

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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Peña named State Council on Developmental Disabilities Director

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services announced that Andrea Peña has been named Executive Director of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities. The council promotes independence, productivity, and inclusion for North Dakotans with developmental disabilities.

Peña previously worked for the Department of Public Instruction as a program coordinator and data manager, and served as a program compliance manager for federal grants. She also served on the Advisory Council for the North Dakota Disability Health Project. Her professional expertise includes grant writing, budgets, and contract and project management. Peña has a master's degree in educational leadership from the University of Northern Colorado.

Peña will coordinate meetings and initiatives of the 19-member council and will administer the grant program, which distributes funding as directed by council members to support projects that enhance opportunities for people with developmental disabilities and their families. She replaces Tom Wallner who retired this summer after 26 years of public service.

During its history, the council has provided start-up grant funding resulting in many services that continue to directly benefit people with developmental disabilities. These include para-transit services, pre-natal screenings and education for expectant mothers to help prevent birth defects, guardianship services, respite care for families, consumer training to promote employment, the Family-to-Family peer support project, and many other initiatives.

Council members include individuals with developmental disabilities; parents, guardians, or immediate relatives of such persons; and state agency representatives from the Department of Human Services and its Developmental Center; Job Service North Dakota; the Department of Public Instruction; the Department of Health; the Protection and Advocacy Project, and the N.D. University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. Community-based service provider organizations are also represented.

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