

**NEWS** from the North Dakota Department of Human Services  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**N.D. receives grant to strengthen services to individuals with head injuries**

Bismarck, N.D. – The federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has awarded the North Dakota Department of Human Services a grant to strengthen the coordination of services for individuals with traumatic brain injuries (TBI). The three-year grant provides \$354,000 to help North Dakota better address the needs of military veterans, American Indians, and others with traumatic brain injuries.

Nationally, the Centers for Disease Control estimates that about two percent of the population is affected by traumatic brain injuries that disrupt the normal function of the brain. Using this estimate, about 12,800 North Dakotans have brain injury-related disabilities.

The main causes of such injuries include falls, traffic accidents, and assaults. In North Dakota, tribal injury prevention experts have helped focus attention on brain injuries and the need to address the leading causes of TBI hospitalizations among American Indians. In a letter supporting the grant application, the North Dakota Administrative Committee on Veteran's Affairs noted that more soldiers are surviving traumatic brain injuries, and understanding their concerns and enhancing services is important.

Department Executive Director Carol K. Olson said, "The traumatic brain injury service delivery system in North Dakota is at a crucial juncture. This grant will support the goal shared by individuals with TBI, their family members and caregivers, service providers, advocates, and others to work together to build a stronger, more viable service system that addresses the unique challenges individuals face after they leave the hospital."

Olson said many public and private entities provided input and vital resources such as matching funds that were essential to winning the grant. Significant partners included the Center for Rural Health at the University of North Dakota (UND) School of Medicine and Health Sciences, the Dakota Medical Foundation, and the Anne Carlsen Center for Children in Jamestown, N.D.

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Grant funds will be used to improve screening and referrals for needed services and service coordination, Olson said. Other goals include strengthening cultural awareness, implementing a peer mentoring pilot program involving American Indians, promoting education and awareness through a statewide summit and targeted medical education, and developing a resource library. Resources may also be used to explore ways to track the incidence of traumatic brain injuries in North Dakota.

According to Olson, implementation will involve a multicultural advisory committee and will utilize the expertise of UND's Center for Rural Health, which managed the state's original planning grant for traumatic brain injury.

Sue Offutt, Associate Director for Operations at the Center for Rural Health Services, said "The Center for Rural Health has a 27-year history of connecting resources, research, and knowledge to strengthen the health of people in rural communities. We look forward to working with partnering organizations including the Tribes and veterans' organizations to enhance the delivery of services to individuals and their families affected by traumatic brain injury."

The North Dakota Department of Human Services provides services to individuals affected by traumatic brain injuries through its Disability Services Division, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division, eight regional human service centers, and Medicaid program.

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