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For Immediate Release

Human Services Department Now Accepting Applications for Home Energy Assistance

Winter Moratorium Protection Begins November 15, 2009 through March 15,
2010

Santa Fe, New Mexico – The New Mexico Human Services Department is now accepting applications for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The once-a-year benefit assists low-income New Mexico households with their energy costs.

“We encourage your family to apply now for the benefits, that can help pay for natural gas, electricity and bulk fuels such as propane, firewood and wood pellets just in time as the colder weather approaches,” said Katie Falls, Human Services Department Deputy Secretary.

The LIHEAP program begins each year in October and goes through August. Last year nearly 70,000 New Mexico households participated in the program. This year the department is expecting to serve even more households. Federal funding however, is anticipated to stay at the same level as last year. The one-time benefit this year is expected to be an average of \$150.

Each year beginning November 15 through March 15 a moratorium on utility disconnections for low income households who meet the qualifications of LIHEAP is in effect. The moratorium is designed to keep low-income New Mexico households from getting their utilities turned off during the coldest months of the year. The moratorium does require that the household’s heating bill from last season be current on November 15 in order to receive the protection.

“The LIHEAP benefit can help households get current with their bills,” said Falls. “Another alternative is to work out a payment plan with the energy company and keep up with the plan to receive the protection during the winter months.”

Households qualifying for LIHEAP must be at or below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. For example, a household of three with monthly income of \$2,289 could qualify for a LIHEAP benefit (see guide below). The benefit can be used to help pay gas, electric, or bulk fuels, such as propane, firewood or wood pellet bills.

<i>Family Size</i>	<i>LIHEAP Maximum Monthly Income</i>
1	\$1,355
2	\$1,823
3	\$2,289
4	\$2,757
5	\$3,225
6	\$3,692
7	\$4,160
8	\$4,628

Households applying for LIHEAP should bring the following to one of the department's 35 Income Support offices:

- Application Form** - completed and signed including Social Security Numbers for all members applying for help
- Heating/Cooling Costs**
 - Proof that you have a heating/cooling cost, including your account number
 - Only give proof of your highest energy cost in the last 12 months if your bill was more than \$177
 - Crisis LIHEAP – HSD can help you faster if you have:
 - disconnected utility service;
 - disconnect notice; or
 - almost out of wood, propane or other bulk fuels
- Give us a copy of your disconnect notice

Give proof of the following when you are not getting other benefits from HSD or your income has changed.

- Identity** – for one adult applying for help
- Non-Citizen Immigrant Status**– for all applying for help
- Disability** – only give proof if you are not getting disability income
- Income** – only give proof when you are not getting other benefits from HSD or your income has changed. When you give proof, give us proof of income **from the most recent 30 days or all from last month.**

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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