

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
600 East Boulevard Avenue – Department 325, Bismarck ND 58505-0250**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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N.D. Human Services Department to host meetings across state

BISMARCK, N.D. – North Dakota Department of Human Services is hosting meetings in the state's eight largest communities in October and November to gather information about local and regional human service needs and priorities. The department invites consumers of its services, health and human service providers, advocates, and other interested individuals to participate.

"We hold these community conversations every two years to listen and learn. Individuals, their families, and providers share concerns and suggestions that help us serve people more effectively," said Department Executive Director Carol K. Olson. "We use the information to identify priority areas for planning and to shape future budget proposals."

Scheduled two-hour meetings include:

October 13, 2009

- 10 a.m., **Devils Lake**, Ramsey County Courthouse, basement meeting room, 524 Fourth Ave. N.E.

October 14, 2009

- 10 a.m., **Grand Forks**, County Office Building, Sixth Floor, 151 S. Fourth St.
- 2 p.m., **Fargo**, Doublewood Inn, Woodlawn Room, 3333 13th Ave. S.

October 15, 2009

- 10 a.m., **Jamestown**, South Central Human Service Center, Rooms 124-126, 520 Third St. N.W.

November 2, 2009

- 1 p.m. (MDT), **Dickinson**, Badlands Human Service Center, Staff Meeting Room, 300 13th Ave. W., Suite 1

November 3, 2009

- 10 a.m., **Williston**, Psychosocial Club, 212 Second St. W.

November 4, 2009

- 9 a.m., **Minot**, North Central Human Service Center, Teddy Roosevelt Room, 1015 S. Broadway, Suite 18
- 1:30 p.m., **Bismarck**, West Central Human Service Center, 1237 W. Divide Ave., Suite 5.

People who are unable to attend a community meeting can submit ideas, concerns, or recommendations about agency services to the department at 600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 325, Bismarck, N.D. 58505-0250 or dhseo@nd.gov.

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Individuals with disabilities who need special accommodations to participate should contact their regional human service center or the department at 701-328-1814 or Relay ND 800-366-6888 in advance of the meeting they plan to attend.

Olson said department services and programs affect thousands of state residents. The N.D. Department of Human Services operates on a two-year \$2.3 billion budget and employs about 2,000 North Dakotans. About half of the department's workforce provides direct services to state residents through the Developmental Center, the State Hospital, eight regional child support enforcement offices, and the eight regional human service centers, which provide community-based mental health and substance abuse treatment and other human services. The department's Medicaid program is a significant funding source for health care providers and other service providers across the state.

Olson said community conversations two years ago highlighted the need to increase Medicaid reimbursements to health and human service providers, which Governor Hoeven promoted and the 2009 Legislature approved. The Governor also pressed for enhanced services to seniors, resulting in legislative approval of an income level increase for seniors and people with disabilities who participate in the Medicaid medically needy coverage group. Funding to increase participation in child health coverage programs was approved too. These are only a few of the positive developments the Governor and the department worked for and legislators approved in the agency's budget.

The department administers child protection services, child support enforcement, disability services, foster care, economic assistance programs including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid, the children's health insurance program, home and community-based long term care services, mental health and substance abuse treatment services, and aging services including senior meals and related services.

Together, the department, counties, Tribes, and other public and private organizations deliver human services in North Dakota.

For information about the programs and services provide by the N.D. Department of Human Services, visit www.nd.gov/dhs.

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