

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

## **600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Students with Disabilities Gain Work Experience through Employment Project**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The N.D. Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has selected 12 community rehabilitation providers and special education units to participate in its Summer Employment Project, which provides paid summer employment opportunities to high school juniors and seniors with disabilities. This summer, over 80 students will take part in this project.

The organizations selected to participate in the project include Easter Seals Goodwill of North Dakota, Inc., **Minot**; East Central Special Education Unit, **New Rockford**; **Fargo** Public School District; HIT, Inc., **Bismarck**; HIT, Inc., **Dickinson**; **Minot** Vocational Adjustment Workshop; Northern Plains Special Education Unit, **Crosby**; Oliver/Mercer County; Rehab Services, **Minot**; Standing Rock Reservation, **Ft. Yates**; Southwest Special Education District, **Mott**; and the **West Fargo** Public School District.

“This program offers a unique opportunity for students with disabilities to explore a variety of jobs and professions,” said Russ Cusack, director of the department’s Vocational Rehabilitation Division. “Many students would not have the chance to build a resume without this project.”

Interested organizations submitted written proposals outlining their community-based summer employment opportunities including objectives, expected outcomes, number of students involved in vocational rehabilitation services, and budget expenditures. Representatives from the Department of Public Instruction and Department of Human Services reviewed the proposals and made selections based on program criteria.

Cusack said the project is designed for students to work hand-in-hand with participating organizations to gain work experience in a job that matches their interest, abilities, and talents. A job coach is available to provide specialized on-site training and support to assist the student in learning and performing the job as well as adjusting to the work environment.

To qualify, students must be a junior or senior in high school with a documented disability and must be receiving services through an individualized education program or 504 plan.

The N.D. Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation began the Summer Employment Project in 2008 and nearly 200 students have participated. The division works to assist individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment opportunities and helps North Dakota business owners and employers find solutions to disability-related issues.

For more information on services and supports offered by the division, go online to <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr>, or call 701-328-8950, or ND Relay TTY: 1-800-366-6888.

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