



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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Governor Richardson Announces \$4 Million in Efforts to Combat Substance/Gambling Abuse

(Santa Fe, NM) – Governor Bill Richardson today announced major new initiatives to help New Mexicans fight substance and gambling abuse problems. These initiatives build on the Governor’s existing efforts to help New Mexicans clean up and find help for drug and gambling addiction issues.

“I have consulted with state experts and asked for real solutions to combat substance and gambling abuse in our state,” said Governor Richardson. “These initiatives are good, positive steps in the direction of a better New Mexico.”

Funding for these projects will be included in the Governor’s Executive Budget to be considered during the upcoming legislative session.

1. Centralized Treatment Referral Database: \$300,000

This database is an important investment that will be a first point of contact across the state for family members, the courts and law enforcement officers that are looking for substance abuse services for a person in need. The state will work with ValueOptions, the Behavioral Health statewide vendor, to create and operate the Centralized Treatment Referral Database.

“This database will be instrumental in improving access and targeting services in a more meaningful and effective way,” said Leslie Tremaine, Governor Richardson’s Behavioral Health Czar.

2. Targeted Probation for Substance Abusers: \$3,000,000

This probation effort expands and enhances specialized probation services, which operate in close partnership with the courts, law enforcement and treatment programs to ensure that offenders are tested periodically for drug use while on probation. Funds will be targeted to problem areas in Northern New Mexico.

“By tracking probationers with substance abuse issues, we can monitor their progress and prevent them from spiraling into other serious crimes such as domestic violence, child abuse or even homicide,” said Lt. Governor Diane Denish who also chairs New Mexico’s Children’s Cabinet.

3. Statewide Substance Abuse Strategic Planning: \$100,000

Statewide Substance Abuse Strategic Planning will build on the New Mexico Behavioral Health Collaborative’s work integrating federal, state, local and private funding sources.

“This effort will ensure the strongest possible planning foundation for a truly accountable and results-oriented substance abuse system,” said Human Services Department Secretary Pam Hyde, who also co-chairs the Behavioral Health Collaborative.

The above substance abuse initiatives build upon the actions recently recommended by Governor Richardson’s Interagency Substance Abuse Task Force, co-chaired by his Drug and Behavioral Health Czars. These recommendations focus on collaboration between treatment and criminal justice, strong research based approaches and heightened accountability.

4. Statewide Treatment for Compulsive Gambling: \$500,000

Governor Richardson will also support a \$500,000 appropriation to the Department of Health to create a certified training program in the treatment of gambling addictions and establish a treatment voucher program to serve those affected by compulsive gambling.

“Research has indicated that gambling addictions can devastate entire families, causing divorce, suicide, eviction and bankruptcy,” said Health Secretary Michelle Lujan Grisham. “We have to do a better job providing treatment and support to families who are affected by compulsive gambling.”

Governor Richardson recently received recommendations from his Task Force on Compulsive Gambling, composed of legislators, behavioral-health professionals and representatives from tribes, pueblos, the gaming industry, the Department of Health and the Governor’s Office. His plans track closely with these recommendations. The Governor’s plan includes:

- Create a Governor’s Council on Compulsive Gambling that would report key findings and progress on implementing a strategic approach to dealing with compulsive gambling to the Governor and the Legislature annually.

- Direct the Department of Health and the Gaming Control Board to create an audit team that would monitor compulsive gambling services plan standards for casinos and race tracks.
- Direct the Department of Health and Aging and Long Term Services Department to provide New Mexico seniors and senior centers with prevention training and educational materials about recognizing and treating gambling problems.

“The task force performed a much needed study so we can understand the severity and scope of the gambling problem in New Mexico,” said Rep. Kandy Cordova who participated on the Governor’s task force and sponsored a gambling bill passed during last legislative session that required a study of compulsive gambling in New Mexico. “I hope this creates more awareness of the problems associated with gambling so the State can support people who need help.”

“I’m elated the gaming industry has stepped up to work with the state to provide services to compulsive gamblers in New Mexico,” said Rep. Larry Larranaga, R-Albuquerque, who served on the Governor’s task force.

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