

# **NEWS** from the North Dakota Department of Human Services and Job Service North Dakota

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**September 4, 2007**

**Contacts:** Mike Schwindt, Director, Dept. of Human Services (DHS) Child Support Enforcement Division, 701-328-3582; Maren Daley, Executive Director of Job Service North Dakota, 701-328-2836, or Heather Steffl, DHS Public Information Officer, 701-328-4933

## **N.D. Parent Responsibility Initiative wins Midwestern Legislative Conference's 2007 Innovations Award**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The Midwestern Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments honored North Dakota for an innovative government program last week at its annual meeting in Michigan. The organization presented North Dakota's Parental Responsibility Initiative for the Development of Employment (PRIDE) program with the *2007 Innovations* award, which recognizes new, creative, and successful state programs that are transferable to other states.

The PRIDE program involves the Department of Human Services' Child Support Enforcement Division, Job Service North Dakota, and the courts in the Grand Forks and Dickinson regions. It provides job readiness and employment services to parents who fail to pay their child support because of unemployment or underemployment and is an alternative to incarceration.

"We appreciate this recognition. This program is an example of agencies pooling their resources and expertise to tackle an important issue," said Carol K. Olson, executive director of the North Dakota Department of Human Services. "Children benefit because their parents become employed and are able to meet their child support obligations. This also reduces the need for public assistance, and may help noncustodial parents become more involved in their children's lives."

"Job Service has proven to be an effective partner at working with noncustodial parents to obtain employment," Job Service North Dakota Executive Director Maren Daley said. "By working with noncustodial parents on a case-by-case basis, Job Service helps these parents find employment locally, allowing them to stay closer to their children and community, and improve family ties."

In July 2007, the Department of Human Services reported that 74 percent of the participating parents had improved their employment situation by obtaining work or better jobs, and as a result, their monthly support payments to their children grew by 88 percent.

## **ND Parental Responsibility Program Earns Innovations Award – Page 2**

PRIDE focuses on parents who owe past-due support. The courts refer parents to a Job Service caseworker for employment-related services such as work assessment, job search help, training, job placement follow-up services, and other needed supports. Parents may also be referred to Regional Human Service Centers to address substance abuse or mental health needs.

The North Dakota program was one of 10 under consideration for the regional honor. Child Support Enforcement Division Director Mike Schwindt gave a presentation before the selection committee and accepted the award for North Dakota on August 28, 2007, at the annual gathering of Midwestern lawmakers.

Both Job Service North Dakota and the Department of Human Services, through its Temporary Assistance to Families (TANF) program, provide funding for the two PRIDE program locations.

###