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N.D. recognizes foster parents and the importance of relative connections during National Foster Care Month in May

BISMARCK, N.D. – Gov. Doug Burgum has joined the North Dakota Department of Human Services this month in recognizing those involved in child welfare services – especially foster care – for their important role in supporting children, youth and families. Burgum has declared May Children’s Foster Care Month and has issued a [proclamation](#).

“Foster care month is a time to show appreciation for the hard work and dedication of case managers, licensing specialists, parents, relative caregivers, licensed foster parents, treatment facilities, training staff and other community partners, said Cory Pedersen, director of the department’s Children and Family Services Division. “The professional relationships they maintain have a positive impact on meeting our mission of safe children and strong families.”

In North Dakota this past year, approximately 1,000 licensed foster families provided temporary care to over 1,500 children and adolescents while also supporting parents, relative connections and family reunification.

This year’s national theme: “Relative and Kin Connections: Keeping Families Strong” recognizes the important role of families. If reunification with a parent is not an option, relative caregivers such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and other close relatives often assume an important role in providing a stable home to children.

“Roughly 40% of the caregivers of children in North Dakota foster care are relatives,” said Kelsey Bless, the division’s Licensing Unit administrator. “Relatives are not required to be licensed foster parents; however, our unit is happy to discuss the benefits of both kinship care and licensing and how either may help meet a child’s needs.”

Individuals interested in learning more about becoming a licensed foster parent can contact 1-833-FST-HOME (1-833-378-4663), 711 (TTY). More information is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/fostercare.

Licensed foster parents receive support and training through local licensing specialists, custodial agency representatives and recruitment and retention coalitions. The coalitions also plan special events and recognize foster parents for their role offering emergency placements, temporary placements, respite and long-term support for children.

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Heather Steffl | 701-328-4933
hsteffl@nd.gov

LuWanna Lawrence | 701-328-1892
lklawrence@nd.gov