

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | September 8, 2020

Coalition launches outreach campaign informing caregivers of the importance of taking care of themselves and highlighting respite care resources

BISMARCK, N.D. – Caring for friends or family members who have disabilities or chronic or terminal illnesses can be exhausting.

The North Dakota Department of Human Services and a coalition of partners who advise the agency on the implementation of a federal respite care grant announced a public awareness campaign today to inform unpaid family caregivers about resources and services that can help them take care of themselves while they care for others.

“We know that family caregivers benefit from short breaks from their caregiving responsibilities – what we call ‘respite’ – as well as other support services. By supporting caregivers, we can help adults and children with special needs continue to live at home,” said the department’s Aging Services Division Director Nancy Nikolas Maier.

“The department has offered programs for years that can pay for a substitute caregiver that the family and individual choose. These programs also offer training, support, some specific care-related supplies, and can help connect individuals and families to other available resources and help in their communities. Our challenge is that most people aren’t aware of the available services,” she said.

North Dakotans can learn more and be connected to respite care programs and other related service and supports by contacting the state’s Aging and Disability Resource Link toll free at 855-462-5465, 711(TTY), by email at carechoice@nd.gov or online at www.carechoice.nd.gov.

To help raise awareness, Maier said the coalition has created an outreach campaign. Individuals can view a two-minute video on the benefits of respite and support and how to find help, which is online at <https://youtu.be/uAECe4ZUbb4>. The video and a related 30-second [public service announcement](#) (PSA) were produced with grant funding and coalition support with creative services provided by coalition member Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota.

The Public Education Program administered through the North Dakota Broadcasters Association distributed the PSA to TV and radio stations statewide to air in September. The department and coalition are also in contact with the North Dakota Newspaper Association.

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Coalition member and State Director of AARP North Dakota Josh Askvig said, “Every day over 68,000 North Dakotans perform a great labor of love by helping their parents, spouses and other loved ones remain at home. While these family caregivers wouldn’t have it any other way, ensuring they are aware of supports that keep them healthy and providing care is critically important.”

Kirsten Dvorak, Executive Director of The Arc of North Dakota/Bismarck and coalition member, said her organization is pleased to be a part of the outreach campaign because she knows first-hand how important services and supports are to parents and families caring for someone with a disability.

“As a parent of a young adult with Autism, I know firsthand how vital respite care is to families. Respite relieved some of the stress of caregiving. It allowed us to go shopping and out to dinner knowing our son was well taken care of. The short breaks made us stronger as a family and allowed me to be a better parent to our son,” Dvorak said.

The federal Administration for Community Living awarded the North Dakota Department of Human Services a \$200,000 Lifespan Respite Care grant in 2017 to strengthen community respite care and support services for family caregivers of individuals of all ages with special needs. The department administers the grant in partnership with the North Dakota Respite Care Coalition and AARP.

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Heather Steffl | 701-328-4933
hsteffl@nd.gov

LuWanna Lawrence | 701-328-1892
lklawrence@nd.gov