

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
600 E. Boulevard Ave. - Dept. 325, Bismarck N.D. 58505**

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Human Services seeks input on child welfare services in the Bismarck region through meeting and online surveys

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Children and Family Services Division is gathering input from families and professionals engaged in the child welfare system on how services and supports are provided in the west central region of the state. This includes Burleigh, Emmons, Grant, Kidder, McIntosh, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan and Sioux counties, the Division of Juvenile Services and portions of the Standing Rock Reservation and Fort Berthold Indian Reservation.

Licensed foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers from the region are invited to attend a meeting to share their feedback on Tuesday, May 15, from 6:30 to 8 p.m., at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 106 Osage Ave., in Bismarck. Families who would like to participate, but are unable to attend in person, can call Kevin Miller at 701-328-8882 to receive a toll-free call-in number.

The department is also surveying parents with children in foster care; professionals who work with children and families, including caseworkers, child welfare service providers, county and tribal social services staff members, juvenile court directors, judges, and referees; and other stakeholders through separate online surveys. Youths served through the foster care system will also have the opportunity to comment about their experiences. These stakeholders will receive an email with the appropriate survey link and instructions on how to participate. Others, who are interested in participating in one of the surveys, can call the onsite case review manager at the University of North Dakota Children and Family Services Training Center (UND CFSTC) at 701-777-5971.

The surveys consist of questions that focus on the safety, permanency and well-being of children served through the state's child welfare system. The surveys will be available from May 7 to 18. A paper version of the survey for parents is also available upon request through their child welfare agency.

Individuals who need accommodations to participate in the meeting or a survey should contact Leanne Miller at 701-777-5971, ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888 or tleanne.miller@und.edu.

"Child welfare is a continuum of services to ensure children are safe and that families have the supports they need to care for their children successfully," said Diana Weber, a program administrator for the department. "It is important that everyone involved in this region's child welfare system has the opportunity to share their insight as to how the system as a whole can best meet the needs of children and families."

In addition to the meeting and surveys, the department will also conduct a week-long onsite review of county foster care and in-home services cases of children and youths in the child welfare system.

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Weber said the goal is to establish a continuous feedback process to measure how the state's child welfare system is helping achieve positive outcomes in safety, permanency and well-being for children and families, as well as ensure conformity to federal child welfare requirements.

The department along with its partner the UND CFSTC will conduct meetings and survey stakeholders in all eight regions of the state this year. Earlier this year, the Grand Forks, Devils Lake and Williston regions completed their reviews and stakeholder meetings.

A final report will be developed showing outcomes and feedback collected during the reviews. It will be submitted to the Children's Bureau, U.S. Administration on Children, Youth and Families. The information will also be used to support continuous quality improvement efforts by the department and its stakeholders.

All states are required by the federal government to review their child welfare systems on an ongoing basis.

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