

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

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

Human Services seeks input on child welfare services in the Devils Lake region through meeting and online surveys

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Children and Family Services Division is gathering input from families and professionals engaged in the child welfare system on how services and supports are provided in Benson, Cavalier, Ramsey, Rolette and Towner counties, as well as by the Division of Juvenile Services, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Social Services and Spirit Lake Nation Social Services.

Licensed foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers from the region are invited to attend a meeting to share their feedback on Tuesday, Feb. 13, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., at Lake Region Human Service Center, 200 Hwy. 2 SW, in Devils Lake. Families who would like to participate, but are unable to attend in person, can call Allison Schmill at 701-665-2270 to receive a toll-free call-in number.

The department is also surveying parents with children in foster care, and professionals who work with children and families, including caseworkers, child welfare service providers, county and tribal social services staff members, juvenile court directors, judges, and referees; and other stakeholders through separate online surveys. Youth served through the foster care system will also have the opportunity to comment about their experiences. These stakeholders will receive an email with the appropriate survey link and instructions on how to participate. Others, who are interested in participating in one of the surveys, can call the onsite case review manager at the University of North Dakota Children and Family Services Training Center (UND CFSTC) at 701-777-5971.

The surveys consist of questions that focus on the safety, permanency and well-being of children served through the state's child welfare system. The surveys will be available for comment from Feb. 5-16. A paper version of the survey for parents is also available upon request through their child welfare agency.

"Child welfare is a continuum of services that ensure children are safe and that families have the supports they need to care for their children successfully," said Diana Weber, a program administrator for the department. "It is important that everyone involved in this region's child welfare system has the opportunity to share their insights as to how the system as a whole can best meet the needs of North Dakota's children and families."

In addition to the meeting and surveys, the department will also conduct a week-long onsite review of county foster care and in-home services cases of children and youth in the child welfare system.

Weber said the goal is to establish a continuous feedback process to measure how the state's child welfare system is helping achieve positive outcomes in safety, permanency and well-being for children and families, as well as ensure conformity to federal child welfare requirements.

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The department along with its partner, the UND CFSTC, will conduct meetings and survey stakeholders in all eight regions of the state this year. The first review was completed in the Grand Forks region this week.

A final report will be developed showing outcomes and feedback collected during the reviews. It will be submitted to the Children's Bureau, U.S. Administration on Children, Youth and Families. The information will also be used to support continuous quality improvement efforts by the department and its stakeholders.

All states are required by the federal government to complete a review of their child welfare systems on an ongoing basis.

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