For Immediate Release

Child Support Enforcement Division Surpasses Annual Collections Goal for 2007 Budget Year

(Locate and Outreach to Non-Custodial Parents Helps Division to Get More Money for Those Using Child Support Services)

Santa Fe, July 25, 2007 - Human Services Department Secretary Pamela Hyde announced that the Child Support Enforcement Division collected \$95.3 million in child support during the 2007 budget year. The increased collections over last year's \$89.4 million helped the state assist New Mexico families who use child support enforcement services.

"We are on target to reach a landmark \$100 million in child support collections," Secretary Hyde said. "More important, we have dramatically improved the number of cases that now have court-ordered payment plans, which means more children benefit from child support." Last year, nearly 65 percent of the 59,000 families with open child support cases had court-ordered payment plans – up from 28 percent of families six years ago.

Of the 59,000 families with open child support cases, the division has moved to establish court orders 64.5 percent of the time. Most of the \$95.3 million collected last year goes to these families with court orders. "The Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) has dramatically improved its ratio of cases with court orders to total cases," said Hyde. Six years ago a mere 28 percent of cases had active court orders, compared to 64.5 percent now," said Hyde.

"Overall, our major successes in collections have been in working with, not against absent parents to get them on a payment plan [court order] that both parents can live with," said new CSED Director Charissa Saavedra, who worked in CSED for nearly 15 years, and two years with the Second Judicial District Family Court prior to accepting the director position. "This too, I believe, promotes more of both parents' involvement in their children's lives."

Governor Bill Richardson's "Fresh Start Program" has contributed greatly to the new way New Mexico's child support enforcement agency looks at the work that it does. Instead of enforcement, enforcement, enforcement, which often only caused the absent parent to hide, arrears management programs like Fresh Start gets parents in the doors of child support offices and helps both parents work towards child support solutions. So far the program has helped 814 parents to get on a payment plan while netting over \$1,089,000 in lump sum payments to custodial parents.

(more)

The CSED is also focusing on two primarily in-state initiatives: increasing the number of paternities established at birth and increasing the number of new court orders requiring parents to provide health insurance for their children.

The CSED has begun working more closely with hospitals and other agencies that support young married and unmarried families to inform parents of the importance of establishing paternity for their children at the time of birth.

Earlier this year legislation signed by Governor Bill Richardson allows family law judges to order either parent to provide health insurance for their children, instead of only the non-custodial parent.

“We are confident this new rule will lead to more clients providing private health insurance for their children,” said Saavedra. “Just as we have improved our ratio of court order to cases over the past six years, we have seen the number of cases with medical support orders increase from 13 percent to 33 percent today.”

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