



## State of New Mexico

*Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
Governor

For Immediate Release  
December 3, 2004

Contact: Pahl Shipley  
505-476-2299

### **Governor Bill Richardson Announces Initiative to Reduce Obesity, Improve Health of New Mexico Youth**

SANTA FE - Governor Bill Richardson today announced he has directed his Council on Physical Fitness and Health to partner with other New Mexico youth organizations in an effort to help the state's youth become more physically active and develop healthy lifestyles. The Governor's Council will join with New Mexico Action for Healthy Kids, the New Mexico Coalition to Promote Physical Activity and Nutrition, and the New Mexico Pediatric Society for this important effort.

"Youth obesity is a crisis in New Mexico," said Governor Richardson. "We must put in place programs to get our kids more active, educate them about fitness and nutrition, and find ways to replace unhealthy snacks and beverages in our schools with more nutritious foods."

In October Governor Richardson rolled out a package of comprehensive statewide health initiatives entitled "Building a Healthy New Mexico," that will be a priority of the administration for the upcoming legislative session, and during the coming year.

"Helping our kids live healthier, more active lives will help them grow into happier, healthier adults," the Governor added. "It will also reduce the burden on our healthcare system cause by complications from obesity, such as heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure."

The Governor's plan calls for:

- Increasing the amount of time children in school spend daily on physical exercise and activity through the implementation of quality, daily physical education programs in NM Schools that are developmentally appropriate and provide physical activity of sufficient intensity, duration and frequency to help reduce the rate of obesity and enhance the academic performance in NM School Children.
- Eliminating the substitution of alternative activities to satisfy the physical education graduation requirement in New Mexico high schools.
- Providing a licensed physical education instructor in all New Mexico elementary schools.
- Implementing a statewide policy to establish nutrition standards in NM Schools that assures that school children have access only to nutritious foods and beverages during the school day.
- Amending the Public School Code 22-13-1 to ensure that physical education and health education are required in NM public schools.
- Developing a statewide policy that sets standards for the sale of competitive foods sold in schools and include that policy in contractual agreements between NM public schools and the companies that sell products in vending machines on public school property.
- Expanding the New Mexico Content Standards with Benchmarks for both Health Education and Physical Education to include Performance Measures.
- Supporting the expansion of the School Breakfast program in all New Mexico public schools.

The Governor's Office estimates that in New Mexico, 17% of elementary students, 52% of middle school students, and 43% of high school students are overweight, and that chronic disease associated with obesity costs New Mexico more than 320-million dollars each year.