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## **NM Human Services Department Discontinues Pay Phone Toll-Free Access to EBT Customer Service Line for a \$25,000 to \$28,000 Annual Savings**

Access by cell phones, land lines, internet, and field offices remain available

*Santa Fe, New Mexico* – Beginning next month the NM Human Services Department will discontinue access to the 24/7 Electronics Benefit Transfer (EBT) Customer Service Line by pay-phone. This change will save the department approximately \$25,000 to \$28,000 annually.

“We want to assure our customers who use the EBT card for services that they will still have access to the 24/7 EBT Customer Service Line by cell phone, land lines, the internet and all local county field offices,” said Katie Falls, Human Services Department Secretary-designate. “This cost-savings measure was decided only after careful consideration of the many options customers have to access the Customer Service Line, including our field offices, and the percent of calls that come from pay phones, which is very small.”

The HSD Help Desk, which is operated Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. will remain available to customers using pay phones, as this does not cost the department additional funding.

Customers who use the EBT cards are participating in one of several programs offered through the Human Services Department such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program and the General Assistance Program. Of the 4.3 million calls per year to the 24/7 EBT Customer Service Line, only 1.4 percent of the calls are made from pay phones.

The Human Services Department began paying for the toll-free calls back in 2000 when federal rule changes allowed phone service providers to charge for the toll-free calls from pay phones. At that time there were more pay phones available to customers and fewer cell phones; something that has changed dramatically in 10 years.

New Mexico is joining several other states that have already discontinued pay phone access to the state EBT Customer Service Line without any adverse cardholder impact.

The 24/7 EBT Customer Service line is 1-800-843-8303 and will no longer accept calls from pay phones beginning in February 2010. The HSD Help Desk, which is operated Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. is 1-800-283-4465 can be accessed using any type of phone.

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