

**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | January 26, 2021

## **ND Department of Human Services receives federal approval to expand behavioral health services**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services has received final approval of the Medicaid 1915(i) State Plan Amendment from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), creating opportunities to expand community-based behavioral health services. The department plans to have the program available for Medicaid members who qualify by Feb. 16, 2021.

"The Medicaid 1915(i) State Plan Amendment is one of the most crucial steps North Dakota has taken to end the behavioral health systems crisis," said Carlotta McCleary, spokesperson for the Mental Health Advocacy Network. "In fact, the 1915(i) represents one of the single largest behavioral health reforms this state has seen in the last several decades."

These new home and community-based behavioral health services support eligible individuals to overcome barriers in their social and physical environments. Individuals, youth or adult, enrolled in Medicaid or Medicaid Expansion with an addiction, mental illness or brain injury may qualify.

Newly covered services will include housing and employment supports, peer support, family peer support, respite and educational supports. Information regarding eligibility and a full list of new services is available at [www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov/1915i](http://www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov/1915i).

"It is so exciting to finally receive full approval for the 1915(i) amendment! Many months of work have been put into this extensive request by the Department of Human Services and many partners, including individuals who can benefit and their advocates, education professionals, providers of needed services and others. Thank you to everyone who has worked together to reach this important goal," said Sen. Judy Lee, Senate Human Services Chair.

The Medicaid 1915(i) State Plan Amendment addresses gaps in the state's behavioral health system and is considered to be the most robust program approved by CMS in the country.

"These new services provide additional behavioral health support which is even more important now as the pandemic has had a significant impact," said Behavioral Health Division Director Pamela Sagness. "This new program also provides an opportunity to develop and expand the behavioral health workforce in the state."

### **Providers Needed**

The department is seeking providers interested in developing these new services or expanding their current service array. Information on provider enrollment and program guidance is available at [www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov](http://www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov).

“The new 1915(i) services provide more support for Medicaid members,” said Medicaid Director Caprice Knapp. “We are looking to grow our provider network in order to meet member needs. We look forward to welcoming new providers to the Medicaid program.”

### **Background**

During the 2019 legislative session, North Dakota lawmakers authorized the Department of Human Services to create a Medicaid 1915(i) State Plan Amendment. The amendment allows North Dakota Medicaid to pay for additional home and community-based services to support individuals with certain behavioral health conditions.

North Dakota’s Medicaid State Plan is an agreement between the state and federal government that outlines how the state will operate its Medicaid program. The plan covers many topics from program administration to provider reimbursement and is updated regularly through state plan amendments.

###

### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

LuWanna Lawrence | 701-328-1892 | Heather Steffl | 701-328-4933  
[lklawrence@nd.gov](mailto:lklawrence@nd.gov) | [hsteffl@nd.gov](mailto:hsteffl@nd.gov)