

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | November 7, 2019

Agency seeks public comments on peer support certification process; holds public input meeting Nov. 14 in Bismarck

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division is seeking public input on the development of the state's peer support specialist certification process. The division is hosting a community meeting on Thursday, Nov. 14, from 5 to 6 p.m. at the Bismarck Event Center, Prairie Rose Room 101.

Peer support specialists use their lived experience of recovery, plus skills learned in formal training, to support others' recovery and resiliency. While peer support has existed in the behavioral health field for decades, interest and usage has surged as evidence of its effectiveness has grown.

In 2019, North Dakota lawmakers approved Senate Bill 2032 establishing a credentialing program for peer services to continue to support the expansion of a robust peer workforce. The public meeting will focus on gathering input from interested stakeholders. The proposed certification process and supporting documents and information is available online at www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov/addiction/peer-support.

"Supporting and expanding peer support is an effective, evidence-based way for North Dakota to improve the current behavioral health system," said Behavioral Health Division Director Pamela Sagness. "Through peer support, we can increase access to supports in rural areas and in vital places like emergency departments and local public health units. Peer specialists can also be a valuable resource on crisis teams and in programs addressing housing needs and homelessness."

Individuals unable to attend the public input meeting can submit comments until 5 p.m., CT, on Nov. 22, 2019, to Nicole Berman at the Department of Human Services - Behavioral Health Division, 1237 W. Divide Ave., Bismarck, ND 58501, nberman@nd.gov, or 701-328-8949, 711 (TTY). Anyone who needs a disability accommodation to participate in the public meeting should also contact Berman.

Through division efforts, more than 314 individuals have been trained as peer support specialists over the past 18 months. Peer support providers must complete training and certification by states before providing billable services.

###

CONTACT:

Heather Steffl | 701-328-4933
hsteffl@nd.gov

LuWanna Lawrence | 701-328-1892
lklawrence@nd.gov