

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | Aug. 1, 2022

New human service zone team launching Aug. 1 to divert children in need of services from juvenile justice system and foster care

BISMARCK, N.D. – North Dakota is launching a new team to divert children in need of services from the juvenile justice system and foster care system. Beginning Aug. 1, a statewide team of human service zone professionals will connect children and their families to community resources.

The team is supervised by the RSR Human Service Zone in southeastern North Dakota, and members work in locations across the state. The North Dakota Department of Human Services provides the policy and procedures oversight.

“This new program grew out of the state’s juvenile justice reform efforts and was approved by the 2021 Legislature,” said Cory Pedersen, director of the Department of Human Services’ Children and Family Services Division. “Lawmakers recognized that children who are acting out and need services, but who have not committed a delinquent act, can and should be served in the community.”

“It is exciting to be able to lead this new team, which is energized and ready to take on the challenges of developing and implementing new practices and building relationships with community partners,” said RSR Human Service Zone Director Lynn Flieth. “We are honored to work with youth and their families and to have this opportunity to help change the trajectory of the lives of children and youth.”

The team will work to engage, empower and encourage as it serves children who have run away, missed at least three days of school without an excused absence, use tobacco and related products, or regularly disobey their parents and guardians, Flieth said.

Team members will talk to children, parents and others, assess needs, and identify services and resources that may help meet the unique needs of children, youth and their families. They will also work directly with families to review service and support options and develop a plan that may include community services.

School officials, parents, law enforcement personnel and other interested adults should make referrals, beginning Aug. 1, to the new Children in Need of Services Team, instead of the Juvenile Court.

To make a referral, complete the [referral form](#) found on the Department of Human Services' [website](#) and submit it by fax to (701) 328-0104 or email to chins@nd.gov. Law enforcement professionals can use their current referral paperwork if they prefer.

Children from other states who have run away and been found in North Dakota will continue to be served by the Juvenile Court.

Pedersen said, the team is not an emergency service. If a child is in crisis, call the Behavioral Health Crisis Line at 988 or 211.

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