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**For Immediate Release**

## **Home Heating Help Still Available for Low-Income New Mexico Families**

**Santa Fe, New Mexico** – The Human Services Department is encouraging New Mexico families who qualify for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), but who have not yet applied for this year's benefit, to act quickly to get assistance with their heating bills. "Many families living in the areas hit hard by recent storms could use this extra help in paying their heating bill this month," said Pamela Hyde, Human Services Department Secretary.

Over the past four months, 35,534 families have received \$4.9 million from this program to help pay for their home heating costs. This year's average once-a-year LIHEAP benefit is about \$138 per family, and with January's release of \$717,000 in emergency contingency funds the program received just over \$10 million for the 2008 federal budget year. Last year, the LIHEAP program assisted 62,269 New Mexico families with heating and cooling assistance.

Another 6,000 families living in rural parts of the state have received \$1.8 million to help pay for bulk fuel used to heat their homes. "We are extremely happy with the number of families who are using the LIHEAP's bulk fuel program," said Hyde. This year low-income families who heat their homes with propane, firewood or wood pellets can receive an additional \$300 to help pay for their increased home heating costs, as long as funding is available. Last year about 17 percent of the program's participants requested HSD pay bulk fuel vendors instead of conventional electric or natural gas providers for their LIHEAP benefit.

Households qualifying for LIHEAP earn at or below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. For example, a family of three with a monthly income of \$2,146 could qualify for home heating help (see guide below). The benefit can be used to help pay gas, electric, or bulk fuels, such as propane, firewood or wood pellet bills.

HSD has also simplified the eligibility process so LIHEAP applicants who currently use other income support programs such as food stamps, cash assistance or Medicaid, may not have to provide new proof of their circumstances.

Households applying for but who are not currently clients of the Income Support Division (ISD) should bring proof of the following to one of the department's 36 ISD offices:

- Proof of household income for the past 30 days
- Identification
- Social Security Numbers (SSN) for all household members
- Proof of New Mexico residency
- If not a U.S. Citizen, proof of qualified immigrant
- Heating or cooling expense

<i>Family Size</i>	<i>LIHEAP Maximum Monthly Income</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>\$1,276</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>\$1,711</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>\$2,146</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>\$2,581</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>\$3,016</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>\$3,451</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>\$3,886</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>\$4,321</b>

For more information on LIHEAP, please visit your local Income Support Division office, call 1-800-283-4465, or visit the department's LIHEAP website at <http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/isd/liheap.html>.

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