

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services

600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 19, 2015

For more information, contact: LuWanna Lawrence at 701-328-1892 or Heather Steffl at 701-328-4933.

Foster Homes Offer More than Shelter to North Dakota Children and Youth *Gov. Dalrymple proclaims May as Children's Foster Care Month*

BISMARCK, N.D. – May is Children's Foster Care Month in North Dakota. It is a time to recognize foster parents who open their homes and hearts to children in need, as well as child welfare professionals and others whose work supports child safety, permanency, and well-being.

"When you look at foster care, there are so many people who work together as a team to ensure a child in foster care is in a safe, stable, and supportive environment," said Maggie Anderson, executive director of the North Dakota Department of Human Services. "Foster parents, family members, caseworkers, court personnel, child welfare professionals, counselors, therapists, educators, and other community members deserve praise for the challenging but rewarding work they do to meet the needs of children while helping to strengthen families."

Foster care is the temporary placement of children outside of their own home due to neglect, abuse, or other family situations that impact a family's ability to care for children. Currently, there are about 730 licensed family foster homes, therapeutic foster homes, and approved tribal foster homes that care for about 1,340 children and youth in foster care.

"This month is also a good time to raise awareness of the need for more individuals and families to foster infants, young children, adolescents, sibling groups, and children with special needs," said department foster care administrator Dean Sturn. "Training and support are available for both new and long-serving foster families that will help make the foster care experience a positive one for all."

Foster parents are provided with pre-service training and ongoing training and financial and medical support to meet the needs of each child in care. Caseworkers are involved and provide support for both the foster family and the child. In addition, there are foster parent support groups and foster parents can access a lending library of books, videos, and other resources on foster care topics.

Potential foster parents need to meet certain requirements. They must be at least 21 years old, be financially stable, have a clear background check, own or rent a home or apartment, have adequate space for a child, and successfully complete the licensing process.

Sturn said some foster families adopt foster children who cannot return to their birth families, resulting in an ongoing need for more foster families.

-MORE-

Foster Homes Offer More than Shelter to North Dakota Children and Youth

Page 2

The department is partnering with the University of North Dakota's Children and Family Services Training Center to streamline efforts to recruit and retain foster homes. This collaboration will provide coordinated recruitment and outreach messages, innovative recruitment tools, strategic retention planning, and other supports to counties and local coalitions.

The North Dakota Department of Human Services licenses all family foster care homes and group care facilities to maintain a standard of safety and well-being for the children in care. The department is also responsible for reviewing information collected during home studies of each prospective foster family prior to issuing a license to provide foster care.

Individuals interested in becoming licensed to provide foster care to children and youth in their home should contact their local county social services office. Contact information is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/countysocialserv/. People can also call the Professional Association of Treatment Homes (PATH) of North Dakota at 877-766-PATH or www.pathinc.org.

Information is also available at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/fostercare/ or by calling 701-328-2316, toll-free 800-245-3736 or ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888.

The Children's Foster Care Month proclamation is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/info/pubs/docs/cfs/proc-childrens-foster-care-month.pdf.

###