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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**NEVADA'S PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN
FOR CHILD WELFARE PRAISED**

Carson City—Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Director Mike Willden announced today that his office has received a letter from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, informing his agency that its Program Improvement Plan (PIP) aimed at increasing child welfare safety has been approved.

A letter dated June 11, 2007, from Susan Orr, Ph.D., Associate Commissioner, Children's Bureau, to Willden states:

"The purpose of this letter is to inform you that the State has successfully completed all action steps and benchmarks in the PIP...Nevada can and should take pride in the actions it has taken to improve its services to the children and families in the State."

Willden said, "This good news for the children of Nevada can be attributed to many individuals and groups, including the support our efforts have received from Governor Gibbons and the 2007 Legislature. Further, I want to compliment our Division of Child Family Services staff who have worked diligently and effectively with the Clark County Department of Family Services and Washoe County Social Services to incorporate these much needed changes, which better ensures that children in the care of the state and counties will receive the protection they justly deserve."

Nevada's PIP was originally based on the results of the state's 2004 Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). The Plan was later amended in September 2006 to include 10 new action steps and 73 new benchmarks following the publication of the Independent Child Death Review Panel relating to child welfare in Clark County.

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By meeting the June 2004 benchmarks, the state was able to bypass penalties that could have amounted to more than \$1 million. Additional identified areas must be improved or penalties could be assessed totaling more than \$608,000. Essentially, Nevada and Clark County have until February 28, 2008, to reach conformity with the remaining areas of concern, which include the federal outcome measures for Timeliness of Investigations (initial response to report of maltreatment), Repeat Maltreatment (protection from further abuse), Risk of Harm (children maintained safely in their residence when possible and appropriate), and Permanency (children have permanency and stability in their living arrangement).

Willden added, "If all of the involved parties work in collaboration and cooperation with each other, I am confident the state and counties can meet and exceed the objectives outlined in the PIP, thus providing children under the supervision of child welfare agencies in our state with the attention and treatment they should be afforded."

NOTE: The letter from the U.S. DHHS, ACF can be viewed at <http://dhhs.nv.us>, in the "Hot Topics" box.