

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

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## **Conference on Sept. 1–3 focuses on behavioral health, which is essential to overall health**

BISMARCK, N.D. – National and regional experts are headlining North Dakota’s fall 2015 Behavioral Health Conference, Sept. 1–3, at the Best Western Ramkota Hotel in Bismarck.

The North Dakota Department of Human Services and conference planning partners have invited experts who will address stigma and share information and training on evidence-based services, clinical practices, and integrated ways to promote awareness, prevention, intervention, and treatment.

“Behavioral health is an important part of overall wellness,” said Behavioral Health Division Director Pam Sagness. “This conference is an opportunity to further discuss integrated services and effective strategies for recovery.”

According to Sagness, thousands of North Dakotans have behavioral health needs, and those closest to them, such as family members, friends, co-workers, and others, are also affected.

A 2012-2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that in the previous year, 49,949 adults in North Dakota had a substance use disorder, and 93,087 adults had a mental illness. Additionally, almost 18,000 of these adults struggled with both mental illness and substance abuse.

Bern Heath Jr., Ph.D., will kick off the conference with an all-day preconference session on Sept. 1 about how states can break down barriers between behavioral health and traditional health care to care for the whole person and more effectively address mental and substance abuse needs. Heath, who is the chief executive officer of Axis Health System in Colorado, will focus on how organizations can successfully transform and integrate care.

Traumatic brain injury expert John Corrigan, Ph.D., who is a professor at Ohio State University’s Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and the director of the Ohio Valley Center for Brain Injury Prevention and Rehabilitation, is the keynote speaker on Sept. 2. Corrigan will share information from 8 to 10:45 a.m. about brain injury and related behavioral issues and substance abuse, and opportunities for intervention and integrated treatment.

On Sept. 3, Rear Admiral Joan Hunter, who serves as the Assistant Joint Surgeon at the National Guard Bureau, Joint Surgeon General’s Office - Psychological Health at the Pentagon, in Washington, D.C., will talk about behavioral health issues for returning military members and veterans. Hunter serves as principal staff and advisor to the Chief of the National Guard Bureau and has been tasked with building the National Guard’s psychological health program. She will speak at 8 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Also on Sept. 3, author and nationally recognized mental health and suicide prevention advocate Kevin Hines will share his story at 9:45 a.m. about survival and living mentally well with bipolar disorder. Hines wrote a memoir: “Cracked Not Broken, The Kevin Hines Story,” that was published in 2013.

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Other speakers will talk about medication-assisted treatment and behavioral health interventions for opiate addiction, cognitive-behavioral interventions for substance abuse, peer support, and serving children and youth with disabilities and preventing them from entering the juvenile justice and adult corrections systems.

Additional sessions include behavioral health needs of older adults, attention deficits and neuro-developmental optometry, mental health advance directives, past traumatic experiences and behavioral health care for older adults, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders across North Dakota, and other topics.

Information about speakers and a detailed schedule of events is available on the conference website at <http://behavioralhealthconference.nd.gov/>.

Interested persons can register on the website; registration will also be accepted at the door.

Registration fees are \$60 for the pre-conference session, \$150 for the two-day conference, and \$210 for the entire conference. A \$60 two-day conference rate is available to students and consumers and their family members.

Continuing education units have been approved by the ND Board of Addiction Counselor Examiners, ND Board of Social Work Examiners, ND Peace Officers Standards and Training, ND Board of Counselor Examiners, and the ND Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist Licensing Board. Continuing education units for psychologists, as determined by the ND Board of Psychologist Examiners, are pending.

The conference is organized in partnership with the North Dakota Mental Health and Substance Abuse Planning Council, Mental Health America of North Dakota, the North Dakota Protection and Advocacy Project, the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the ND Addiction Counselors Association, the ND Addiction Treatment Providers Coalition, the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, and the North Dakota Department of Human Services.

Individuals who need auxiliary aids to participate or who have questions about the conference should contact Lauren Sauer in the department's Behavioral Health Division at [lsauer@nd.gov](mailto:lsauer@nd.gov), 701-328-8733, toll-free 800-755-2719, or ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888.

Information about department behavioral health services and a treatment locator is online at <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/mentalhealth/>.

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