

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | May 17, 2021

Agency recognizes National Foster Care Month and announces extended support for former foster youth affected by the pandemic

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services and partner agencies are recognizing National Foster Care Month in May 2021, which honors foster parents for providing safety, stability and support to children and youth in foster care, while also serving as mentors to children and families in crisis.

Most children and youth in foster care are able to live in homes and communities in North Dakota because about 900 licensed foster parents and 275 relative caregivers open their homes to children in need.

Each year, approximately 2,500 North Dakota children and youth are placed in foster care, and about 100 of these foster youth turn 18 and age out of care. Some of these young adults have faced additional challenges due to the pandemic.

To assist them, the department is offering extended assistance and support services to older youth currently in foster care and former foster youth who have already aged out of care during the pandemic and are not yet age 22.

“Former foster youth often do not have access to the same resources and support as other young adults who are getting their first apartments and starting to live independently,” said Dean Sturn, Foster Care Administrator for the department’s Children and Family Services Division. “The pandemic compounded these challenges for some individuals. This is where the 18+ Continued Care program can help.”

The department and partner agencies are reaching out to qualifying young people to explain the opportunity to remain in or return to the 18+ Continued Care program, which offers case management services and additional resources to support education, training, stable housing, Medicaid coverage and other financial assistance.

Qualifying youth need to reach out to a Chafee Transition Coordinator at Nexus-PATH at (877) 766-7284 to participate. Youth can find more information about available support and resources online at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/covid19-youth-transition.html.

Funding is being provided by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020. It authorized North Dakota to extend eligibility an additional year and approved using Title IV-E funds for the 18+ Continued Foster Care program. Additional federal COVID-19 relief was made available for youth in transition through the Chafee Transition program.

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