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For Immediate Release

## **NM Human Services Department Issuing Energy Assistance Supplemental Benefit to 55,000 Families**

**Additional Assistance Will Help Low-Income Families with Heating Bills that  
Soared during Last Month's Cold Snap**

*Santa Fe* – Beginning March 30, 2011, the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) will be issuing a Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) supplemental benefit to nearly 55,000 customers who have already received a benefit this year.

The department has received final funding amounts from the federal government for the current year, which allows the department to increase LIHEAP benefits already issued as well as increase benefits for those who have not yet applied for the once-a-year-benefit.

“This supplement comes at a time when New Mexico families are noticing an increase in their heating bills due to the bitter cold weather we had in February,” said Sidonie Squier, HSD Secretary. “A supplement of \$18 to \$126 will be a welcome relief to thousands of New Mexico families.”

Since October, 2010, which is when the program begins each year, approximately 55,000 New Mexico families have received the once-a-year LIHEAP benefit, which has averaged \$121 per household. Participating families will be eligible to receive the additional benefit to help pay heating costs for gas, electric, or bulk fuels, such as propane, firewood or wood pellet.

Families who have already received a LIHEAP benefit this year and have not changed address and are using the same energy company will automatically get the benefit. Those families who have moved since their LIHEAP benefit was issued have until August 31, 2011 to contact their local Income Support Division office and provide the new address and energy account information. Any family that has moved out of state is not eligible for the supplement.

Each year New Mexico receives a block of federal funding for the LIHEAP program and the Human Services Department estimates how best to distribute the funds in order to assist as many eligible families as possible. This year's total funding is \$21.3 million.

Households that have not applied for the program are still encouraged to do so. The LIHEAP program assists families with incomes at or below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. For example, a household of three with monthly income of \$2,289 could qualify for a LIHEAP benefit (see guide below). The benefit can be used to help pay heating costs for gas, electric, or bulk fuels, such as propane, firewood or wood pellets.

<i>Family Size</i>	<i>LIHEAP Maximum Monthly Income</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>\$1,355</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>\$1,823</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>\$2,289</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>\$2,757</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>\$3,225</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>\$3,692</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>\$4,160</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>\$4,628</b>

Households applying for LIHEAP should bring, fax or email the following to one of the department's 35 Income Support offices:

- Application Form** - completed and signed including Social Security Numbers for all members applying for help
- Heating/Cooling Costs**
  - Proof that you have a heating/cooling cost, including your account number
  - Only give proof of your highest energy cost in the last 12 months if your bill was more than \$160
  - Crisis LIHEAP – HSD can help you faster if you have:
    - disconnected utility service;
    - disconnect notice; or
    - almost out of wood, propane or other bulk fuels
  - Give us a copy of your disconnect notice

Households should provide proof of the following when not receiving other benefits from HSD or income has changed:

- Identity** – for one adult applying for help
- Non-Citizen Immigrant Status**– for all applying for help
- Disability** – only give proof if you are not getting disability income
- Income** – only give proof when you are not getting other benefits from HSD or your income has changed. When you give proof, give us proof of income **from the most recent 30 days or all from last month.**

**For more information on LIHEAP, please visit your local Income Support Division office, call 1-800-283-4465, or visit the department's LIHEAP website at <http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/isd/liheap.html>.**

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