

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Child support enforcement and public assistance programs can help people impacted by layoffs

BISMARCK, N.D. – Parents who pay child support and are laid off through no fault of their own may get some relief through a North Dakota Department of Human Services' Child Support Enforcement pilot program. Created in April 2009, the program works to maintain support to children while temporarily adjusting support and providing short-term enforcement relief and job placement help for qualifying parents. The program involves the department, the courts, and Job Service North Dakota.

Mike Schwindt, director of the department's Child Support Enforcement Division, said "This program is for people who have been working and supporting their children and who find their financial situation changed due to a permanent or temporary layoff or reduced work hours."

Parents should contact their child support enforcement case worker to let them know about their situation. Regional child support enforcement unit contact information is available at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childsupport/progserv/enforcement/access.html. Parents who do not have a case worker or who need additional help should call the Child Support Enforcement Division's Customer Service Unit at 800-231-4255 or 701-328-5440 in Bismarck.

Parents served by the Child Support Enforcement Division can have their court-ordered obligation reviewed and possibly modified by the court. Schwindt said that under the pilot program, Child Support Enforcement will prioritize a case and use the most recent income information to file a motion with the court for a modification of support. Where possible, enforcement tools such as interest charges and license suspensions will be put on hold.

If appropriate, noncustodial parents may be referred to the multi-agency PRIDE program that connects parents to specialized Job Service North Dakota staff who work with them to improve their employment opportunities.

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The Department of Human Services also administers public assistance programs that can help families impacted by layoffs and reduced incomes. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides funds issued on a debit card to purchase food. Children in participating households also qualify for free school meals. Other assistance may be available through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Child Care Assistance Program, Medicaid, and the Healthy Steps Children’s Health Insurance Program. Households must qualify financially and should apply at a county social service office. To find an office, look in the county government section of the telephone book or go to <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/countysocialserv/>.

Public assistance programs exist to help individuals and families facing financial setbacks. Most are used for a short period of time, and thousands of children benefit from them. Details are on the Web at <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/financialhelp/>.

North Dakota’s Child Support Program establishes and enforces child support and medical support obligations, establishes paternity, and reviews court orders for potential modification. Parents can monitor their case activity at www.childsupportnd.com.

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