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New Mexico Awarded \$385,000 for Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Projects

Funding Will Assist Rural New Mexicans Reduce Health and Safety Risks

Santa Fe – New Mexico is one of three states that have been awarded a Residential Energy Assistance Challenge Program (REACH) grant of \$385,000 from the U.S. Health and Human Services Department’s Administration for Children and Families.

The NM Human Services Department applied for the REACH grant with the goal of assisting low-income, vulnerable families living in rural New Mexico that use propane and wood burning stoves to meet their home heating needs. Vulnerable families are considered those with children, individuals with disabilities or chronic illness and the elderly.

“Families that use propane spend more money heating their homes than those using natural gas or electricity and families using either propane or fire wood are often not able to afford crucial safety inspections or repairs to keep their homes and themselves safe from fire and asphyxiation hazards,” said Katie Falls, Human Services Department Secretary. “The REACH grant has the potential to help many of the 15,000 people who received assistance through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for propane and wood burning stoves this past year.”

The Low Income Networking and Conservation Plan (LINC) will assist eligible New Mexicans with the following services based on need and funding availability:

- Funds for the purchase of bulk fuel,
- Assistance with partial or complete cost of installation/safety inspections,
- Assistance with partial or complete cost of repairs to home heating system,
- Home energy audit, and
- Assistance with partial cost of improving the energy efficiency of a home (could include sealing, insulation, or installation of programmable thermostat).

“The activities are designed to prevent energy crises for families, encourage responsible energy efficiency behavior, and encourage household payment,” said Falls. “Eligible households will

receive immediate assistance with fuel costs, but will also receive assistance with increasing the energy efficiency of their home by being provided both information and financial assistance with improving energy efficiency.”

The Human Services Department will be working with HELP-NM Inc., a non-profit Community Action Agency, to complete a needs assessment, determine eligibility of participants, determine services to be provided, provide outreach services, educate participants, provide payments to or on behalf of eligible participants and conduct follow-up with participants.

The LINC plan will begin in late summer or early fall of 2010.

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