

**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | September 2, 2020

## **Human Services hires Hasbargen as new Director of Zone Operations**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS) has hired Kristen Hasbargen as its new director of zone operations. Hasbargen is currently the zone director for the RSR Human Service Zone, which has offices in Ransom, Sargent and Richland counties that were formerly known as county social service offices.

In her new role, which begins Oct. 1, 2020, Hasbargen will work with the 19 human service zone directors to build collaboration, consistent policy and service delivery. She will serve as the liaison between zone boards, zone directors and the department.

The state agency develops policy, funds services and is responsible for overseeing the delivery of human services in North Dakota. The human service zones provide services locally, determining eligibility for economic assistance programs and providing child welfare services and other local human services to North Dakotans.

“This is an important transitional time for the state’s human service system, as DHS and the human service zones establish a collaborative model of delivering human services to North Dakotans,” said Department Executive Director Chris Jones. “Kristen’s background includes over 25 years of experience working with child welfare services, older adult services, and other local human services; county commissioners; and most recently zone board members in her role as the RSR Human Service Zone director. She has the experience and skills to help us succeed.”

Jones said Hasbargen will report to the department’s Chief Operating Officer Sara Stolt who oversees the social service redesign process authorized in 2019 Senate Bill 2124. The position is not a new full-time equivalent (FTE), he said, but was transferred from county authorized FTEs to state authorized FTEs.

The human service zones have been completing their budgets. Hasbargen will be involved in developing training and working with zone directors on aligning services and operations across their regions and the state. She will also be a resource as zones finalize their written plans guiding how they will transition from the old model, involving individual autonomous county social service offices, to function as unified zones offering consistent quality services to residents. Plans must be submitted and approved by DHS by Jan. 1, 2121.

Hasbargen will maintain an office in Richland County, and will work remotely, using technology to collaborate with department colleagues and zone directors across the state.

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Hasbargen, a licensed social worker, joined Richland County Social Services in 1995. She worked as a child welfare case manager, home and community-based services case manager, and child welfare supervisor, before being promoted to county social service director in 2002. Her work experience includes public agency management, budgeting, personnel management, and administration of county social service programs.

Her career has been dedicated to improving the quality of life of vulnerable individuals. She is a past president of the North Dakota County Social Service Directors Association and has served on local boards for United Way, the Salvation Army Service Unit, the community food pantry and related entities.

Hasbargen earned her bachelor's degree in social work from Minnesota State University Moorhead. She and her family reside in the Wahpeton-Breckenridge area.

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