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For Immediate Release

New Mexico Improves Food Insecurity Ranking

14.7 Percent of New Mexico Families Had Difficulty Providing Food During 2009

Santa Fe – The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has released its Household Food Security in the United States, 2009 report, which found New Mexico moving up seven spots from the previous year to 12th in the Nation for food insecurity at 14.7 percent compared to 16.1 in 2008. The USDA ranks New Mexico 32nd in the Nation for families with “very low” food security.

“There are still far too many families having difficulty providing enough food for all of their family members, but it is nice to see an improvement from the previous year,” said Katie Falls, Human Services Department Secretary. “The Human Services Department has been working diligently over the past eight years with our community partners and sister state agencies to find solutions to end hunger in New Mexico and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has been an instrumental part of the solution.”

The number of SNAP participants has grown over the past year by 22 percent and is currently serving 167,968 New Mexico eligible families. During the month of October more than \$50 million in SNAP benefits was distributed to New Mexico families participating in the program. New Mexico is ranked seventh in the nation in timeliness of SNAP application processing, which is important because it means that the benefits get to the eligible families as quickly as possible. New Mexico families with incomes up to 165% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) qualify to apply for SNAP. For example, a family of four with a monthly income below \$3,032 would likely qualify.

Other programs that are instrumental in serving low-income families include The Emergency Food Assistance Program, the Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Program, the School Lunch Program, the Summer Lunch Program, the Senior Meals Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. In addition, New Mexico has a strong food bank network through the New Mexico Association of Food Banks.

“The USDA study found that nationally 57 percent of all food insecure households participated in one or more of the three largest federal food and nutrition assistance programs during the month prior to the 2009 survey. As the Collaboration to end Hunger in New Mexico finalizes the next five year plan, all of our 80-plus partners will continue to focus our efforts in helping our hungry neighbors access these federal program,” said Nancy Pope, Director of the NM Collaboration to End Hunger.

The complete USDA report can be found on the USDA website at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/Err108/>.

To find out if your family qualifies for the SNAP program, visit www.hsd.state.nm.us and click on the “Do I Qualify” icon or call 1-888-473-3676. To find a location for emergency food in your area, please visit the NM Food Bank Association’s website at <http://www.nmfoodbanks.org/EmergencyFoodProviders.asp>.

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