

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services

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New Screening Tool Helps Identify Brain Injuries in North Dakotans

Governor Jack Dalrymple has proclaimed March as Brain Injury Awareness Month

BISMARCK, N.D. – A traumatic brain injury can happen to anyone at any time and can alter a person's life in many ways. This type of injury can cause changes in physical abilities, behavior and emotions, and personality that may affect the ability to complete routine daily activities, as well as work-related activities and skills. The N.D. Department of Human Services has launched a new screening tool to help identify possible brain injuries in the children, adults, seniors, and military veterans it serves through its eight regional human service centers.

The new screening tool is a questionnaire that is used during the client intake process to determine whether a client experienced a past head or neck injury due to a motor vehicle accident, sports injury, physical violence, explosion or loud blast, or other cause. Responses will help treatment professionals understand and identify the most appropriate treatment approach and make referrals to specialized service providers. This screening will also provide more exact information on the extent of this issue to help with future planning efforts.

"Not all brain injuries are severe, but even minor to moderate brain injuries that leave no physical trace can affect people in subtle to significant ways. If left undetected, individuals are often misunderstood," said Susan Wagner, program administrator for the N.D. Department of Human Services. "That is why the injury is often referred to as an invisible injury."

Wagner said the department has also worked to identify existing brain injury supports and services in North Dakota including support groups, public and private providers, care facilities, and physicians who can offer guidance, care and support. Staff will be able to provide appropriate resource information to clients.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, about 9,000 North Dakotans are affected by a traumatic brain injury. The injury has also been called the "signature injury" of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

The Department of Human Services is the lead state agency serving people dealing with traumatic brain injuries and their families. The department contracts with providers to offer supports and services as well as partnering in the North Dakota Traumatic Brain Injury Partnership Grant Program.

For more information on brain injury services and supports, contact the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division of the N.D. Department of Human Services at 701-328-8920, toll-free 1-800-755-2719 or TTY: 1-800-366-6888.

Individuals can also contact the Head Injury Association of North Dakota at 877-525-2724 or 701-255-2120.

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