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Holiday family gatherings are an opportunity to talk about support needs and available services

BISMARCK, N.D. – Every holiday season many people travel back to North Dakota or to rural areas to visit loved ones. North Dakota Department of Human Services officials say that family gatherings provide a good opportunity to visit with aging parents and other relatives with physical disabilities about their changing needs, and to do some planning for future care needs.

“If people notice that a loved one needs help with house cleaning or chores, meal preparation, managing medications, transportation to the grocery store, or more personal needs, this is a great time to talk about needs and to research care options, including in-home and community-based support services,” Nancy Nikolas Maier, director of the department’s Adults and Aging Services Division said.

Individuals who may benefit from added support and their family members can get help researching options by contacting North Dakota’s Aging and Disability Resource Link (ADRL) toll-free at 855-462-5465, 711 (TTY), or by email at carechoice@nd.gov. Trained resource specialists answer the ADRL phone line Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. CT. Individuals can also use the online database to research options or apply online for services at <https://carechoice.nd.assistguide.net/>.

The department funds a variety of long-term support services. In-home support services range from minimal support helping people maintain health and well-being such as home-delivered meals, and health maintenance and companionship services, to 24-hour in-home support and supervision services for qualifying individuals. Services help several thousand North Dakotans each year – including many who qualify for nursing home care – to remain living independently in their homes and communities. Functional and financial criteria vary by program.

“Many people are not aware that Medicare funding for extended long-term care services is very limited. In 2021, care in a skilled nursing setting in North Dakota cost, on average, \$313 per day,” Maier said. “There are alternatives, and we encourage people to know more about their options, so they can make informed choices. Family members who are caregivers can even access training and support allowing them to take short respite breaks from caregiving responsibilities.”

According to the federal Administration for Community Living, at some point, about six in 10 American adults will need help with things like getting dressed, transportation, or making meals. Understanding service options and planning ahead can help individuals live independently longer.

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