

# **NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Online resource helps launch youth with disabilities toward independence**

BISMARCK, N.D. – Many young people feel anxious and stressed about transitioning from high school to work or college and training. A consortium of agencies that work with young people with disabilities has created an online resource, [LaunchMyLifeND.com](http://LaunchMyLifeND.com), to take the guess work out of planning for this major life change.

“Uncertainty can stop people in their tracks,” said Russ Cusack, N.D. Department of Human Services’ Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Division director. “The agencies involved in this effort want to help young people set things in motion by providing the information, tools, resources, and connections to help them achieve their goals – whether that is pursuing more education or joining the workforce.”

The new online resource portal was developed with financial and program support from the Department of Public Instruction’s special education unit, the N.D. Center for Persons with Disabilities at Minot State University, the N.D. Protection and Advocacy Project, the N.D. Department of Human Services’ VR Division, and the State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

“At [LaunchMyLifeND.com](http://LaunchMyLifeND.com), young adults will find information about resources to help them pursue education and training, guidance on when and if they should disclose a disability, check lists to help them plan and stay on track, as well as links to North Dakota universities and colleges and training programs,” said Brent Askvig, executive director of the N.D. Center for Persons with Disabilities.

He said the multi-agency effort is the next step after students complete their Individualized Education Programs (IEP).

“As students near the completion of their secondary education, students, their parents, and other IEP team members discuss goals,” Askvig said. “This includes talking about services, work experiences, assistive technology, or future testing a young person might need to reach their next life goals. [LaunchMyLifeND.com](http://LaunchMyLifeND.com) is a new resource to help young people confidently move into the next stage of their lives.”

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## **New Web Portal Helps Launch Youth with Disabilities Toward Work or School**

**Page 2**

Cusack and Askvig stressed that in addition to information, the Web portal can help young people locate services that directly support them during this important life transition.

The N.D. Department of Human Services' VR Division, for example, can provide auxiliary aids, counseling, or other assistance with postsecondary education and training. During the 2013 fiscal year, VR served 1,900 young people under age 21 and helped 200 become employed.

The North Dakota Transition Consortium is a partnership of programs and agencies. The consortium's goal is to promote, improve, and educate about services that help young adults with disabilities move from high school into college, training, or a job. Information is online at [www.launchmylifend.com/about.html](http://www.launchmylifend.com/about.html).

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