

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | January 12, 2021

Department of Human Services hires Schlinger as director of its Vocational Rehabilitation Division

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services has selected Damian Schlinger as director of its Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Division, which helps individuals with long-term disabilities reach their employment goals and helps employers connect with qualified job applicants to meet their workforce needs.

Schlinger joins the department after serving as the enterprise senior director for strategy for occupational medicine at Sanford Health in Bismarck. Schlinger has been a part of the local health system for 20 years. He first joined MedCenter One as an athletic trainer, pursued advanced training and education, and served in various clinic management positions in occupational medicine, orthopedics and sports medicine and rehabilitation departments at Sanford Health in Bismarck.

In announcing Schlinger's selection, department Executive Policy Director Jessica Thomasson said, "We are excited to have Damian join the Department of Human Services' VR team. Damian has spent his career helping people realize their potential and reconnect to work and the community, and he is passionate about leading and being part of a high performing team."

Thomasson also expressed gratitude to interim division director Robyn Throlson. "We thank Robyn for her capable leadership of the VR team during the interim between directors. Robyn knows the work, cares about the team and has a true passion for helping people see ability."

Schlinger said he is excited to meet VR team members who work in program and policy roles in Bismarck and who work with employers and provide direct vocational counseling and related services to North Dakotans with disabilities from regional hubs in Bismarck, Devils Lake, Dickinson, Fargo, Grand Forks, Jamestown, Minot and Williston.

At Sanford, Schlinger worked with teams at multiple, dispersed clinic locations in North Dakota and Minnesota to align operations and culture toward shared goals.

Schlinger earned a bachelor's degree in athletic training and a master's degree in public administration from the University of North Dakota. He was born and raised in Mandan, N.D., and he and his family live in Bismarck.

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