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N.D. Parent Responsibility Initiative Named Finalist For Award

BISMARCK, N.D. – The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Office has selected a parental responsibility initiative run by the N.D. Department of Human Services and Job Service North Dakota as a regional finalist for the 2007 Innovations Award program.

The Parental Responsibility Initiative for the Development of Employment (PRIDE) involves the department's Child Support Enforcement Division and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, Job Service North Dakota, and the courts. Children benefit because PRIDE addresses the unemployment and under-employment of noncustodial parents, which increases child support collections, promotes self-sufficiency, and reduces reliance on public assistance. The state is currently piloting the program in the Grand Forks and Dickinson regions.

"The PRIDE program works," said Child Support Enforcement Division Director Mike Schwindt. "Seventy-four percent of the participating parents have improved their employment situation by obtaining work or better jobs, allowing them to increase their monthly support payments to their children by 88 percent. Additionally, we are hearing of increased parental involvement in the lives of their kids."

North Dakota's PRIDE program is one of 10 programs under consideration for the regional honor. The Council has invited Schwindt to give a presentation during their August 26-29 conference in Michigan, at which time they will select two regional winners. If selected, PRIDE will join six other programs from across the nation in receiving a Council of State Governments Innovations Award.

PRIDE focuses on parents who owe past-due support. Participating parents are referred to a Job Service caseworker for employment-related services such as work assessments, job search help, training, job placement follow-up services, and other needed supports. Caseworkers may also refer parents to services to address substance abuse or mental health needs.

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