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**April 3, 2008**

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**Feds approve new N.D. Medicaid program for medically fragile children with severe disabilities**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has granted North Dakota’s request to run a new program to help some families care for their medically fragile children at home. Called a “Medicaid waiver,” the program will serve up to 15 children at a time who would otherwise require care in a nursing home, hospital, or other institutional setting.

“This program will help some parents care for their children at home,” said North Dakota Department of Human Services’ Medicaid Director Maggie Anderson. “It serves children between the ages of 3 and 18 years who have a serious illness or condition that is medically complex and requires prolonged care.”

Anderson said parents of qualifying children will have access to standard Medicaid services along with additional services for unique needs. Those services include transportation, dietary supplements, family and individual counseling, in-home support services such as caregiver assistants, adaptive equipment and environmental modifications, and respite care for family caregivers.

Parents, she said, will direct their child’s care, and case managers will be available to provide support. Care costs must stay within a specified budget amount.

The program’s application process is intended to serve the most serious situations first, she said. The department will screen applicants to determine if their “Level of Care” requires skilled nursing care. If a child meets those criteria, the child’s primary healthcare provider must complete a “Level of Need” form, and the child must score at least a 40.

Parents can apply for the Medicaid waiver program by contacting the Department of Human Services at 701-328-3701 or completing and submitting application form number 394 that is available on-line at <http://www.nd.gov/eforms/Doc/sfn00394.pdf>.

The North Dakota Legislature authorized the department to develop the Medicaid waiver when it passed Senate Bill 2326, which also established a Medicaid Buy-In Program for middle income families with disabled children. That program also went into effect this month and is expected to help about 400 disabled children with their health care needs.

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