



# State of New Mexico

## *Office of the Governor*

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### **Governor Richardson Takes Action to Provide Health Insurance Access for All New Mexico Kids Under 5**

*Governor signs health and behavioral health care, help for problem gamblers legislation*

(Santa Fe, NM) -- Governor Bill Richardson today signed key pieces of his Year of the Child agenda passed during the recently completed legislative session. These bills are designed to fill the gaps in the health insurance system and give every New Mexico Child, five and younger, access to health insurance.

“To keep our kids healthy, in the classroom and out of the doctor’s office, they need to be insured,” said Governor Richardson. “With these bills, every child in New Mexico, from newborn to toddler, will have access to the care they need to stay healthy, grow up strong, and succeed.”

21,000 New Mexico children ages zero to five currently have no health care coverage, 16,000 of which are eligible but not enrolled in the Medicaid program. The remaining 5,000 do not qualify for Medicaid. These bills work in concert with the administrative actions the Richardson Administration have already taken to close those gaps.

“After today, there will be no excuse for a child under five in New Mexico to not have health insurance,” said Governor Richardson.

Governor Richardson today signed:

- **Senate Bill 267** to help the Human Services Department provide medical or premium assistance to uninsured children who are not otherwise Medicaid eligible

- **House Bill 24** to give employers more health insurance options for employees through both the Health Insurance Alliance and state or federal agencies offering health insurance coverage

Governor Richardson also signed:

- **House Bills 253, 331 and 341** to address the shortage of behavioral health professionals especially in rural New Mexico. These bills remove licensure barriers and support health-care professionals to create a behavioral health system that provides better access and better services.
- **House Bill 459** This bill ensures appropriate, humane care and treatment of persons with behavioral-health needs and empowers consumers to direct decisions about their treatment.
- **House Bill 267** to help problem gamblers get the help they need. This legislation is a direct outgrowth of Governor Richardson’s Compulsive Gambling Task Force. It establishes standards for compulsive gambling treatment and creates a compulsive gambling council.

“Health insurance for kids, behavioral health care in rural New Mexico, and help for problem gamblers are all key ways that we are creating a healthier state and moving New Mexico forward,” said Governor Richardson.