

# NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 31, 2011**

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## **Human Services Recognized for Assisting Individuals with Brain Injuries**

*Governor Jack Dalrymple has proclaimed March as Brain Injury Awareness Month*

BISMARCK, N.D. – The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has recognized the N.D. Department of Human Services for excellence in strengthening the coordination of services and supports for individuals with brain injuries and their families.

The *Big Strides Award* highlights one state who has sustained traumatic brain injury outreach and activities by building new partnerships and collaborations. The award was presented to officials during the Traumatic Brain Injury Grantee Leadership meeting in Bethesda, Md. this month.

"This award represents a tremendous amount of cooperation and coordination among multiple entities for the purpose of improving the lives of people affected by brain injuries," said Carol K. Olson, the department's executive director.

The efforts to create a traumatic brain injury service delivery system in North Dakota began in 2003 with a two-year planning grant to conduct a needs assessment and action plan. In 2007, the state received a second grant to strengthen services and supports, to improve screenings and referrals, to increase awareness through education, and to create an advisory board. Significant partners included the Center for Rural Health at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, the Dakota Medical Foundation, the Anne Carlsen Center for Children in Jamestown, N.D., and other organizations.

Since 2009, the N.D. legislature has provided funding for services and supports for individuals affected by brain injuries. The department contracts with providers for the Peer Mentor Support Connection Program, Pre-Vocational Skills and Mentoring Program, and the Brain Injury Social and Recreational Services Program.

The department also launched a new screening tool this month to help identify possible brain injuries in children, adults, seniors, and military veterans it serves through its eight regional human service centers.

For more information about brain injury services and support, contact the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division of the N.D. Department of Human Services at 701-328-8920, toll-free 1-800-755-2719 or TTY: 1-800-366-6888.

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