

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | March 16, 2020

Behavioral Health Division offers age-appropriate resources to help adults talk with children about coronavirus (COVID-19)

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division is offering new resources to support parents and other adults in having conversations with children about the coronavirus (COVID-19) through its Parents Lead program. The information is available online at www.parentslead.org.

"News about the coronavirus is everywhere, and concern over this virus can result in families feeling anxious," said Pamela Sagness, Behavioral Health Division director. "We all play an important role in helping children make sense of what they hear in a way that is honest, accurate and minimizes anxiety or fear."

New resources on www.parentslead.org offer simple tips such as establishing a normal routine, having ongoing conversations, recognizing signs of stress and staying calm. Additionally, parents, caregivers and others can find resources to support age-appropriate conversations with toddlers to preschool, elementary, middle school and high school students.

The website also contains information on accessing services and supports, suicide prevention and links to support social distancing.

Sagness said information will continue to be added to the website. Parents, community members, professionals and others are encouraged to regularly check back for updates.

The primary goal of Parents Lead is to provide parents and caregivers with tools and resources to support them in promoting the behavioral health and well-being of their children. Interested individuals can also follow Parents Lead on Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest.

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, access to services and quality services. It also 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 www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov.

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