

For Immediate Release
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State Enters into Settlement Agreement about Fort Bayard Medical Center Department of Health Agrees to Continue Ensuring Quality of Care at Nursing Home

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health voluntarily entered into a settlement agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice that will ensure residents at Fort Bayard Medical Center receive the care and services they need to lead the highest quality of life possible. The Department of Justice filed the agreement in federal court in Albuquerque Monday.

For one year, the Department of Justice will periodically visit the facility to determine whether the State is complying with the terms of the agreement. The Department will file a motion to successfully end the agreement if the State continues to meet all requirements at the end of the year.

The agreement resolves the Department of Justice's 2005 investigation into care provided at Fort Bayard Medical Center, a 200-bed long-term care facility in Silver City.

“This agreement solidifies our commitment to continue providing care at Ft. Bayard that surpasses the state and federal minimum standards,” said Health Secretary Michelle Lujan Grisham. “The situation at Ft. Bayard is completely different than two years ago when the facility was under investigation. Today, residents are receiving safe, appropriate, high quality care.”

The agreement acknowledged that the State has made significant progress in remedying the problems the Department of Justice identified with pain management, appropriate use of medications and medical care in July 2005.

When the Department of Health was first alerted of serious concerns with resident care at Fort Bayard, the Department convened a special team to personally resolve problems and immediately issued a moratorium on accepting new residents until care could be improved. The Department re-trained all staff and reviewed every resident's medical record to assure staff provided proper medical attention and appropriately managed medication needs.

“We appreciate the dedicated Fort Bayard employees who stayed at the facility and the community for helping us make and sustain improvements at Ft. Bayard,” Grisham said.

The Department hired GEO Care, a premier provider of behavioral health and long-term care services, to manage Fort Bayard and build a new, state-of-the-art facility. Together, the Department and GEO Care have improved the quality of medical and nursing care, discharge planning, nutrition, activities, charting protocols and staff training.

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GEO Care is also responsible to work with Grant County to build a new facility that will further improvements for Ft. Bayard residents. The county has selected land near the current facility, and construction should be underway shortly.