

**NEWS – North Dakota Department of Human Services  
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**N.D. receives grant to help people move from institutions into communities**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has awarded the North Dakota Department of Human Services an \$8.9 million grant to help move eligible individuals from institutions to community settings over the next five years. Called a “Money Follows the Person” demonstration project, the grant is expected to help about 110 Medicaid clients move from either nursing homes or facilities serving individuals with developmental disabilities into other appropriate settings. Participation will be voluntary.

“It is crucial that we have a strong array of long-term care services for the people of our state,” Governor John Hoeven said. “This grant will help ensure that we do all we can to help support the individual needs and preferences of seniors and people with disabilities.”

Department of Human Services Executive Director Carol K. Olson said, “While many people who qualify for nursing facility care live at home and receive services in our communities, we need to continue strengthening North Dakota’s care-giving infrastructure – especially in rural areas. This grant will increase the Medicaid program’s ability to support home and community-based services.”

Department officials said that after the state completes the required planning phase, the project will enlist the help of partnering organizations to provide services. Services will include identifying eligible participants and placement options, providing resources for one-time transition costs such as housing and utility deposits, purchasing household items and durable medical equipment, making housing modifications, and meeting other transition costs, as well as coordinating community care and support services.

State Medicaid Director Maggie Anderson said the grant restricts who can participate. According to federal guidelines, participants must qualify for Medicaid and reside in a facility for at least six months prior to moving back into the community.

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Department staff developed and submitted North Dakota's proposal last fall after consulting many stakeholders. Anderson said implementation may involve nonprofit centers for independent living, the North Dakota Long-term Care Association, AARP, Protection and Advocacy, local housing authorities, and many other provider and advocacy organizations.

The grant is the latest federal *Real Choices Systems Change* initiative. All are intended to give individuals more care and service choices. Moving some Medicaid clients to community-based care is also expected to produce cost-savings over the long term.

Individuals and families often make long-term care decisions after a medical crisis and may lack complete information. Within the next two years, the department also hopes to secure federal funding to establish an Aging and Disability Resource Center. Both the *Money Follows the Person* grant and a resource center would offer individuals and families care choices. Grant funding will supplement transition planning already underway and supported by the 2007 legislature.

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