

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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 14, 2017**

Media contacts: LuWanna Lawrence at 701-328-1892 or Heather Steffl at 701-328-4933

Licensed and self-declared child care providers invited to apply for grant funding to support children with disabilities

BISMARCK, N.D. – Licensed and self-declared early childhood service providers who care for children with special needs, ages birth through 12 years, can apply for funding for additional support and resources for their programs through the Inclusion Support Program offered by the North Dakota Department of Human Services.

Licensed and self-declared early childhood service providers can use the funding to support staffing needs, purchase equipment or materials that support inclusive early childhood programming, or modify a child care setting by building ramps or widening doors to accommodate children with diverse abilities and needs.

The Inclusion Support Program also provides technical assistance to licensed and self-declared child care providers including educational resources, connections to community resources, on-site observations, and helpful strategies for meeting the unique needs of children. This assistance is offered through Child Care Aware of North Dakota at no cost to providers.

All licensed and self-declared early childhood service providers can apply for the funding. These include childcare centers and school-aged programs, preschool programs, and family and group child care providers.

Providers must be licensed/regulated by the Department of Human Services to be eligible to apply for the funding. Providers also need a letter from a child's therapist, physician, or other health care provider that outlines the need for additional supports, and a care plan for each child in care with special needs.

Applications will be accepted from Aug. 1 to Oct. 31, 2017. Additional details, including an application, are online at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childcare/inclusion.html.

The department has provided information about the funding opportunity to about 1,400 licensed and self-declared early childhood service providers in the state, as well as to other partners and organizations who work with children and families.

A self-declared provider can care for five or fewer children or three infants in a home. These providers must meet some minimal standards, including a criminal fingerprint-based background check and basic health and safety training, are inspected prior to approval, and receive one monitoring visit per year.

The Inclusion Support Program was created by the 2011 legislature as part of a comprehensive effort to meet the needs of North Dakota families and early childhood service providers. The 2017 legislature appropriated \$300,000 to continue this program and meet the needs of children.

Since the program's implementation, 87 licensed and self-declared early childhood service providers have received funding to help create and maintain an inclusive environment that supports children with disabilities or developmental delays to learn, grow, and play alongside their peers.

###