

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Summer employment program offered to help students with disabilities gain work experience

BISMARCK, N.D. – The N.D. Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is offering a Summer Youth Employment Program this year to connect high school students with disabilities to summer jobs.

To participate, individuals must be a junior, senior, or 18-21 years of age and enrolled in secondary education. In addition, they must qualify for vocational rehabilitation services and be able to obtain and maintain employment with little support.

Division Director Russ Cusack said the program provides benefits beyond work experience.

“Research has shown that young people who have work experience also have a higher rate of academic attainment and are more likely to become employed after graduation,” Cusack said.

Interested individuals should contact the vocational rehabilitation office in their region. Contact information is online at <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/about/regional-contact.html> or can be obtained from the division at 701-328-8950, toll free 1-800-755-2745, ND Relay TTY 1-800-366-6888, or via email at dhsvr@nd.gov.

Teachers, parents, vocational rehabilitation counselors, community rehabilitation providers, and others will work together with students before the school year ends to identify interests and beneficial work experiences. Vocational rehabilitation employment specialists will help participants find and retain jobs.

Actual placements can begin as early as May 27. Placement hours and duration will vary, but will ideally be 20 hours per week for 13 weeks, Cusack said.

Summer Youth Employment Program jobs are temporary because the program ends Sept. 1. However, employers occasionally offer ongoing employment to participating students.

The program is a collaborative effort involving the Department of Human Services, the Department of Public Instruction, Job Service North Dakota, secondary school transition teachers, community rehabilitation providers, parents, students, and employers.

For more information on Division of Vocational Rehabilitation services and supports, go to www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr or call 701-328-8950, or ND Relay TTY 1-800-366-6888.

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