

**NEWS from the N.D. Department of Human Services  
600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
July 22, 2015**

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## **Celebrating the ADA: Agency works to increase access to employment for people with disabilities**

BISMARCK, N.D. – Sunday, July 26, marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the federal civil rights law known as the Americans with Disabilities Act. The law is aimed at assuring that people with disabilities have the same access to employment, transportation and telecommunication services, public buildings and gathering spaces, and government programs and services as other people.

Russ Cusack, director of the North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), said the ADA is cause for celebrating, and not just by North Dakotans who have disabilities.

“Whether you are born with a disability, experience a disabling injury or illness, or are facing changing abilities as you age, this law truly benefits all people by supporting access to many things that add to our quality of life, including employment,” said Cusack.

While the Census Bureau reports that North Dakota leads the nation in the employment of people with disabilities at 53 percent, Cusack said, efforts to increase workforce diversity need to continue.

“The ADA prohibits discrimination in employment based on disability. We strive to change the conversation to abilities because there are still many North Dakotans who have abilities that can enrich our communities and our state’s workforce,” he said.

Cusack encouraged employers to contact Vocational Rehabilitation to learn more about workplace accommodations that can help retain experienced employees who are injured or develop a disabling health condition. The agency also has resources that can help train new employees with disabilities.

He said accommodations are often inexpensive and may include ergonomic changes to work spaces, low-cost adaptive equipment, training, and other options so that seasoned, trained employees can stay on the job.

The division also provides individualized help so people with disabilities can overcome barriers to employment. Professional counselors help people assess interests and abilities and set employment goals, and then work with them to apply for positions, explore adaptive equipment, or pursue training and education leading to employment.

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Last year, DVR helped over 400 people with significant disabilities obtain competitive employment in North Dakota.

Cusack said employers can find information about employee retention and other workforce resources online at [www.NDAdvantage.com](http://www.NDAdvantage.com).

Employers and people with disabilities can learn more about vocational rehabilitation services at <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/index.html> or by contacting the North Dakota Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation at 1237 W. Divide Ave., Suite 1B in Bismarck, North Dakota 58501, 701-328-8950, toll-free 800-755-2745, ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888, or [dhsvr@nd.gov](mailto:dhsvr@nd.gov).

DVR offices are located in North Dakota's eight largest communities. Local DVR office contact information is online at [www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/about/regional-contact.html](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/about/regional-contact.html).

DVR works with these workforce development partners: Job Service North Dakota, North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education, North Dakota Department of Commerce Workforce Development, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Adult Basic Education - Safe Schools; North Dakota State Workforce Council; North Dakota University System, System-wide Student Entry, Transfer, and Retention; and Continuing Education, Training and Innovation at Bismarck State College.

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