

For Immediate Release:
August 22, 2007

Contact: Deborah Busemeyer
827-2619, 470-2290

Health Secretary Announces Major Immunization Initiative Department of Health Takes Shots on the Road

(Albuquerque) -- Health Secretary Dr. Alfredo Vigil unveiled a new immunization strategy at a news conference in Albuquerque today – the “Got Shots? Protect Tots!” road tour. The New Mexico Department of Health will visit 15 communities across the state that have immunization rates typically lower than the rest of the state.

In each community the Department of Health identified the best time and place to reach the most families. The Department will work with community leaders, local nurses, health clinics, hospitals and local clubs and coalitions to provide immunizations out of vans, including the Blue Cross Blue Shield Barbara Richardson Van. Staff will give vaccines in areas most convenient to families, such as a community center, church, park, health office or a store parking lot.

“We should do everything we can to make it easy for parents to get immunizations for their children safely and efficiently,” said Dr. Vigil. “If our tour is successful this year, we would like to expand this initiative to everywhere in the state.”

The Department is launching its “Got Shots? Protect Tots!” tour in Truth or Consequences Sept. 11 and will be traveling to every corner of the state through November. All immunizations are free. They protect against such diseases as measles, whooping cough, rotavirus, chicken pox and hepatitis B.

The immunization road tour is a new initiative the Department of Health is launching in areas where access to health care may cause barriers to getting children immunized on time. This is one of several strategies to improve immunization rates in New Mexico.

Public health staff partners with local coalitions and health-care providers to promote the importance of vaccines and assesses health-care practices and assists providers in getting their patients immunized. The State of New Mexico also provides incentives to managed care companies for improving immunization rates. This year, the New Mexico Immunization Coalition and the New Mexico Primary Care Association will be coordinating quarterly immunization events starting in November to target children who need flu shots and catch-up and regular immunizations.

The Department of Health encourages parents to take their children to their health-care provider for regular immunizations. There is a primary care center in almost every county of New Mexico that provides immunizations. The Department has 55 public health offices across the state that also provide free immunizations for children who don’t have health insurance.

###