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## **Governor Richardson Says “Kasey Will Stay”**

Santa Fe: Governor Bill Richardson’s statewide truancy prevention program for 2004 will include \$60,000 for the “Kasey Says Program” - a 25% increase in funding over last year which will be allocated from existing truancy funds.

“The public has been unnecessarily alarmed. I want to make it exceedingly clear - the Kasey dogs’ program is a viable truancy prevention program. The plug has not been pulled. Kasey Says remains an option for educators, particularly in elementary schools, working to keep students in school, and particularly in Sandoval County where it’s proven successful” said Secretary of Education Dr. Veronica C. García.

In all, \$300,000 will be made available to schools in this second round of truancy funding. The funding is focused on prevention programs like Kasey Says and developing model programs for truancy early intervention.

“Every day in school counts. I have kept my promise to keep kids in school. My goal is for school attendance to reach 95% statewide,” said Governor Richardson.

Currently, 12 districts are implementing truancy prevention and intervention programs. The programs are focused on students with between three and seven unexcused absences in a 20-day reporting period.

Governor Richardson initiated the Truancy Prevention Program in 2003 with the state Children, Youth and Families Department. “That funding is continuing. This program is strong. We are committed to programs like “Kasey Says” because they are decreasing truancy and dropout rates and increasing attendance,” said Governor Richardson.

Secretary Dr. García announced 10 new statewide strategies for reducing truancy, as follows:

- Implement the provisions of HB 106 of 2004 -- Enforcement of Habitual Truancy. The bill ends a pattern of unexcused absences by students and provides for early intervention before the absences become frequent.
- Innovative pilot programs at school sites, like “Kasey Says”

- School-based family resource centers
- School and law enforcement connections for truancy prevention
- School and tribal partnerships to prevent truancy
- Statewide media campaign focused on “Every Day Counts”
- Conduct meetings and conferences focused on resolving truancy issues for Native Americans
- Build the capacity of communities to collaborate around truancy prevention
- Conduct a statewide evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the truancy prevention program and
- Ensure oversight and direction of the program through the PED.

“Student achievement cannot improve if kids are not in school. We must keep the focus on improving student attendance,” said Secretary Dr. García.

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