

**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | January 19, 2021

**Department of Human Services working to prevent disruption in contracted programs and services supporting behavioral health and child care needs**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services announced short-term plans to transition contracted services supporting behavioral health and child care needs.

The department intends to sustain contracted behavioral health services by collaborating with other providers and, if needed, using in-house resources from its eight regional human service centers and Behavioral Health Division.

“North Dakota’s behavioral health community has reached out to offer support to clients and our respective agencies,” said Behavioral Health Division Director Pamela Sagness. “Our primary goal is to prevent a lapse in behavioral health services in programs like Free Through Recovery (FTR), which supports people recovering from mental illness and addiction. It is also important that we continue to ensure program participants have a choice in providers.”

Sagness said the department has been contacted by other recovery service providers and is working to connect them to Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota (LSSND) care coordinators who may choose to join their organizations and continue serving existing clients. FTR program participants who are unable to follow their care coordinator to another agency will be contacted by the division to help connect them with a new provider.

In addition, the department will operate, on a temporary basis, several statewide contracted child care services that are part of the state’s Child Care Development Block Grant program, including the Growing Futures child care provider registry and workforce development and training program, Bright and Early North Dakota quality rating and improvement program, and Child Care Aware, the child care resource and referral service the helps parents find licensed child care.

Department Executive Director Chris Jones noted, “LSSND has been a valuable partner, serving as the state’s quality, training and information hub for child care providers and for parents alike. These important services need to be sustained to minimize disruption to families and child care providers.”

Last Friday, LSSND announced it would be closing its doors and suspending programs. In response, the department began reviewing contracts and developing plans to minimize disruption in vital programs and services.

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