

NEWS from the N.D. Department of Human Services and Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota

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FOR IMMEDIATE

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ND transitions refugee services to private sector non-profit

Lutheran Social Services of ND to assume lead administrative role

BISMARCK, ND – Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of North Dakota, a private non-profit organization based in Fargo, is assuming responsibility for most refugee-related services in the state. Previously, the North Dakota Department of Human Services received and distributed federal funds for refugee services and provided administrative oversight.

The department will continue to be responsible for the Unaccompanied Minor Program, which involves foster care, as well as Refugee Medical Assistance, which provides eight months of medical assistance coverage. The federal Office of Refugee Resettlement officially approved the change in July 2010.

“The department and Lutheran Social Services have partnered to provide refugee services to legally-admitted individuals for over two decades,” said Department of Human Services Executive Director Carol K. Olson. “This change makes sense because the department was contracting with LSS for many refugee services, and their organization has the expertise.”

Lutheran Social Services is the only federally-recognized and approved refugee resettlement organization in the state. The transition removes the state agency as a middle-man and shifts the responsibility for securing federal grant funding, providing services, and fulfilling required reporting requirements to LSS.

“We remain dedicated to helping refugees re-establish their lives in North Dakota and look forward to this latest public-private partnership with Human Services,” said Robert Sanderson, Chief Executive Officer of Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota.

Olson said LSS will continue the department’s practice of contracting with other organizations to provide services ranging from English as a second language tutoring to translation services, health screening services, and employment and job readiness services. The department will be involved in reviewing proposals and selecting service providers.

LSS has helped resettle about 4,500 international refugees in North Dakota since the late 1990s. The number of refugees resettled per year in the state now totals about 400.

Refugee services are time-limited services and supports that are provided to people who are legally admitted to the United States. Services include help securing housing, basic furnishings, clothing and other household goods, and assistance finding jobs and learning English.

Refugee status is granted to people who meet the definition of refugee and who are of special humanitarian concern to the United States because they have been persecuted or are at risk of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, and/or membership in a particular social group or political opinion.

Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota is a nonprofit social services agency serving North Dakotans from offices in five cities with 19 programs that strengthen individuals, families, and communities without regard to a clients’ race, religion, gender or economic status.

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