

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services  
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 325, Bismarck, N.D. 58505**

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Contacts: Heather Steffl, 701-328-4933; LuWanna Lawrence, 701-328-1892 at the Department of Human Services, or Joey Ness, Office of the First Lady, 701-328-1010

## **Campaign launched to shift social attitude toward addiction**

*North Dakotans encouraged to address stigma, shame associated with disease*

BISMARCK, N.D. - Addiction is a chronic disease suffered by one in seven people in the United States. However, unlike other chronic diseases, the shame and stigma associated with addiction often prevent people from seeking the care they need. With the goal of changing the conversation around addiction across the state, the North Dakota Department of Human Services, in collaboration with Gov. Doug Burgum and First Lady Kathryn Helgaas Burgum, is launching a statewide multi-faceted campaign aimed at reducing the stigma of addiction, promoting support for those affected by addiction and inspiring innovative approaches to addressing and preventing the disease.

“I know from my own experience the shame and stigma of addiction can make it difficult for people to have the courage to honestly address this disease,” Helgaas Burgum said. “But when we recognize addiction as the chronic disease it is, rather than a moral failing, we can develop more effective strategies to prevent, treat and recover from it. The truth is addiction can happen to anyone, but recovery is possible, and the support of family, friends and community makes a significant impact on the willingness of people to seek care and be successful in recovery.”

The first ads that will appear on television, radio and online, called “Dream Again,” emphasize that addiction is not a deliberate choice but rather is a disease that can affect anyone. The ads also direct people to [RecoveryReinvented.com](http://RecoveryReinvented.com) for additional information and resources.

“Alcohol and drug use is the primary social problem among adults in North Dakota,” said Pamela Sagness, director of the department’s Behavioral Health Division. “We rank third in the nation for binge drinking. Half of all crashes on North Dakota roads are alcohol-related, and three-quarters of our state’s inmates have substance use disorders. This campaign aims to change the conversation around addiction and reinvent the way we approach addiction in North Dakota.”

The multi-year effort will also encourage the development of healthy families, businesses and communities and promote the directive for residents to lock, monitor and take back prescription drugs to limit accessibility to addictive medicines.

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## **New multi-faceted campaign aimed at reducing stigma and addiction – page 2**

### National Effort, Local Approach

North Dakota's initiative was influenced by a 2016 report released by the U.S. Surgeon General called "[Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs and Health](#)," which identified that an evidence-based public health approach toward addiction, including a cultural shift in the way addiction is viewed, can be effective in preventing substance use, reducing the number of people suffering from addiction, shortening the duration of the illness and reducing the number of substance-related deaths. The report compared this approach with social attitude shifts that have been successful in addressing other diseases such as cancer and HIV. Further, the report highlights the success of community-based programs, which supports the state's call for action at a local level as part of the multi-faceted campaign.

The campaign also aligns with Helgaas Burgum's platform to reduce the stigma and shame of addiction by sharing her personal story of addiction and recovery. On Sept. 26, 2017, the governor and first lady hosted Recovery Reinvented, a daylong event at the Bismarck Event Center, which was the first in a series of events and initiatives focused on finding solutions across the full continuum of care: prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery.

### Access to Information

Several supporting initiatives have already been announced as part of this statewide effort. These include [Free Through Recovery](#), a program designed to increase access to community-based behavioral health services for former inmates; [opioid treatment, recovery and prevention funding for North Dakota tribes; and expanded training](#) and increased [availability of naloxone for state agencies](#) to prevent deaths from opioid overdoses.

Funding for the campaign is being provided through the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant, which is administered through the North Dakota Department of Human Services. Visit [RecoveryReinvented.com](#) for more information about the state's initiatives, links to behavioral health resources and to view the advertising materials developed as part of the campaign.

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