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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**FOCUS SURVEY OF ALL AMBULATORY SURGICAL CENTERS
TO BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF MARCH**

Carson City—Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Director Mike Willden and Nevada State Health Division Administrator Richard Whitley announced today that the Bureau of Licensure and Certification (BLC) has developed a Plan of Action to perform a Focus Survey of all 50 Ambulatory Surgical Centers (ASCs) in the state of Nevada. Willden said 16 BLC Surveyors are currently completing unannounced reviews of procedures at all ASCs, which he said they hope to complete by the end of March, sooner if possible. He added the date reflects using only current BLC Surveyors, and that if requests for federal assistance are answered the process may be completed more quickly.

“We are sending a formal request to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention asking for additional surveyors to be sent to Nevada to help complete this process as quickly and as professionally as possible,” Willden said. “The State needs to provide as much assurance as possible to the people of Nevada that the medical procedures being performed at ASCs are safe. Further, that the doctors and nurses at these facilities are abiding by the manufacturers recommendations for use of medication vials, syringes, and other equipment, as is the standard practice in the industry.”

Willden said Governor Jim Gibbons has authorized the State Health Division to adopt emergency regulations requiring clinical competency in relation to ASCs, including strict adherence to manufacturer’s recommendations for the use of medications.

Gibbons said, “The State needs to do everything in its power to ensure the health and safety of people who are scheduled to receive a procedure at one of these facilities, or that will soon be of the recommended age for a colonoscopy or related procedure. The emergency regulations will provide the State Health Division and the Bureau of Licensure and Certification with a greater ability to protect Nevadans from unsafe practices at outpatient surgical centers.”

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A Focus Survey—conducted by two Registered Nurse Surveyors who have successfully completed specific training in observing and questioning surgical protocols, procedures, and practices—concentrates on specific procedures. An individual Focus Survey requires 4-6 hours of onsite observation of a specific facility, whereas a Full Survey requires two days and is usually completed by three Surveyors.

Prior to today's announcement, the State Health Division, Bureau of Licensure and Certification, has been proactive on several fronts:

- State Epidemiologist, Dr. Ihsan Azzam, issued a Technical Bulletin to ASCs in Nevada on February 27, 2008.
- Bureau of Licensure and Certification staff have been in contact with all ASCs statewide to verify receipt of the Technical Bulletin and to address protocols and procedures that have come into question as a result of an ongoing investigation of ASCs.
- State Health Division launched a Hepatitis C Investigation website on February 27, 2008. (http://health.nv.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=622&Itemid=1394) which includes information about the investigation, Frequently Asked Questions, and Hepatitis B, C, and HIV.
- State Health Division issued a media release on March 3, 2008, which encouraged patients to ask their medical provider questions about surgical procedures.

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