

FOSTERING COMMUNICATIONS

May 2025

Upcoming State Conferences

**West River Conference
on Social Welfare
"Pathways to Progress
Through Bridging Barriers"**
June 12–13, 2025
Medora, ND

In-Person
Click [HERE](#) for more
information

Behavioral Health & Children and Family Services Conference

October 20-23, 2025
Bismarck Event Center
Bismarck, ND
In-Person & Virtual
More Details to Come...



Children and Family
Services Training Center
Department of Social Work
University of North Dakota

May is National Foster Care Month

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

PROCLAMATION CHILDREN'S FOSTER CARE MONTH MAY 2025

WHEREAS, keeping children safe and families strong is the key to healthy communities, while providing services and support to families so they can stay together or be reunited as soon as possible is the primary goal of the North Dakota child welfare system; and

WHEREAS, North Dakotans have a long-standing tradition of helping the community, while opening their hearts and homes to children in need of stability and support; and

WHEREAS, North Dakota foster care providers are role models and provide important mentoring to parents, helping them enhance relationships with their children and maintain family connections until reunification can occur; and

WHEREAS, Children's Foster Care Month is an opportunity to recognize nearly 750 licensed foster families and numerous relative kinship caregivers who provide quality care to 1,150 children and adolescents placed in foster care; and

WHEREAS, there is an ongoing need to engage family and kinship caregivers immediately, while working to recruit additional foster care providers and retain current foster care providers; and

WHEREAS, grandparents, aunts, uncles and other close family members and relative caregivers have an important role in providing normalcy, stability and family connections to children and adolescents who are not able to remain with their biological parents; and

WHEREAS, relative caregivers, foster care providers, human service zones, child welfare professionals and other partnering agencies involved in foster care deserve recognition this month and all year long for their continued teamwork and steadfast devotion to the safety, permanency and well-being of children and adolescents; and

WHEREAS, this annual observance calls attention to the value of foster care as a temporary service that provides safety and supports for the engagement of children and adolescents, while strengthening opportunities for their families in our North Dakota communities.

NOW, THEREFORE, as Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim
May 2025, CHILDREN'S FOSTER CARE MONTH in the State of North Dakota.




Kelly Armstrong
GOVERNOR

ATTEST: 
Michael Howe
SECRETARY OF STATE

Proclamation on National Foster Care Month 2025-Donald Trump



PRIDE Link

This edition of the PRIDE Link is highlighting the PRIDE competency “Protecting and nurturing children”, specifically focusing on welcoming a new foster child into your home. Think back to a situation where you were “new” to a situation, place, or person. Maybe it was when you started a new job, or meeting a new group of friends, or even traveling to a foreign country. Reflect on the feelings you had and consider how some of those same feelings may be just one of the many feelings a child or youth may experience when entering a new foster home, and how you, as caregiver, approach this transition can go a long way in setting a foundation for child to

feel safe and build a relationship. The first highlighted resource, Metro Family’s article “12 Ways to Make Foster Kids Feel Welcome”, focuses how to make a child feel like they are at home while in a placement with 12 specific things that the authors, who are foster care providers, do in their home. This article outlines allowing a child to have a voice in creating their own space, having objects that are familiar to them, and having them be responsible for chores around the house as ways to make a child feel welcome. To read the article with the entire list please click on the link below:

[12 Ways to Make Foster Kids Feel Welcome](#)

Another resource is Creating a Family’s article, “6 Essentials for Welcoming a Child to Your Family” where 6 essentials are identified for you to focus on not just when a child enters your home, but throughout the entire time the child is with you that will lead for a child to grow and thrive while in placement. The essentials include the importance of you being present, meeting a child’s physical needs, and more. Additional resources are linked within the article to help meet a child’s needs. Click on the link to read the article:

[6 Essentials for Welcoming a Child to Your Family](#)

The last resource comes from Laura, Foster Care Partner. First, Laura created two short videos role playing what you can do as a provider on that first day of the child coming to your home. The videos focus on the first day with an older youth/teens/tween. Click on the links below to watch each video:

[First Day with an Older Foster Youth/Teen/Tween in Foster Care Part 2: First Day with an Older Foster Youth/Teen/Tween in Foster Care](#)

The last video from Laura Foster Care Partner demonstrates how to welcome a younger child into your home. Specifically, what to consider when introducing the child into your home. To watch this short video, click on the link below:

[Foster Parent House Tour with New Foster Child Who May Feel Scared or Sad](#)

Summer Time Resources

The school year is winding down, the sun is shining, lawn mowers are humming, and sunscreen is being applied. Yes, summer is upon us!! Although there are many wonderful benefits of summer the reality is for some families that without the structure that comes during the school year there can be added struggles. This is especially true for children who are impacted by trauma, emotional struggles, or developmental delays. The Child Mind Institute’s article, “Strategies for a Successful Summer Break” addresses these struggles and provides a variety of strategies on how to maintain a structure, implement a behavioral support system, and others’ ideas to make this time of year easier for your child and you. Click the link below to read the entire article from Child Mind Institute.



[Strategies for a Successful Summer Break](#)

Summer is also a time that we, as caregivers, need to focus on increased vigilance to safety, weather we are having fun by the water, biking, or grilling outside. With May being Safe Kids month, it is appropriate to highlight ways to keep kids (and adults) safe during this summer season. In the Safe Kids blog Sadiqua Kendi, MD, MPH addresses summer safety as well as additional links to safety tips for the summer. To access the blog please click on the link below:

[Summer Safety For Kids](#)

In honor of Foster Care Awareness month we, at CFSTC, want to **THANK YOU**, the foster care provider, kinship provider, adoptive parent, child welfare worker, and community partner for giving your time, love, and passion to make a difference to a child and family in North Dakota!

