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The Southeast Region has the Poorest Health Status in New Mexico

(Santa Fe) -- In general, the Southeast Region of New Mexico has the poorest health status in the state as a result of lower income levels and educational achievement, a higher adult smoking rate, and higher rates of chronic disease and chronic deaths. Current health status data by region and county can be found in New Mexico Department of Health's Indicator-Based Information System (IBIS) at ibis.health@state.nm.us.

The New Mexico Department of Health regularly examines New Mexico's health status to guide policy decisions and improve health programs. "Tracking the health status of New Mexico regions and counties allows us to target prevention programs toward the areas of greatest need," says Department of Health Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Catherine Torres.

In general, Bernalillo County has the best health status in New Mexico of any region partly due to higher regional income levels, educational attainment, and health care coverage. Because all other regions of New Mexico do less well on these demographic factors, the health status of these regions is more adversely affected. The Southeast Region had the highest total death rate in 2009 at 977.3 deaths per 100,000 people, while Bernalillo County had the lowest total regional death rate at 838.9 deaths per 100,000 people.

Of concern for the future is the highest youth smoking rate of 26.3 percent among high school students in the Northwest Region, which also has the highest regional alcohol-related death rate in New Mexico.

The New Mexico Department of Health provides counties and regions with information on their strengths and weaknesses through IBIS, which allows them to focus attention in those areas.

Why Indicator-Based? The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that comprehensive key indicator systems had the following positive effects:

- Enhanced collaboration to address public issues.
- Provided tools to encourage progress.
- Informed decision-making and improved research.
- Increased public knowledge about key issues.

IBIS has 70 indicator reports that are regularly updated. In addition, two reports present key indicators for each county:

County Health Highlights Reports:

<http://ibis.health.state.nm.us/community/highlight/Selection.html>

County Indicator Snapshot Reports:

<http://ibis.health.state.nm.us/community/snapshot/Builder.html>

Health Regions:

Northwest Region: Cibola, McKinley, Sandoval, San Juan, and Valencia counties.

Northeast Region: Colfax, Guadalupe, Los Alamos, Mora, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, San Miguel, Taos, and Union counties.

Southwest Region: Catron, Dona Ana, Grant, Hidalgo, Lincoln, Luna, Otero, Sierra, Socorro, and Torrance counties.

Southeast Region: Chaves, Curry, De Baca, Eddy, Harding, Lea, Quay, and Roosevelt counties. Bernalillo County is its own health region because of its large population.

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