

**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | Feb. 6, 2020

## **Agency seeks public's input on plan guiding its short-term, work training program for low-income older adults**

**Plan is online for review; public meetings are scheduled on Feb. 12 and 25.**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Aging Services Division is seeking the public's input on its draft plan for the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) that offers short-term, work training for unemployed, low-income individuals ages 55 and older.

"According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a growing proportion of Americans ages 55 and older are working or looking for work. Keeping older individuals in the workforce benefits both employers struggling to meet their workforce needs and individuals because work is linked with improved health and well-being," said Aging Services Division Director Nancy Nikolas Maier.

"The Senior Community Service Employment Program focuses on helping qualifying individuals who may not have current work skills, and who aren't ready or able to retire. They develop marketable skills while working at a host agency, and the program pays their wages for a limited time until they are connected to other employment," Maier said.

To participate, North Dakotans must be at least age 55, unemployed or not job-ready, with an income of no more than 125 percent of the federal poverty level, which is \$1,329 a month for a one-person household.

The division is hosting public meetings on Feb. 12 at the North Dakota State University Dickinson Research Extension Center in Dickinson, and Feb. 25 at the senior center in Hillsboro, N.D., to gather public comments on the state's plan for operating the federally-funded program.

The draft plan describes how assessments, career planning, skills training, community-service work-based assignments and supportive services will be provided from July 2020 through June 2023. Individuals can review it online at [www.nd.gov/dhs/services/adultsaging](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/adultsaging). The division has highlighted the sections that have been modified and can provide copies of the draft state plan upon request.

Individuals unable to attend one of the two public meetings can direct questions and submit comments to Jaclyn Seefeldt, North Dakota Department of Human Services - Aging Services Division, 1237 W. Divide Ave., Suite 6, Bismarck, N.D. 58501, 701-328-4645, toll-free 855-462-5465, 711 (TTY), [carechoice@nd.gov](mailto:carechoice@nd.gov) or fax to 701-328-8744. All public comments must be received by 5 p.m. Central Time on Feb. 28, 2020.

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SCSEP's goal is to help participants develop work skills and transition from subsidized employment to jobs with higher wages, benefits and opportunities. The program prioritizes serving individuals age 65 and older who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, or have a disability, or have low literacy or limited English proficiency, or who reside in rural areas, or who are veterans or eligible spouses of veterans.

The program serves those who have failed to find employment after using services provided under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

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