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**For Immediate Release**

## **Human Services Department Increasing Paternity Establishment for Children of Unwed Parents**

### **Establishing Paternity Benefits Children and Parents**

*Santa Fe, New Mexico* –The Human Services Department (HSD), Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) is helping to increase the number of unmarried parents establishing paternity soon after the birth of their child. “Establishing paternity as soon as possible after birth benefits both the child and the parents,” said Pamela Hyde, HSD Secretary. “The child gets a legal parental relationship established and the father gets a legal child relationship established, both of which are known to improve the relationship between the parent and the child and help in the child’s development.”

Establishing paternity can be done at the hospital after delivery of the child or at one of the 16 CSED offices across the state. “Last year the CSED created Social Community Service Coordinator (SCSC) positions, whose goal is to increase voluntary paternity establishment in New Mexico,” said Charissa Saavedra, CSED Director. “We want to make it easy to complete the process in hospitals or at our CSED offices that are easily accessible for most parents to come in and complete the paternity acknowledgment form without feeling intimidated.”

In 2007, the SCSC team assisted in obtaining 10,272 paternity establishments from fathers. This was an increase of 1,332 from 2006 when 8,895 paternity establishments were signed. “Our 2008 outreach efforts will again focus on every community across the state, including but not limited to hospitals. Other targeted outreach locations will be alternative high schools, and NM Young Fathers organizations,” said Saavedra. “By building upon what we’ve learned last year we fully expect to increase the number of paternitys established in 2008.”

One of the tasks of the SCSC is to train hospital staff under contract with the state on how to complete Acknowledgement of Paternity forms. With the help of the SCSC, the forms are being completed correctly and sent in to the Dept. of Health’s Vital Records Bureau so that the father’s name can be immediately added to the birth certificate. “There is no charge for this service and by doing this they have in many ways taken their first step of becoming a responsible parent,” said Saavedra.

With the high rate of teen pregnancies in New Mexico it is important that the word gets out about where unmarried parents can get information on establishing paternity for their children. “Parents of teen parents also need to know that it is very important for their children to ensure their grandchild has a legal father,” said Saavedra.

Fathers who did not sign an Acknowledgement of Paternity form before they left the hospital with their child are encouraged to stop by their area CSED office to get this done. To find out where the CSED offices are located in New Mexico, visit [www.hsd.state.nm.us/csed](http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/csed) or call 1-800-288-7207.

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