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Human Services Department Announces Record Amount of Child Support Collections

Collections Surpass Annual Target by 11 Percent for a Total of \$111 Million

SANTA FE – Human Services Department Secretary Pamela Hyde is pleased to report another record breaking amount of collections for the New Mexico child support program.

“The Child Support Enforcement Division collected a record \$111.1 million in child support for State Fiscal Year 2009, which ended June 30, 2009. This is an 11.1 percent increase above our performance measure target and is 7.6 percent more than was collected in the prior budget year,” said Hyde. “This is also nearly a 35 percent increase from the 2004 budget year when collections were \$72.2 million.”

“A key to this success is increasing the percentage of cases that have court orders, which is now over 66 percent,” said Charissa Saavedra, Child Support Enforcement Division Director. “We really have to credit our staff for working so hard to obtain court orders at a time when caseloads are growing so quickly. Without their dedication and commitment, we would not have been able to collect this year’s record amount of child support for New Mexico families.”

There are many resources the Child Support Enforcement Division has at its disposal to assure non-custodial parents are paying their child support. Nearly 60 percent of the \$111.1 million collected last year was paid through wage withholding, which is the single best method of ensuring consistent, reliable payments. “The CSED recognizes that employers play a major role in helping to collect child support by honoring wage withholding orders,” said Saavedra.

Tax rebate intercepts accounted for more than \$17 million in collections, and the License Suspension program brought in \$1.5 million in lump sum payments.

Governor Richardson’s Fresh Start Program has also played an important role over the last few years in helping to increase child support collections. Since its inception in 2005, 1,297 cases have taken part in the initiative, collecting more than \$1.8 million in child support.

“This program has brought in a large number of non-custodial parents who otherwise would have continued to allow their child support arrears to increase. The Fresh Start program has given them the incentive as well as the opportunity to contact the CSED and learn how they can settle their child support obligation by making a lump sum payment and entering into a new payment plan. It is important that both parents provide for the support of their children,” said Saavedra.

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