

**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | Sept. 24, 2019

## **Human Services re-implements federal background check requirement for licensed and regulated child care providers**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services is reminding licensed and regulated child care providers that starting on Oct. 1, the department will re-implement a federal fingerprint-based background check requirement to ensure the protection and safety of children in licensed or regulated child care.

The federal requirement prohibits new child care employees from starting employment until the department receives and reviews their in-state Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) or their national Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) criminal history records. New employees can then begin working under direct supervision if their initial record shows no convictions that would disqualify them from working with children. They can begin full unrestricted employment only after their entire background check is complete, which may include receiving records from each state the applicant has lived in during the past five years.

In November 2018, the department received a waiver from the federal Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families that allowed new employees hired by licensed and regulated child care providers to begin work under direct supervision before their criminal background checks were complete. The time-limited waiver expires on Sept. 30.

"As we approach the expiration of our federal waiver, it's important for child care providers to know that the department has created several efficiencies to reduce the time it takes to process fingerprint-based criminal background checks," said Amanda Carlson, the department's early childhood services administrator.

The most recent efficiencies launched this summer are the implementation of a new simplified criminal background check authorization form (SFN 829) and enhanced website content, including links to out-of-state authorization forms from 49 states and the District of Columbia, at [www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/cbcu/index.html](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/cbcu/index.html).

Tara Reed, with department's Criminal Background Check Unit said, "Our focus has been to identify ways to reduce the processing time of criminal background checks. A lot of work and collaboration have gone into this effort. We are hearing positive feedback from child care providers and applicants who have used the new simplified form and accessed the website content."

Reed said other efficiencies implemented earlier this year include a daily secure pickup of criminal records from BCI, which eliminated about six days of unnecessary records handling, a simplified background check results memo and the hiring of a full-time temporary office assistant to support the Criminal Background Check Unit.

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Throughout the past year, the department has kept licensed and regulated child care providers informed through direct mail and other department-issued communication about the expiration of the time-limited waiver and the implementation of several efficiencies to help reduce fingerprint-based background check processing time.

These efficiencies also benefit other programs and areas that require criminal background checks. The department completes fingerprint-based background checks for foster care licensing, employment in licensed foster care facilities, adoption including employment in licensed child placement agencies, guardianship, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Kindship Care and relative care placements.

In calendar year 2018, the Criminal Background Check Unit completed about 7,000 background checks, of which about 67 percent related to early childhood services.

Department background check information for child care providers is available online at [www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childcare/bkg-check.html](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childcare/bkg-check.html).

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