

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
600 E Boulevard Ave, Bismarck ND 58505-0250**

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Contacts: Maggie Anderson, Medical Services Division Director, 701-328-2321; or Heather Steffl, Public Information Officer, 701-328-4933

Families impacted by layoffs reminded about child health coverage programs and other assistance

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services and county social service offices are reminding individuals affected by the layoffs at Bobcat Co. plants in Gwinner and Bismarck that help may be available to fill gaps in family budgets if they lost company-sponsored health benefits along with needed family income.

County social service office directors in Burleigh and Sargent counties have contacted company and union representatives about meeting with affected employees to provide information about available programs. County staffs can help people apply for health coverage programs, child care assistance, supplemental nutrition assistance (food stamps), temporary assistance for needy families, and heating assistance.

“Public assistance programs exist to help individuals and families through tough times and temporary setbacks,” said department Executive Director Carol K. Olson. “If a family has experienced a change in income due to a layoff and has lost employer-sponsored health coverage, we encourage them to contact their county social service office because they may qualify for help.”

Olson said the department’s Medical Services Division has already contacted schools in Gwinner, Milnor, Wyndmere, Oakes, and Lisbon offering to provide brochures about public and private child health coverage programs that serve uninsured children. Contacts are still being made to Bismarck and Mandan schools. These programs include the Healthy Steps State Children’s Health Insurance Program, Medicaid, and the Caring Program. Together they covered approximately 1,492 children in Dickey, LaMoure, Ransom, Richland, and Sargent counties, and about 5,178 children in Burleigh and Morton counties in March 2009.

Qualifying income levels vary by program. Parents can receive information and take the first step toward applying for the child health coverage programs by calling the department toll free at 1-877-KIDSNOW (1-877-543-7669) or by contacting their local county social service office.

Information about public assistance programs and county social service office locations is available online at <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/financialhelp/index.html>.

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