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January 27, 2010
For Immediate Release

NM Human Services Department Investigation Leads to Guilty Pleas for Misuse of Public Funds

Plea agreements include recoupment of more than \$11,000 of taxpayer dollars *Santa Fe, New Mexico* – The Human Services Department’s (HSD) internal investigation of misuse of public funds has resulted in two guilty pleas, a no contest plea and agreements that will recoup \$11,226 of public funds.

The Human Services Department’s Office of Inspector General conducted an internal investigation in 2008 of a former employee of the S. Valencia County Income Support Division (ISD) office in Belen. The investigation was turned over to the Valencia County District Attorney’s Office for felony prosecution of the case.

The former employee, Sara Gonzales, and two of her associates, Polly Garley and Jessie Padilla have now pled to falsifying applications that resulted in benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

“We are pleased to have caught the misuse of taxpayer dollars through our internal process,” said Katie Falls, HSD Secretary-designate. “This is not something we tolerate from our employees or clients and have a top-notch investigations unit to make sure those who try are stopped immediately.”

Sara Gonzales, Polly Garley and Jessie Padilla are awaiting sentencing, which could result in jail time as well as the agreed recoupment of the misused public funding.

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