

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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North Dakota receives grant to support respite and training for family caregivers

BISMARCK, N.D. – In North Dakota, an estimated 64,400 informal caregivers¹ help loved ones of all ages with chores, transportation, food preparation, bathing, medication administration, supervision and other care needs.

These family caregivers typically face stress, exhaustion and financial strain. They are about to get some assistance through a grant the Administration for Community Living awarded to the North Dakota Department of Human Services.

The \$200,000 Lifespan Respite Care grant will help the state strengthen community respite care and support services for family caregivers of individuals of all ages with special needs. North Dakota House Bill 1038, which lawmakers approved in 2017, directed the department to apply for the grant.

The Aging Services Division, which is administering the grant, said funds will be used to increase awareness of existing respite care and resources for caregivers and to develop a voucher program for emergency respite care, which is an unmet need statewide. It will also support training for caregivers so they feel better able to meet their loved ones' needs.

A 2016 study commissioned by the North Dakota Legislature and conducted by North Dakota State University found that a lack of sufficient respite care was the most common challenge reported by family caregivers.

“Taking care of family caregivers makes sense,” said department Aging Services Division Director Nancy Maier. “They are providing much-needed unpaid care and support to children with disabilities and adults at home where individuals want to live. Offering training and respite can reduce stress, support the quality of life of both care recipients and caregivers, while saving individuals, their families and society millions of dollars in care costs.”

The department will administer the three-year grant in partnership with the North Dakota Respite Care Coalition and AARP.

The grant steering committee intends to address gaps and promote systemic changes strengthening access to respite care providers and other resources. They also intend to offer caregiver training statewide using existing curriculum.

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“North Dakota has existing programs, services, and service delivery systems that are unique for children and adults and for different types of disabilities.” Maier said. “Our goal is to serve families better by strengthening this state infrastructure through better communication and coordination across agencies, service providers, and service delivery systems, and by building capacity in rural areas.”

By supporting families, she said individuals will have a lower risk of institutionalization.

Maier said families seeking respite and other supportive services to care for adult family members can currently use the state’s Aging and Disability Resource Link: 1-855-462-5465 (1-855-GO2-LINK), ND Relay TTY 1-800-366-6888, or www.carechoice.nd.gov to find existing services and resources.

Grant funding will also be used by the division to update the database to include emergency respite and other caregiver resources for families caring for children with disabilities, she said.

North Dakota is the latest state, among 37 states and the District of Columbia, to receive a federal Lifespan Respite grant since they first became available in 2009. Federal officials expect participating states to implement statewide systems of coordinated, community-based respite for family caregivers caring for individuals with special needs of all ages. Grantees are required to work in conjunction with the Aging and Disability Resource Center in their state, as well as the statewide respite coalition.

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¹ Family Caregiver Alliance Caregiving across the States: 50 State Profile (2014)