

**NEWS from the N.D. Department of Human Services
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ADA Leadership Network launched statewide

Will serve as a critical ADA resource for businesses and individuals

BISMARCK, N.D. – With one in six North Dakotans having a permanent injury, illness, or impairment, many of the state's business owners and employers are uncertain about their responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To assist them, the North Dakota Department of Human Services' Vocational Rehabilitation Unit has established a statewide, 18-member ADA Leadership Network to provide critical resources.

North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation Director Nancy McKenzie said, "Employers want to understand their roles and responsibilities under the ADA should an employee have or incur a disability. We believe our ADA Leadership Network can be a valuable asset, not only in their employment practices, but in their business efforts."

The network is comprised of Rehabilitation Consulting and Services professionals from eight regional offices. Each consultant has completed training established by the Rocky Mountain Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center, a federally-funded ADA resource center.

As part of a select group of ADA experts within a six-state region, they are available to answer ADA questions, present customized trainings, provide resource materials, make referrals, and educate people about their rights under the ADA.

"Our network members commit themselves to ongoing training and education on ADA issues. The Governor has assigned us the role of primary contact on ADA issues, and we take that role seriously," McKenzie said.

"It is important that business owners understand the ADA has a very positive impact on their business operations," she said. "The accessibility standards in the ADA represent a means for businesses to garner a greater share of the marketplace. Our ADA network can demonstrate to business owners that good access is good business."

North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation's primary mission is to assist individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment opportunities. The *Rehabilitation Consulting and Services* initiative is aimed at helping North Dakota business owners and employers find solutions to their disability-related issues.

For referrals to ADA Leadership Network members and more information on the ADA or *Rehabilitation Consulting and Services*, contact Harley Engelman at 701-328-8957.

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