

**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | September 16, 2021

**Register now for Oct. 26-27 conference focusing on behavioral health and strong, stable families**

BISMARCK, N.D. – Two key priorities of the North Dakota Department of Human Services are behavioral health and strong, stable families. These topics are the cornerstone of an upcoming conference hosted by the department's Behavioral Health and Children and Families Services divisions on Oct. 26-27. Individuals can attend either in-person at the Bismarck Event Center or virtually by an online livestream.

This is the first-ever conference that focuses on blending behavioral health with family well-being and resiliency topics. The conference will also provide an opportunity for behavioral health and child-serving professionals and stakeholders to network and learn and share best practices in behavioral health prevention and recovery and safety, permanency and well-being of children and families.

Some keynote speakers and presentations include:

- Author and podcast creator Nora McInerney will share an entertaining message about the importance of adding levity to the difficult and uncomfortable conversations most people try to avoid.
- Long-time child welfare professional Matt Gebhardt from Casey Family Programs will discuss the transformation of North Dakota's child welfare system and what this means for supporting families and keeping children safe.
- Joyce Marter, a licensed clinical professional counselor and founder of Urban Balance, an insurance-friendly counseling practice, will share ways individuals can support their mental health and wellness and build healthy relationships.
- Author and podcaster John Moe will explore society's reluctance to discuss mental illness and offer ways to overcome the stigma around mental illness for a more fulfilling life.
- Ben Nemtin, author and cast member of the MTV reality show [The Buried Life](#), will draw on his own experience of managing depression and share how to rethink mental health to build resilience, lower stress and become equipped to manage the ups and downs of life.

The two-day conference will also feature various workshops on topics including understanding cannabis use on parenting and child safety, trauma-informed care, reducing stigma in pregnant and parenting women with substance use disorders, housing first, equity, personal and unconscious bias and more.

Registration is \$175 for the entire two-day conference and \$25 for university students and foster and adoptive parents. This registration also includes attendance at a virtual ethics course to be held on a later date. People can also register at the door. All conference activities are at the Bismarck Event Center at 315 S. Fifth St.

To register online or learn more about the conference, visit [www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov/conference](http://www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov/conference).

Conference organizers are pursuing continuing education units for various professionals. Details are pending.

The conference follows the Oct. 25 [Recovery Reinvented event](#) hosted by Gov. Doug Burgum and First Lady Kathryn Burgum.

Individuals encouraged to attend include behavioral health advocates, service providers, professionals who work with children and families and the child welfare system; business and community leaders; faith-based organizations; first responders; law enforcement; tribal representatives and other interested North Dakotans.

This conference combines the department's long-standing Behavioral Health Conference and the Children and Family Services Conference, which were held annually in October and July.

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