

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services 600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505

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Dept. of Human Services Enhances Supportive Employment for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness

Bismarck, N.D. – The N.D. Department of Human Services announced today that the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has awarded a \$113,000 grant to the department's Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division to enhance an employment development initiative for individuals with serious mental illness.

"Employment opportunities for people in recovery are important because of the positive effect this can have on their quality of life, their community, and their families," said JoAnne Hoesel, director of the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division. "This grant will enhance the services and supports already in place and helps promote greater independence in the workplace."

The initiative includes innovative approaches to assist individuals in recovery with their employment needs. One-on-one pre-employment coaching sessions will teach basic skills like resume development, job exploration, and job interview etiquette. Group coaching sessions will help individuals learn employment strategies in a group setting.

Benefit counselors will conduct presentations to educate individuals on the impact work activities could have on benefits and to provide options and strategies for successful employment. An e-learning training module will also be created on this topic and distributed statewide to recovery centers, public and private service providers, and department professionals.

The initiative also includes assisting a few individuals who are interested in becoming entrepreneurs and creating an interagency group that will make recommendations to enhance competitive employment opportunities.

Hoesel said all of these approaches are stepping stones for individuals with serious mental illness to move into the workforce.

North Dakota was one of nine states receiving grant funding for the employment development initiative. The grant will run through September 2012 and will be used to complement funding appropriated by the 2011 legislature to help restructure the extended employment support system for people with serious mental illness.

For more information on the employment development initiative, contact the N.D. Department of Human Services' Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division at 701-328-8920, toll-free 800-755-2719, ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888 or dhsmhsas@nd.gov.

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