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May is Children's Foster Care Month

Foster parents recognized for being creative at strengthening families by supporting connections during COVID-19

BISMARCK, N.D. – Gov. Doug Burgum has [proclaimed](#) May Children's Foster Care Month in North Dakota to recognize the many individuals committed to strengthening families and ensuring the safety, permanency and well-being of children in foster care.

"North Dakota foster parents have a long-standing tradition of opening their homes to provide a safe, stable and nurturing environment," said Dean Sturn, foster care administrator with the North Dakota Department of Human Services. "Foster parents are role models and an important support for parents and other relatives until children can be reunited with their families."

On any given day, roughly 1,600 North Dakota children are in foster care. Foster parents are vital for family reunification because they help parents build stronger relationships with their children.

Sturn said, supporting parents really strengthens families. He praised the innovative measures North Dakota foster parents continue to make during the pandemic, which bring joy to the children in their care and the children's parents.

North Dakota foster parents have become very creative at supporting family connections using technology and other means. Foster parents have arranged visits with family members in a park or other outside setting, while using social distancing measures. Some have even organized virtual crafts sessions – dropping off a kit in advance with a child's parent to complete during a virtual visit. Foster parents also text updates and pictures regularly. Some have also prepared and delivered meals for birth families with notes and pictures from the children.

North Dakota currently has about 1,000 licensed foster parents statewide and continually works with partners to recruit and retain foster parents.

Foster parent recruitment and retention efforts have recently been reorganized to better support local human service zones and partners by contracting with the University of North Dakota – Children and Family Services Training Center (UND-CFSTC). Individuals interested in becoming a licensed foster care provider can now contact the North Dakota Recruitment and Retention Specialist at 1-833-FST-HOME or 1-833-378-4663 and 711 (TTY). Additional information is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/fostercare/.

"We are very excited to be able to partner with the department's Children and Family Services Division, human services zones, licensed child placing agencies and the Tribes in recognizing, recruiting and supporting North Dakota foster families," said Recruitment and Retention Specialist Sheila Muus at the UND-CFSTC.

Sturn said, foster parent recruitment and retention coalitions will continue to be active locally to plan special events and offer training and support for current and prospective foster families.

The Children's Foster Care Month proclamation can be viewed online at <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/>.

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