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2019 North Dakota Behavioral Health Conference reports record attendance

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division's annual Behavioral Health Conference held at the Bismarck Event Center, Nov. 13-15 set an attendance record. More than 550 behavioral health clinicians, peer support specialists, health care professionals, community agencies, consumers and family members came together to learn about new behavioral health initiatives, connect with state and national behavioral health leaders and advance their skills.

"It is inspiring to see so many individuals coming together to improve their skills regarding behavioral health," said division Director Pamela Sagness. "The conference reconfirmed that the state is investing in behavioral health, and people are committed to taking action to address the needs of North Dakotans."

During the conference, North Dakota Senators Dick Dever, Kathy Hogan, Judy Lee and Tim Mathern, and Representative Jon Nelson were recognized with Behavioral Health Champion awards for their work supporting behavioral health programs and services. Key behavioral health legislation passed during the 2019 session included the 1915i Medicaid state plan amendment, certification of peer support specialists, expansion of the Free Through Recovery program, and investment in mental illness prevention and mental health promotion and recovery housing.

For the first time, the conference provided sessions for peer support specialists, and more than 60 trained peer support specialists attended. Several of the sessions aimed at continuing education were made available via livestream to peer support specialists residing in the North Dakota State Penitentiary.

Materials presented at the conference are available online at www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov/conference/handouts.

The Behavioral Health Division is responsible for reviewing and identifying service needs and activities in the state's behavioral health system to ensure health and safety and access to quality services. It establishes quality assurance standards for the licensure of substance use disorder program services and facilities and provides policy leadership in partnership with public and private entities. For more information, visit <https://www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov/>.

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