

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**A New Program Offers Pre-Employment Support to People Affected by Brain Injuries**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The N.D. Department of Human Services announced a new program to help individuals who have sustained a traumatic brain injury to receive individualized support, encouragement, and training.

“It’s important to help people be productive so they can contribute to their community, improve their quality of life, and have a sense of accomplishment,” said Susan Wagner, the department’s lead for Traumatic Brain Injury efforts.

The department has contracted with Community Options for Residential and Employment Services, Inc. to offer a statewide pre-vocational skills and mentoring program beginning May 1, 2010, for individuals with traumatic brain injuries.

The program’s main goal is to teach basic skills such as resume development, wardrobe planning, time management, and work etiquette to individuals preparing to enter or re-enter the workforce following a brain injury. Once individuals receive the desired training and support, they may be referred for additional services to Rehabilitation Consulting and Services, North Dakota’s Vocational Rehabilitation program. Participants will also receive mentoring from a job coach to ensure long-term success in the workplace.

“The goal of this program really matches the value of our company,” said Trina Gress, chief operations manager for Community Options, Inc. “We provide personalized service to help individuals realize their hopes and dreams by promoting self-direction and personal growth through opportunity, choice, and relationships.”

This program can serve current vocational rehabilitation clients, returning soldiers from Afghanistan and Iraq, and individuals who are not currently receiving this type of service. There is no cost for the program, but individuals must be approved to participate. The program hopes to receive referrals from clinics, hospitals, group homes, and human service centers, along with other service providers in the state.

In 2009, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 2198, which appropriated funds to the Department of Human Services to increase support and services for people affected by brain injuries. The Brain Injury Social and Recreational Services Program, operated by HIT, Inc., of Mandan, N.D., was created to address unmet needs in April 2010. In addition, the Head Injury Association of North Dakota provides informal support services.

For more information about the pre-vocational and mentoring program, contact the N.D. Department of Human Services’ Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division at 701-328-8920, or Community Options for Residential and Employment Services Inc. in Bismarck at 701-391-8523.

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