



NEW MEXICO HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT
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September 6, 2011
For Immediate Release

Child Support Bench Warrant Sweep Ends Successful Operation *More than \$35,500 Collected for Children*

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Human Services Department in partnership with State Police and over 12 law enforcement agencies, including Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Valencia County Sheriff’s Departments successfully conducted a child support enforcement bench warrant sweep this morning. This program is the first of its kind in the state, and resulted in a total of 28 bench warrants acted on, 12 during this morning’s four-hour operation.

“This program, launched by Governor Susana Martinez, has turned out to be a great success,” said Secretary Sidonie Squier. “During the amnesty period we had over 26% of all non-custodial parents with outstanding bench warrants come forward to help bring them current on their child support obligations. Since the amnesty and during this morning’s sweep, law enforcement rounded up an additional 28 non-custodial parents who are now in a position to take responsibility for their child support obligations.”

At the beginning of the sweep, law enforcement was presented with a list of over 90 active child support bench warrants. More than 28 of those warrants were successfully executed in Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Valencia Counties. This morning’s four-hour round up alone will result in more than \$35,500 in cash only bonds, money that will go directly to the child support debt that is owed.

“I want to give a special thanks to all of the law enforcement personnel who took part in this operation,” commented Secretary Sidonie Squier. “I know it was a large task to pull this operation together, but the children of this area are better off tonight with the obligations being met by their parents. We are looking forward to rolling this program out on a statewide basis in the near future.”

Non-custodial parents who would like to take care of any outstanding bench warrants by paying their bond before law enforcement catch up with them are encouraged to visit their local child support enforcement office.

A fact sheet regarding the bench warrant sweeps is attached to this release.



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Operational Facts

- The warrant sweep operation is the next step in the Child Support Bench Warrant program announced by Governor Susana Martinez on July 20, 2011
- The initial phase of this program, the amnesty period, was very successful with over **26% of non-custodial parents** on the bench warrant list contacting the Child Support Enforcement Division to help clear their warrants and live up to their obligations
- With the New Mexico State Police taking the lead, there are more than **12 law enforcement agencies** and over **60 personnel** helping to serve these warrants – agencies include:
 - New Mexico State Police Uniform & Investigations Bureaus
 - New Mexico Motor Transportation Police, New Mexico Special Investigations Division
 - New Mexico National Guard – Albuquerque HQ
 - Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office
 - Sandoval County Sheriff's Office
 - Central New Mexico Correctional Facility
 - New Mexico Corrections Department
 - Adult Probation & Parole, Adult Probation & Parole Security Threat Intelligence Unit (STIU)
 - Metropolitan Detention Center
 - Sandoval County Detention Center
 - Valencia County Detention Center
 - United States Marshall Service
- This multi-agency task force will attempt to serve **over 90 warrants** on non-custodial parents with outstanding bench warrants that have been issued for failure to pay child support

Child Support Bench Warrant Facts

- The issuance of a bench warrant for child support is the most severe enforcement remedy available to the Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) and it used only as a last resort when all other efforts to collect child support have failed



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- Child support warrants are considered civil warrants under law – the payment is different from other warrants, however, in that the full amount of the bond must be paid in cash in order for the non-custodial parent to be released from custody. This differs from appearance bonds in which an individual will typically pay a bondsman ten percent of the bond amount and the bonding company then guarantees the remainder
- This effort represents the attempted collection of over **\$233,242 in bond payments** for warrants and to help these non-custodial parents live up to their collective obligations of over **\$2,858,601 in arrears due** to the children of this tri-county area
- The bench warrants issued for child support payments in the Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Valencia tri-county area represent **27.8% of all child support bench warrants** issued by district courts in New Mexico
- A bench warrant is issued when an individual fails to appear for a child support hearing, or when the individual has previously been found to be in contempt of a child support order and then fails to comply with a subsequent order of the court

Child Support Facts

- In State Fiscal Year 2011, which ended June 30th, NM CSED **collected an all time high of \$123.5 million** in child support payments.
- CSED has **approximately 62,350 cases statewide** and its caseload **includes approximately 91,378 dependents** associated with these cases
- **41% of New Mexico's children** live in single parent households
- Nationally, child support payments represent **approximately 30% of the income** of families living below the poverty level