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**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | April 17, 2020

# North Dakota creates temporary shelter program to serve vulnerable individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 or need to be in quarantine

BISMARCK, N.D. – Today, a multi-agency task force announced a new temporary shelter program in North Dakota for vulnerable individuals who are homeless and who cannot safely stay at existing homeless and domestic violence shelters because they have tested positive for COVID-19, are showing symptoms and awaiting test results, or need to be in quarantine because of recent travel to the state from hotspot areas.

"Our goal is to meet the shelter and health needs of some of the most vulnerable people in our communities – people who literally have nowhere else to go," said North Dakota Department of Human Services' Chief Operating Officer Sara Stolt who chairs the multi-agency task force.

"The new shelter and support program, which has been set up temporarily during this public health emergency, is currently serving 12 people in a couple of communities," Stolt said. "If needs grow, we are prepared to expand to serve homeless individuals who need to self-isolate in Bismarck, Devils Lake, Dickinson, Fargo, Grand Forks, Jamestown, Minot and Williston."

To access the temporary shelter program, Stolt said, individuals must be referred by a homeless shelter, domestic violence shelter, hospital, public health unit or other partner agency. Local human service zone offices (formerly known as county social service offices) will work directly with any homeless individuals or families referred to the program. Individuals cannot refer themselves.

Shelter location information will not be provided due to health-related privacy concerns and safety considerations. Some participants are fleeing domestic violence.

The department's regional human service centers will provide homeless case management services to participants, who will also have access to nursing support and meals. Security will also be available on site.

Program funding is being provided by the federal government and the state, with major support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Agencies participating in North Dakota's Interagency Task Force on Homelessness, Domestic Violence and Food Insecurity include the Governor's Office, the state departments of Commerce, Emergency Services, Health, Housing Finance, and Human Services; FM Coalition to End Homelessness; Missouri Valley Coalition for Homeless People; North Dakota Coalition for Homeless Persons; Great Plains Food Bank; Hunger Free North Dakota Coalition; and other partners.

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