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥ **THANK YOU!** ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

Sturn Retires After 39 Years of Service to ND Children and Families

Dean Sturn, the permanency administrator with the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services' Children and Family Services Section announced his retirement. Dean has had 27 years of public service as a state employee and 12 years of service to children and families through the private sector. Dean's last day at Children and Family Services will be June 13th, 2025.

Sturn has spent nearly the last 17 years as the administrator of the foster care program including oversight of the foster care budget, placements, licensing and training of foster care providers and child welfare workforce. He provides direct supervision to other areas that focus on providing stability to children including adoption, guardianship, foster care provider payments, and adoption subsidies. Sturn engages with foster care constituents and is a liaison to our Tribal Nations specific to child welfare cases. Sturn had a history of working closely to support program and policy in efforts to guide the Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program and was involved in state Child and Family Service Reviews evaluating how child welfare services are provided in the state compared to national standards.

Sturn has an undergraduate and master's degree in social work from the University of North Dakota. His career spans over three decades in child welfare centered around foster care. He began his career at the Dakota Boys Ranch in Minot as a direct care professional. In 1989, he joined the department's Ruth Meiers Adolescent Treatment Center (PRTF) in Grand Forks where he worked for nine years in various roles including case manager, clinical director and program director. He later went on to work for a residential facility through Casey Family Programs based in Bismarck and PATH ND. Sturn rejoined the department in 2008 overseeing the independent living program and licensing facilities before becoming the state foster care administrator.

"Dean has been involved in every level of the child welfare system from working directly with children and families, engaging in treatment in facilities, supervising staff, mentoring professionals, writing state law, rule and policy all while promoting permanency and reunification options whenever safe to do so," said Cory Pedersen, Director of Children and Family Services. "This well-rounded experience has made him a champion for ensuring that children have permanent and stable living situations and families get connected to services and supports needed to achieve positive outcomes."

Many accomplishments and awards over the years, but notable recognition was the receipt of the 2018 Ruth Meiers Award from the North Dakota Conference of Social Welfare for his career working to achieve healthy outcomes for children and families involved in ND foster care. The Ruth Meiers Award was established by the North Dakota Conference of Social Welfare in honor of the late Lt. Governor Ruth Meiers who worked to improve the lives of those less fortunate.

Dean's presence will be missed in the ND child welfare system. If you are lucky enough to have worked with Dean Sturn, you are lucky enough. He has been instrumental in our statewide work with children and family services. Congratulations on retirement, it is well deserved!!!

— HAPPY —
Retirement



Recruitment & Retention

National Foster Care Month 2025

Happy National Foster Care Month! Although providers deserve to be celebrated year-round, May is a special time to recognize all those who walk alongside and support both children and families as they navigate a difficult season of life. Taking on the role of a provider is one of the most selfless and generous acts of kindness that can be offered. Providers give so much of themselves to help children and families heal, and this does not go unnoticed. Thank you to each and every provider in North Dakota!

The Importance of Connections

“Centered on Family, Strengthened by Connections” reminds us this National Foster Care Month of the importance of maintaining a child’s existing relationships during their time in foster care. When a child cannot remain in their home, outcomes tend to be more positive when they are placed with somebody they have a bond with, such as a family member or fictive kin - like a teacher, coach, or neighbor. When this is an option, a child’s trauma resulting from being separated from their parents is minimized, their cultural identity can be preserved, and placement stability tends to be stronger. However, relative or fictive kin placement is not always an option. When a child is placed with a non-relative foster care provider, family connections and engagement become even more imperative for a child’s healing process and overall wellbeing. Having an open mind and working together as a team with birth family will be beneficial in keeping families in the center and connections strong. Keep in mind, birth family does not only mean parents. Siblings, grandparents, aunts, and uncles may also be an important birth family connection for the child. In this YouTube video, foster care providers with the Coalition for Children, Youth, & Families out of Wisconsin share their experiences and perspective on family connections. Hear what they have to say!

[Stronger Together: Foster Parents on the Value of Birth Family Connections - YouTube](#)

Virtual Training Opportunities!

CFSTC offers monthly virtual training as part of the Recruitment & Retention contract with the North Dakota Department of Health & Human Services. One hour of education credit is offered to licensed foster care providers who attend. Kinship homes are also welcome to participate! Watch for monthly fliers sent through email that will include details on upcoming training opportunities! If you have questions, or need access to the monthly flyer, please reach out to your Licensing Specialist, Case Manager, or CFSTC!

FOSTER PROVIDER TRAINING NEEDS SURVEY!!

It is that time when we want YOUR feedback for planning for future Foster Care Provider Trainings. To provide that feedback please complete a survey before 07.01.25 by clicking the Survey Link below.

[Foster Provider Training Needs Survey](#)

Virtual Foster Care Panels

Do you know somebody who is interested in fostering?
Attending a Virtual Foster Care Panel is a great place to start!
Keep an eye on the UND CFSTC Facebook page for upcoming dates,
and consider sharing with friends, family, and through social media!

The next panel is 09.04.25 7:00-8:00 p.m. CST

Click [HERE](#) to register to attend!!



NORTH DAKOTA

FOSTER OR ADOPT



Are you interested or know someone who may be interested in becoming a foster care provider?

Please call the
Toll Free Inquiry Line @
1.833.FST.HOME
(1.833.378.4663)

And speak with
Recruitment & Retention
Specialist, Carissa Cox.



**UPCOMING
Virtual Training:**

**“Organizational Tips for
Providers”**

**6.10.25
6:00-7:00 p.m. CST
Click [HERE](#) to Register**

****Watch your emails for
further details****