

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services

600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 9, 2014

Contacts: LuWanna Lawrence, Public Information Officer, 701-328-1892 or Heather Steffl, Public Information Manager, 701-328-4933

Bright & Early North Dakota Launched to Support Early Childhood Providers

Informational meetings scheduled for licensed child care providers to learn more about the program

BISMARCK, N.D. - According to ZERO TO THREE® - National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families, 90 percent of a child's brain development happens before the child enters kindergarten. To support early childhood development and quality child care, the N.D. Department of Human Services launched a new program called *Bright & Early North Dakota* that will help foster a child's early success by providing training, support, and resources to child care professionals.

Licensed child care providers in Cass, Stutsman, Ward, and Williams counties are invited to participate in four informational meetings Jan. 13-23, 2014, to learn about the new *Bright & Early North Dakota* program and how it can create a thriving future for children and enhance their child care programs.

Bright & Early North Dakota is a voluntary program, which provides a roadmap to help child care providers focus on school readiness through a multi-step process that will help children be more likely to be ready for kindergarten and be successful in school. Child care providers will receive support through one-on-one coaching from a trained child care consultant, grant dollars to purchase educational toys and materials for their programs, bonus awards for achieving program goals, and recognition for achieving and maintaining levels of quality in addition to licensing.

Preregistration is required. Informational meetings are scheduled for these dates and times.

- **Minot** – Mon., Jan. 13, 6:30 to 8 p.m.
- **Williston** – Tues., Jan. 14, 6:30 to 8 p.m.
- **Jamestown** – Tues., Jan. 21, 6:30 to 8 p.m.
- **Fargo** – Thurs., Jan. 23, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

There is no cost to attend the meetings. Providers must register online at <http://tinyurl.com/brightnd> or by calling 218-299-7237. An e-mail confirmation will be sent to registered participants along with the meeting location details. All meetings have been approved for 1.5 hours of Growing Futures training.

"We are excited to partner with Child Care Aware and our providers and families through *Bright & Early North Dakota* to make a positive impact on one of our state's greatest resources, our children," said Maggie Anderson, executive director of the N.D. Department of Human Services.

Funding for *Bright & Early North Dakota* was provided by the 2013 Legislature, which also increased Child Care Assistance Program eligibility levels for families, and enhanced support to child care providers who care for children with special needs. *Bright & Early North Dakota* will expand to other regions of the state over the next two years.