

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services

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New Law Mandates Reporting of Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of Vulnerable Adults

Mandated reporters include medical and mental health professionals and personnel

BISMARCK, N.D. - Effective Aug. 1, 2013, North Dakota law will require all medical and mental health professionals or personnel who provide healthcare or other services to report possible abuse, neglect, and exploitation of a vulnerable adult to the N.D. Department of Human Services' Adult Protective Services Program or other partner agencies.

The 2013 N.D. Legislature passed Senate Bill 2323, which requires more than 20 different medical or mental health professionals to report possible abuse, neglect, and exploitation of a vulnerable adult. Professionals and individuals mandated to report include addiction counselors, caregivers, chiropractors, congregate care personnel, dentists, dental hygienists, emergency medical personnel, firefighters, hospital personnel, law enforcement officers, nurses, nursing home personnel, optometrists, pharmacists, physicians, podiatrists, social workers, therapists, and other individuals.

Mandated reporters will follow specific guidelines on how to file a report either with Adult Protective Services, the N.D. Department of Health, N.D. Protection and Advocacy Project, a domestic violence center, or law enforcement. A complete list of mandated reporters and other information is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/adultsaging/reporting.html.

Once a report is received by Adult Protective Services, a staff member contacts the potential victim, asks screening questions over the phone to determine if they are in serious danger and in need of immediate intervention, conducts a home visit, and makes a referral to services if needed.

"Anyone in North Dakota may voluntarily report suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation of a vulnerable adult," said Jan Engan, the department's Aging Services Division director. "The addition of the mandated reporters will be another way to ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable adults in North Dakota."

The department met with stakeholders from county social services, law enforcement, long-term care, domestic violence centers, N.D. Protection and Advocacy Project and other partners to discuss implementation and to set cohesive standards and policies.

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Page 2

Engan said there has been a coordinated outreach effort to inform individuals of their new reporting responsibilities including communication to various professional licensing boards, associations and partner agencies, faith-based organizations, and law enforcement agencies.

Since Oct. 2012, Adult Protective Services has documented about 650 reports and has determined that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult occurred in about 160 of those cases.

For information on Adult Protective Services, contact the N.D. Department of Human Services' Aging Services Division at 701-328-4601, toll free 855-462-5465, or ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888.

Senate Bill 2323 is online at www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/63-2013/documents/13-0803-05000.pdf?20130712093354.

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