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Human Services Department Uncovers Potential Medicaid Fraud

McKinley County District Attorney Files Criminal Complaints for Prosecution

Santa Fe, New Mexico – The New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) has turned over its investigation of potential Medicaid fraud to the McKinley County District Attorney's office. Today the McKinley County DA filed eight criminal complaints for prosecution and recovery of the misused public funds.

Over the past several months the department's Office of Inspector General has been working with the McKinley County DA's office after an internal investigation uncovered the potential fraudulent use of the Medicaid Travel Program.

The Medicaid Travel Program is available for Medicaid clients, usually children in rural areas of the state, who need travel inside or sometimes outside of New Mexico for medical care. The funds help pay for travel, lodging and meals for one parent. This program helps the most vulnerable Medicaid clients in our state who otherwise would not be able to get care.

The complaints filed today in the McKinley County District Court could be the first of several complaints filed in this case. "This case could eventually see the prosecution of a more than a dozen people including clients, private citizens and previous employees of the Human Services Department's McKinley County Income Support Office," said Karl Gilson, McKinley County District Attorney.

"While we are pleased to have caught the potential misuse of funds through our internal processes, this is not something we tolerate from our employees or clients of the Human Services Department. We will continue to cooperate fully with the McKinley County DA as they prosecute everyone involved in this case," said Pamela Hyde, Human Services Department Secretary.

While the percentage of fraud among public assistance programs is less than one percent, it is important to know that any welfare fraud over \$500 is a felony. The HSD Inspector

General's office is becoming more active in the pursuit of fraudulently issued benefits. "It is our job to ensure New Mexicans who are authorized to receive benefits get them. For those who are not, we are working closely with district attorney's across the state for prosecution and recovery of misused funds," said Randy Scott, HSD Inspector General.

The former HSD employee suspected in the Medicaid fraud case quit her position with the department prior to the investigation. It is estimated that nearly \$400,000 of the Medicaid Travel Program funds were fraudulently used between 2001 and 2004.

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