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May is Children's Foster Care Month

BISMARCK, N.D. – Gov. Doug Burgum has proclaimed May Children's Foster Care Month in North Dakota. It's a time to recognize the many people who play an important role in strengthening families and ensuring the safety, permanency and well-being of foster children in foster care.

"Foster parents provide a safe, stable and nurturing environment until children can be reunited with their families or achieve permanency through other lifelong connections," said Dean Sturn, foster care administrator with the North Dakota Department of Human Services. "Foster care is intended to be temporary with the primary goal being family reunification."

If reunification with a parent is not an option, relative caregivers, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and other close relatives can play an important role in providing a stable home to children to help prevent them from entering or re-entering the foster care system.

"We are grateful for these kinship caregivers who provide a sense of belonging to a child and help maintain family connections," Sturn said. "Children tend to do best when they live in a home setting with familiar surroundings and people they know."

A recent federal law places priority on keeping families together and providing evidence-based prevention and early intervention services and programs to prevent children from even entering the foster care system.

Sturn said the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 is about strengthening families and supporting parents to try and keep them intact as a family unit. If a child is not able to remain safely in his or her home, the law stresses placement in the least restrictive, family-home setting with the goal of reducing placement into a residential foster care group home.

"The response from North Dakotans to open their hearts and homes to children in need of a home placement remains stable, but there is always a need for additional foster families," he said.

North Dakota has about 1,000 licensed family foster homes, therapeutic foster homes and approved tribal foster homes caring for about 1,600 children in foster care on any given day.

Individuals interested in becoming a licensed foster care provider should contact their local county social service office or visit www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/fostercare/ for a list of other authorized licensed foster care agencies.

The Children's Foster Care Month proclamation can be viewed online at <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/>.

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