Western N.D. leads in certified youth shelter care sites, which can help prevent foster care placements

BISMARCK, N.D. – Western North Dakota currently leads the state in certified shelter care sites for children and youth. In July, the North Dakota Department of Human Services certified Sunrise Youth Bureau in Dickinson and Northwest Youth Assessment Center in Williston as certified shelter care providers for children ages 10-17.

Certification means the shelter care providers are approved by the department and can be reimbursed by the department for the service. Non-certified shelters can continue to operate, but they cannot use public funding through the department.

Certified shelter care providers offer a temporary safe bed for no more than seven days to children and youth during a family crisis. Announced in January 2022, the use of certified temporary shelter care can prevent foster care placements by addressing immediate needs while supports and services are put in place for families. These services support child safety and well-being and help strengthen and stabilize families.

In February 2022, DHS announced $1.5 million in grant funds and invited current and prospective shelter care service providers to apply for up to $150,000 each in funding to establish a certified shelter care program or enhance their existing services and facilities to meet certification and safety requirements.

Both Sunrise Youth Bureau and Northwest Youth Assessment Center applied for and received grant funds and were certified in July 2022, within two weeks after the department received their completed applications.

Youthworks locations in Bismarck, Fargo and Minot also applied for and received grant funds earlier this year, and the Bismarck and Fargo locations applied for certification the week of Aug. 1.

Youthworks Development Director Emily Yanish provided an update on the Minot location.

“Youthworks will finalize the purchase of a new property in Minot in the coming weeks. This location will meet the safety requirements of a shelter care location, and we look forward to submitting a formal certification application to the department very quickly. It is our goal to resume shelter care services in the region as soon as possible,” Yanish said.
The department budgeted for 10 grants and still has about $750,000 in grant funding available for five more interested shelter care providers. Funds can be used for start-up costs, such as initial operating costs, construction, remodeling, payroll, training, staffing ratios and related costs associated with meeting certification standards.

Interested nonprofit and for-profit entities, including agencies operating under tribal nations in North Dakota, can still apply. Once funds have been expended, the grant program will close.

For details about grant funding, visit the division’s webpage. To apply, providers need to review and complete the grant invitation and application at https://bit.ly/3IXgJ0R.

Youth shelter programs managed by private agencies had the first seven months in 2022 to meet certification requirements and comply with state law. Programs not certified by Aug. 1, 2022, can continue to serve youth, however they are no longer eligible to receive reimbursement from a human service zone or the North Dakota Department of Human Services until they become certified.

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