

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**N.D. ranks number one in child welfare review**

BISMARCK, N.D. – If a teacher gives a test and all of the students fail, is the test flawed? The May 2005 issue of the newspaper *Youth Today* asks this question and explores the extraordinarily high standards of the federal Child and Family Services Review, which evaluates state child welfare services.

North Dakota ranked first in the review involving all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico and came the closest to earning a “passing grade.” North Dakota met nine of the 14 factors measured in the review, which focuses on child safety, permanency, and well being and evaluates services related to adoption, foster care, and child protection.

No state has been able to meet all of the federal performance standards, and as a result, all states have prepared program improvement plans. States that fail to make adequate progress as measured in the next round of federal reviews could face reduced funding.

North Dakota Department of Human Services Executive Director Carol K. Olson said the reviews are tough, but are also beneficial. “The federal government has set high standards, and that is appropriate. We all want children to be safe. We all want to make sure that children do not spend years in foster care. The review process has helped us identify strengths and areas for improvement,” she said.

To monitor its progress, North Dakota conducts its own reviews in the state’s eight administrative regions. Designed to mimic the federal process, these reviews involve pulling case files and interviewing families involved in the child welfare system as well as other stakeholders. The reviews involve the department, county social service offices, the courts, and other partners in the child welfare system.

Five regions have been reviewed this year, and the results are encouraging. North Dakota’s conformance with federal safety, permanency, and well being standards has grown from 83 percent in 2003 to 98.9 percent. Case reviews in the Northeast Region were recently completed, and Grand Forks received a 100 percent rating.

North Dakota will undergo another on-site federal review by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in 2007. A copy of ACF’s Child and Family Services Review report for North Dakota is available at <http://www.state.nd.us/humanservices/info/pubs/family.html>.

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