



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson

Governor

News Release

Contact: Jon Goldstein (505) 476-2248

For Immediate Release

January 9, 2006

Governor Richardson Unveils State's First 24-Hour, Toll-Free Suicide Help Line

Toll-Free Help Line: 1-866-HELP-1-NM

(Albuquerque, NM) - Governor Bill Richardson today announced the creation of New Mexico's first toll-free, 24-hour suicide help line. This line is designed to support New Mexicans who need immediate help, especially teenagers. This is part of the Governor's "Year of the Child" agenda to keep our children safe, healthy and well educated.

"I am committed to investing in resources that will enable New Mexico teens to find help fast when they are in crisis," Governor Richardson said. "Providing instant, easy access to mental-health care is an essential component of making New Mexico a healthier place for our children."

Agora Crisis Center has operated an Albuquerque help line for 35 years with support from the University of New Mexico's student government and Psychology Department. With the more than \$200,000 of additional funding from the New Mexico Department of Health, announced today by Governor Richardson, the Crisis Center has made this number toll-free and expanded it to 24 hours a day. The center will also spend additional time marketing and promoting the line statewide.

"By supporting the help line with Department of Health funding, we'll be able to reach more people who might not know such an incredible resource exists," said Health Secretary Michelle Lujan Grisham. "This line is for every New Mexican, but we will focus on teenagers, who often need additional support to cope with every day stresses."

Gov. Richardson created a Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force that developed recommendations for reducing the devastation caused by suicide in our communities. Expanding the help line was one of the task force's recommendations. Governor Richardson also supported almost \$500,000 in suicide prevention funding for the Department of Health during last legislative session, and he will do the same this year.

The Department of Health received a \$1.2 million federal grant in 2005 to establish a suicide prevention project. The project includes developing and implementing such activities as screening and assessment, and coordinating intervention, health promotion and community awareness.

"We all have to work together to reduce New Mexico's suicide rate," Governor Richardson said. "The state is doing our part but we can't do it alone. I'd like to also ask the business community to become partners in our efforts to improve children's health. I will ask cell phone companies to allow users to call our toll-free number without being charged for the minutes."

#30#

Yasine Mogharreban

Special Assistant, Communications

Office of New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson

505.476.2299 (phone)

505.476.2226 (fax)

yasine.mogharreba@state.nm.us