

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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Benson County Social Services Receives Awards

Bismarck, N.D. – Food Stamp officials from the North Dakota Department of Human Services recently presented Benson County with two performance awards. County social service employees were recognized for reviewing the highest percentage of food stamp case files in their eight-county administrative region last year, and for having the most improved food stamp benefit accuracy rate among like-type counties. Benson is among those counties that have a food stamp caseload between 201 and 500 cases per month.

Department officials presented the awards during the annual Spring Showcase training and recognition event held late last month in Mandan, N.D. The awards are based on caseload size, percentage of state food stamp caseload, and quality control data.

County employees who received the award included: Director Ed Forde, Barb Ambers, Barb Arndt, Sally Campbell, Kelli Clifton, Dawn Flemmer, Elaine Jones, Pam Kutz, Janis Lunde, Carol Reilly, Laurie Rodriguez and Margaret Toso. Linda Martinson, the regional representative for the state agency, also received a recognition certificate.

“Reviews are a proven method of detecting errors early and preventing them,” said North Dakota Food Stamp Director Arlene Dura. “This award demonstrates the county’s commitment to providing accurate and timely food assistance benefits.”

Other counties in the Northeast Region include Cavalier, Griggs, Nelson, Pierce, Ramsey, Rolette, and Towner.

Currently the United States Department of Agriculture’s Food Stamp Program helps about 49,000 qualifying low-income North Dakotans pay for food. Almost half of the program participants are children; many others are elderly or have disabilities.

Individuals apply for the Food Stamp Program at their county social service office. If they qualify, individuals receive a special debit card, which can be used to purchase food items only.

Each month, the federally-funded program provides about \$4.8 million in benefits in North Dakota that can be used to purchase food at over 400 grocers.

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