



April 13, 2020

Ms. Mylynn Tufte, State Health Officer, North Dakota Department of Health  
Mr. Christopher D. Jones, Executive Director, North Dakota Department of Human Services

On April 2, 2020, we at the North Dakota Disabilities Advocacy Consortium, a statewide association of organizations who advocate for public policies that support people with disabilities across the lifespan, submitted a letter, enclosed, expressing our gratitude for your leadership during this public health emergency and offering our assistance in advancing a series of measures to guide medical and human service providers in securing the most appropriate services to individuals with disabilities across all ages, who deserve and require appropriate consideration for their unique needs, consistent with their secured civil rights.

Since issuing our letter, you each have expressed encouraging initial openness to consider further our April 2, 2020, recommendations. We thank you for your open expressions to consider our proposals, moving forward. To date, we have received no commitments to adopt or implement these recommendations. We are hopeful that both the Departments of Health and Human Services will take timely and tangible steps to implement the following actions:

- (1) adopt and incorporate our April 2, 2020, recommendations within each of your respective agency's working protocols,**
- (2) issue clear and consistent guidance, aligned with these recommendations, to all public and private service providers within your influence, and**
- (3) communicate clear instructions to and further train all your respective department staff members on the importance of faithfully embodying these person-centered practices within their mission-critical duties.**

In this regard, we respectfully request that you work collaboratively with Governor Burgum and all Cabinet members to **openly communicate to the citizens of North Dakota your proactive responses to adopt the recommendations we identify in our April 2, 2020, letter, securing the statutory programs, procedural safeguards, and accorded civil rights of all individuals with disabilities across the lifespan, especially as it relates to person-centered practices and standards of care provided during this current emergency.**

We respectfully request your written response confirming your commitment to adopt and implement these recommendations, thereby providing the guidance and assurance needed at this crucial time.

Collaboratively, you each have provided, in concert with Governor Burgum, a great service to the state's citizens by participating in periodic daily briefings on the state's current standing and updating best

practices regarding prevention, reporting, and care. **We believe that North Dakota citizens, especially our citizens with disabilities for whom we advocate, would benefit and be comforted greatly by hearing you, as respected state leaders, clearly and unequivocally reasserting, during periodic daily briefings, the procedural steps your state agencies are taking to meet the unique needs of individuals with disabilities across all ages, specifically related to the issues we advance in our April 2, 2020, letter. We believe it is essential for your two crucial administrative agencies to communicate directly and collaboratively with the public and private service providers you oversee to ensure a clear and consistent directive regarding these person-centered practices and policies. The NDDAC extends its hand to you in assisting your respective agencies in preparing specific daily briefings or guidance documents, as may be helpful. We are pleased to serve you, as always.**

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request. If you or any of your staff have questions regarding this request, we within NDDAC are willing to make ourselves readily available and to reach out and provide direct assistance. We wish you well and extend our ongoing support.

Sincerely,

Julie Horntvedt, Chairperson  
North Dakota Disabilities Advocacy Consortium

Enclosure: NDDAC April 2, 2020, Letter

Member Organizations:

Advocates Leading their Lives  
Designer Genes of ND, Inc.  
Family Voices of North Dakota  
Mental Health Advocacy Network  
Mental Health America of North Dakota  
Minot Housing Authority  
ND Assistive  
North Dakota Association of the Blind  
North Dakota Association of Community Providers  
North Dakota Association for Persons in Supported Employment  
North Dakota Consumer Family Network  
North Dakota Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
North Dakota Protection and Advocacy Project  
North Dakota State Council on Developmental Disabilities  
The Arc of North Dakota