

## ***NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Federal government approves new N.D. Medicaid services**

*Seriously ill children and families can access hospice and related services while they continue to receive treatment and strive for a cure*

BISMARCK, N.D. - Children who have a life-limiting diagnosis and their families will benefit from new services available through the North Dakota Medicaid program. The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has approved the N.D. Department of Human Services' Children's Hospice Program.

"Our goal is to support families as they care for their children at home," said Medical Services Division Director Maggie Anderson. "The new program provides hospice services along with other specialized care and support for children while they continue to receive treatment toward a cure."

Anderson said the program is intended to benefit children who have a life expectancy of a year or less. The program overrides some coverage limits, allows ongoing treatment, while also providing specialized services including palliative care, which addresses pain, symptoms, the stress of serious illness, and grief.

North Dakota's Children's Hospice Program can serve up to 30 children at a time and will cover qualifying children ranging in age from infants to young adults age 21, she said. Children with life-limiting diagnoses may qualify even if their families do not meet the regular income criteria for Medicaid coverage.

The program will help qualifying families access services with the help of a nurse case manager, including respite care and other home health aide support, nursing services, hospice, therapy, and grief counseling. Other available services help children with the physical, emotional, spiritual, and social stresses experienced during serious illness.

Lawmakers approved state matching funds for the program during the 2009 legislative session. Because the services supplement existing approved Medicaid services and serve a specific targeted group of people, the state had to apply for a waiver and obtain federal approval.

Families are encouraged to contact the N.D. Department of Human Services' Medical Services Division at 701-328-3701 if they have a child age 21 or younger who has a life limiting diagnoses.

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