

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | June 26, 2020

Life Skills and Transition Center in Grafton modifies on-site visitation guidelines; implements pilot project to allow home visits

BISMARCK, N.D. – In an effort to safely reunite individuals living at the Life Skills and Transition Center (LSTC) in Grafton with loved ones, the center recently modified its on-site visitation guidelines and launched a pilot project that allows for in-home visits under certain circumstances. The center is part of the North Dakota Department of Human Services and provides residential and support services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The modified visitation guidelines allow family members and friends to visit an individual during regular business hours, by appointment only, in designated areas on campus. All visitors will be required to complete a temperature check and health screening upon arrival, wear masks at all times while visiting, and maintain social distancing.

The Life Skills and Transition Center also launched a pilot project that allows families to take their loved ones home for either a day or overnight visit. All family members living in the home must complete a COVID-19 test, and if they test negative, are eligible for the home visit for up to one week from the testing date. LSTC team members will help families coordinate testing opportunities with community partners.

“We appreciate everyone’s patience and continued support during the past three months,” said LSTC Superintendent Susan Foerster. “We are excited to resume some much-needed opportunities for family time while continuing to follow essential health and safety precautions.”

The modified visitation guidelines and pilot project are part of a multi-phase effort to return to some normalcy.

“We are also working towards a new normal in which people will begin to resume their daily routines, including employment both on-site and in the Grafton community, as well as community social and recreational activities,” she said.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the center made adjustments to its day-to-day operation to protect the health and safety of people who live at the LSTC and staff members while trying to foster social connections. This included expanded access to physical and occupational therapy and use of the on-site pool and fitness facility for recreational activities. Recently, individuals completed a scrapbook filled with pictures and drawings documenting life at the center during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Forester said everyone's commitment to following the health and safety precautions implemented early on created a safe and healthy environment. A recent mass testing event of over 300 staff and residents who live at the LSTC resulted in no positive COVID-19 cases.

Currently, the center serves 69 individuals on campus and nine others who live in the community and receive support services from LSTC.

For more information on the North Dakota Department of Human Services response to COVID-19, visit www.nd.gov/dhs/info/covid19/index.html. For details about the state's COVID-19 response, visit www.ndresponse.gov.

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