

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | March 10, 2021

Life Skills and Transition Center Superintendent Sue Foerster retires

BISMARCK, N.D. – The Life Skills and Transition Center (LSTC) Superintendent Sue Foerster is retiring after a 40-year career focused on improving the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Her last day of full-time employment is June 30, 2021.

Heather Jenkins, LSTC's assistant superintendent, will assume the position of interim superintendent on April 15.

Foerster was named the 14th superintendent at the LSTC in May 2015 and is the first female to lead the state-operated, comprehensive support agency for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Grafton. The LSTC serves individuals living on campus, in the community of Grafton and in other communities statewide.

"In her four decades of public service, Sue has had a tremendous impact on everyone who has lived and worked at the LSTC, the state's developmental disability system and the greater Grafton community," said North Dakota Department of Human Services Executive Director Chris Jones. "She is a humble leader filled with great passion for serving people with disabilities."

Foerster began her career at the LSTC in 1981 as a direct support professional and also held other positions including: special education instructor in the school department, program coordinator and director of residential services. She served as the LSTC's assistant superintendent for 15 years before being named superintendent.

"I treasure the many people I have met and worked with during my career at the LSTC," Foerster said. "I'm so proud of our team and grateful for their dedicated work to improve the lives of people with disabilities."

Under Foerster's leadership, the LSTC has transformed its services from center-based services to person-centered services where care can be delivered in a person's home and community. Because of these efforts, the LSTC has accomplished transition goals set by the Transition to the Community Task Force and reduced the number of people living at the center.

Community integration has remained a top priority for Foerster during her tenure at the LSTC.

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“Being a community partner has always been important to our staff and the people who live at center,” she said. “Before the pandemic, people living at the LSTC participated in or volunteered at multiple events each year including the Relay for Life, Heritage Village, Shopping with Santa, Spring Things, St. Johns dinners and many other community events in the greater Grafton community.”

Foerster and the LSTC team members worked diligently to support the health and well-being of everyone at the center during the pandemic. Extensive training was provided to staff and people who live at the center and services and supports were modified to follow health and safety guidelines. These efforts significantly limited the impact of COVID-19 within the center.

Foerster credits her team at the LSTC for achieving continued national accreditation from The Council on Quality and Leadership for its person-centered community integration efforts and specialized services that focus on each person’s individual needs and goals. The LSTC received its most recent four-year accreditation in December 2019.

To ensure a smooth transition, Foerster will temporarily return to the LSTC later this summer to continue to provide leadership and guidance to team members who are implementing a series of transformation efforts that will enhance the LSTC’s role as a provider of crisis and stabilization services within the state’s developmental disabilities system.

Foerster served as a regional director for the Association of Professional Developmental Disabilities Administrators and has been an active member of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities organization. In 2015, Governor Dalrymple appointed Foerster to serve on the North Dakota State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

The LSTC provides residential services and supports to 65 people on the campus and nine others in supported apartment living arrangements in the Grafton community. The center also provides vocational services and specialized outreach services through its statewide Clinical Assistance, Resources, and Evaluation Service (CARES) team. The CARES team members provide crisis evaluation and consultation services statewide to help individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities remain living in their homes and communities and to prevent admissions to the LSTC.

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