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**For Immediate Release**

## **First Federal Health Care Program Launches in New Mexico**

Enrollment in the Federal High-Risk Insurance Pool Begins July 1, 2010

SANTA FE – New Mexico will begin providing affordable health insurance coverage for high-risk uninsured New Mexicans through the first program to emerge from the recent federal health care reform act.

“New Mexico is pleased to be able to offer another option of affordable health coverage through the new federal high-risk insurance pool program,” said Governor Bill Richardson. “We are fortunate to have a good existing high-risk pool that will now use federal funds to expand its services to more New Mexicans.”

Beginning Thursday, July 1, 2010 the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) in cooperation with the New Mexico Medical Insurance Pool (NMMIP) will contract with the U.S. Health and Human Services Department to operate a temporary federal high-risk insurance pool program in New Mexico.

The high-risk pool will assist people with a pre-existing medical condition who have been uninsured for at least six months. Additionally, a person with low income may also qualify for a subsidized premium. The temporary pool will expire in 2014, when the new federal law bars the denial of insurance coverage for medical reasons across all health plans in the country.

“We will begin enrollment in the new federal pool on July 1<sup>st</sup> with an August 1<sup>st</sup> coverage date,” said Deborah Armstrong, NMMIP’s Executive Director. “Thanks to Governor Richardson, New Mexico has been out in front nationally to capitalize on the estimated \$37 million in federal funds for the new pool,” added Armstrong.

New Mexico has had a high risk pool for decades. The New Mexico Medical Insurance Pool currently serves more than 8,000 New Mexico residents who are denied adequate health insurance and are considered uninsurable. NMMIP is considered one of the most efficient, affordable and comprehensive health insurance pools in the nation.

“While the Human Services Department covers more than 540,000 people through Medicaid and other publicly funded programs, there are still many who do not qualify for our programs,” said Katie Falls, HSD Cabinet Secretary. “We are pleased to be partnering with the NMMIP to give further access to coverage solutions for New Mexicans who are in desperate need of health care services.”

“We’re a ‘shovel ready’ program that was well equipped to manage this new federal funding and to assist the Governor in his intent to encourage health care coverage and access for as many of our citizens as possible,” said Farmington City Councilman Jason Sandel, the Vice Chairman of the New Mexico Medical Insurance Pool.

To see if you qualify for the new federal high-risk pool or for additional information on the existing New Mexico high-risk pool please visit NMMIP’s website at <http://www.nmmip.org> or contact the NMMIP Office at (505) 424-7105 or Toll Free at (866) 622-4711.

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