

The Department continues to post other Department COVID-19-related information, including a series of Q&As on the COVID-19 page on our website [www.nd.gov/dhs/](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/) to help ensure that various partner and provider groups have up-to-date information on recommended practices as well as program and policy changes.

## Vulnerable Population Protection Plan (VP3)

- The COVID-19 Hospital Coordination and Vulnerable Population Protection Plan provides the framework for the State of North Dakota in collaboration with hospitals, congregate living facilities, the North Dakota National Guard (NDNG), and other state and local agencies to serve the healthcare needs of citizens with COVID-19 that require hospitalization.
- A six-point plan identifies key actions that will guide the State, hospitals, and care facilities through a tiered system.
- The plan is based on the understanding that our hospitals and long-term care facilities are capable of providing support and care to all residents and fellow facilities without assistance from outside resources through the first two tiers, but will request the State's assistance in various capacities within the last two tiers.
- It addresses key areas of bed availability and staffing and defines expected action plans based on the tiered level of response to the spread of COVID-19.

## Emergency Rent Bridge

- Launched a new COVID Emergency Rent Bridge to help renters struggling to pay rent because of COVID-related economic hardship. Income-qualified renters can apply online at <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/covid-19/housing-homelessness.html>.

## Sheltering Project (Homeless & Domestic Violence)

- 7 scattered shelter sites have been secured across the state to provide independent housing to individuals experiencing homelessness and domestic violence who also need to be quarantined for a positive COVID-19 test result, positive exposure, travel quarantine or while awaiting test results.
- The shelters provide case management, nursing services, three meals a day, and security services.
- Individuals in need should be referred to the Human Service Zone (formerly known as County Social Services) in their community.
- To date, more than 55 individuals experiencing homelessness and domestic violence across the state have been provided shelter.

## Human Service Centers

- Centralized open access assessment and multidisciplinary staffing via statewide telehealth services and a virtual waiting room which increases capacity onsite for team members to address walk in crisis psychotherapy and other clinical services.
- Completed written quarantine and isolation procedures to assist staff in differentiating types of risk for exposure and guidance for client management.

## State Hospital

- Completed targeted COVID-19 testing of a subset of patients and team members.
- Continue new admission quarantine and the isolation unit is now providing patient care.
- Adjusted screening and PPE protocols for staff members exposed to COVID.

## Human Service Zones

- All Human Service Zones (formerly known as County Social Services) continue to operate and serve needs for economic assistance, child welfare, and other critical programs.
- The zones continue to see a significant increase in applications for SNAP, Medicaid, Child Care Assistance, and other economic assistance programs.
- The public can continue to drop off paper applications and eligibility verification at each Human Service Zone office.

## Child Support

- Continues to work with employers and JSND to terminate income withholding orders to employers for wages of former employees who have submitted new claims to Job Service North Dakota for unemployment benefits. Issued new income withholding orders to JSND to collect a portion of those benefits to satisfy the claimant's child support obligation.
- Starting Tuesday May 5, Child Support will receive money that has been offset from recovery rebates payable to parents who owe past-due child support.

## Behavioral Health Division

- Hired a consultant to provide training on addiction and withdrawal management for individuals caring for those in the sheltering project on addiction and withdrawal management.
- Provided first substance abuse prevention training virtually to approximately 60 tribal and public health partners across the state.
- Developed and disseminated new resources:
  - [Parents Lead](#) Website
    - [30-Day Parenting Challenge while Social Distancing](#)
    - [Getting Movement in during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
  - [Behavioral Health Division](#) Website
    - [ND Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Challenge on Suicide Prevention](#)
    - [Recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
    - [25 Things to do to Support your Mental Health While Social Distancing](#)

## Children and Family Services

- Published educational materials to help people recognize the signs of child abuse.

## DD Division

- Issued updated guidance for in-home supports and worked with Department of Health on updated guidance for residential group homes as well as support staff policies for hospitals.
- Implemented a new data tool that helps better understand system capacity and challenges during COVID, as part of the VP3 plan.

## Aging

- Received \$300,000 ADRL grant that will be used to help address social-distancing-related isolation in skilled nursing and basic care facilities, offer temporary rent assistance to people leaving institutional settings, and in community supports (ex. grocery delivery) to help older adults and people with disabilities access the supplies and support they need to continue living independently.

## Economic Assistance

- Received approval for the state's P-EBT plan, which offers additional SNAP benefits to families who are eligible to receive free or reduced lunch in K-12 settings. The additional benefit will be available to help supplement food costs for days the children would normally have been in school.
- Announced additional LIHEAP funds available to help lower income households who are struggling to keep up with their home energy costs.