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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW LEGISLATION EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2007

Carson City—Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Director Mike Willden said today that several bills signed into law by Governor Jim Gibbons that take effect on July 1, 2007, will have a direct impact on the people of Nevada.

Willden added that foster care rate increases included in 2008-09 Biennium Budget which take effect on July 1 will serve as an important component as state and county child welfare agencies work to increase the number of foster care parents in Nevada.

“I am grateful for the support Governor Gibbons and the Legislature provided in our efforts to raise the daily foster care rate in Nevada from \$21.50 per day to \$24 per day beginning July 1, 2007,” Willden said. “The new rate in Nevada is one of the highest in the nation. Our intent is to work in partnership with counties providing foster care services to recruit and enlist a much greater number of foster care parents, who can provide a safe and nurturing environment for children in need.” A total of \$8.6 million was included in the biennium budget to fund foster care rate increases. In fiscal year 2009, the rate will move to \$28 per day.

The state’s Disability Rx program was granted a 2.5% increase in its share of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement for fiscal year 2008. The additional monies will help address a waiting list the pharmacy program has managed since it first rolled out in 2006. Further, funding adjustments in the Senior Rx program will support additional benefits that may include dental and vision, as well as hearing aids and other devices that enhance the ability to hear.

Legislation signed into law relating to DHHS services which takes effect on July 1, 2007, includes:

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Child Welfare

- **AB 261:** Makes changes concerning the release of certain information to the general public relating to a missing child under the care of the state or a county child welfare services agency who is the subject of an investigation of child abuse or neglect. The same release of certain information pertains to a child under the care of the state or a county child welfare services agency who is the subject of an investigation of child abuse or neglect which results in a fatality or a near fatality.
- **AB 507:** Requires certain facilities which have custody of children pursuant to a court order to ensure that employees receive specialized training within 30 days of employment and annually thereafter. Further, AB 507 requires certain child care facilities to be licensed by the Bureau of Services for Child Care of the Division of Child and Family Services of the Department of Health and Human Services, rather than by a city or county licensing agency. DHHS must adopt regulations for these purposes by October 1, 2007, at which time all such facilities must meet state licensure requirements.

Health

- **AB 146:** Requires the Department of Health and Human Services, Health Division, to establish a website designed to increase public awareness concerning hospitals and surgical centers which provide ambulatory services in Nevada, including the cost and quality of services provided.
- **AB 158:** Requires the Secretary of state to establish and maintain a Registry of Advanced Directives for Health Care by posting a digital photograph of each advance directive to a secure portion of the agency's website and to establish operational procedures.
- **SB 314:** Requires certain facilities which offer independent living arrangements for seniors to provide notice of the limitations of the service provided. Further, DHHS is required to develop an informative brochure and a website with the intent of assisting older persons seeking residential care or services with determining which facilities offer an appropriate level of care to meet their individual needs.

Senior and Disability Rx programs

- **AB 182:** Increases Tobacco Settlement funding for Disability Rx from 2.5% to 5%; allows Senior Rx to offer benefits for hearing devices to the extent funding is available; allows Disability Rx to offer dental and vision benefits, as well as benefits for hearing devices, to the extent funding is available; ensures that veterans not already receiving benefits and services available through Senior Rx and Disability Rx can access the program; and allows certain monies to be reallocated within the Department in order to provide effective pharmacy coverage for Medicare-eligible persons with AIDS/HIV.

Director's Office - Grants Management Unit

- **SB 453:** Continues funding for problem gambling treatment and prevention programs through existing slot fees.
- **AB 182:** Reduces funding for tobacco control from 20% to 15% of the Healthy Nevada allocation and increases funding for disability services and the Disability Rx program by 2.5% each; transfers duties of the Task Force for the Fund for a Healthy Nevada to the Grants Management Advisory Committee; increases membership of the Grants Management Advisory Committee to support activities under the Fund for a Healthy Nevada.

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- **AB 203:** Provides \$260,000 in one-time funding to build capacity for Family Resource Centers throughout Nevada to support implementation of Differential Response.

Approximately \$1.8 million was appropriated to the Grants Management Unit to be used for statewide implementation of Differential Response by Family Resource Centers (FRC). Families referred to an FRC are the subject of reports of child abuse and/or neglect which have been determined as likely to benefit from early intervention through assessment of their unique strengths, risks, and individual needs, rather than a more intrusive approach to investigation. The FRC, upon referral from a state or county child welfare agency, initiates a home visit, conducts an assessment, and provides case management in situations where no immediate safety issues have been identified.

The 2007 Legislature also approved a ten percent increase to the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) Cash payment levels for one and two parent households. Currently the average 3-person household receives up to \$348 per month in TANF Cash grant assistance. The maximum amount will increase to \$383, effective July 1, 2007. Different payment levels are applied to each case, depending on the size of the household. Based on the TANF Cash caseload through May 2007, approximately 5,600 households may be affected. The Legislature approved an additional \$1,072,200 to cover the costs of the TANF Cash grant increase in state fiscal year 2008, and an additional \$1,234,823 for state fiscal year 2009.

For more information on the Nevada Department of health and Human Resources and its programs, go to <http://dhhs.nv.gov>.

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