

# **NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services 600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505**

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## *Governor Jack Dalrymple has proclaimed May as Older Americans Month* **Options Counseling: Connects Individuals to Care Choices Now in Dickinson, Minot, and Williston**

BISMARCK, N.D. – May is Older Americans Month. It is a time to ensure that older adults have access to services and supports that help them maintain their quality of life and sustain connections in their communities.

One option making a difference in the lives of older adults and people with disabilities is options counseling through the N.D. Department of Human Services. Options counseling helps guide individuals and their family members through choices in care services and supports that match their specific short-term and long-term care needs. The service is now being offered at the department's human service centers in Dickinson, Minot, and Williston.

“Every individual and family is unique, and there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution to meeting care needs,” said Jan Engan, director of the Aging Services Division. “Options counseling is an interactive approach in connecting people to resources that can help them live as independently as possible.”

A trained professional, called an options counselor, works one-on-one with individuals and their family members to identify goals and preferences, review available care options, and encourage planning for future long-term support needs. The service is free and confidential.

Engan said options counselors also work with service providers to help individuals who might not qualify for publically funded programs or services.

Options counselors are on-site at the Badland Human Service Center in Dickinson, North Central Human Service Center in Minot, and Northwest Human Service Center in Williston. Individuals can contact the Aging and Disability Resource LINK toll-free at 1-855-GO2-LINK (1-855-462-5465), ND Relay TTY 1-800-366-6888, or go online to [www.carechoice.nd.gov](http://www.carechoice.nd.gov) for more information and to contact an options counselor.

Options counseling began in 2009 after the Department of Human Services received a federal three-year grant to streamline access to services and supports through the Aging and Disability Resource LINK pilot project. The project first served Burleigh county residents, and has expanded through contracts with independent providers to Morton, Oliver, Emmons, Kidder, Grant, McLean, Mercer, and Sioux counties over the past two years. In 2013, options counseling services will expand to the Devils Lake, Fargo, Grand Forks, and Jamestown regions.

The Governor's Older Americans Month proclamation can be viewed online at [www.nd.gov/dhs/services/adultsaging/](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/adultsaging/).

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