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Joins NDFFCMH!



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Helping Kids Survive  
and Thrive in Winter



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MHAN Podcast

## Beth Larson-Steckler Joins NDFFCMH as Parent Coordinator

Beth Larson-Steckler joined the North Dakota Federation of Families in December as a Parent Coordinator. We asked her to introduce herself to our readership. We are thrilled to have her dedication and expertise!

Hello, everyone! I'm Beth Larson-Steckler, and I'm thrilled to be part of the Federation of Families. I have over thirty-five years of experience in the field (uffda, I am old). My journey began in Fargo, North Dakota, where my passion for supporting families and youth began. My early career started at Southeast Human Service Center, working with the Partnerships Program. This experience shaped my philosophy on engaging with families and youth. I strongly believe in the power of the voices of family and youth, not only on an individual level but also on a systematic level. Recognizing the invaluable insights families and youth bring, I have dedicated my career to ensuring their voices are heard as experts to enhance and improve our systems.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of contributing my skills and knowledge to various organizations. From Casey Family Programs to Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, Department of Public Instruction, and the North Dakota University System, each role has enriched my understanding of the complex nature of systems.

On a personal note, I am a proud parent of two incredible young adults who have faced their share of complex needs. Navigating the system with them has given me firsthand insight into its challenges. But it's also reinforced my commitment to making our systems more responsive and supportive. When I am not working you can find me enjoying time with my family. I am passionate about outdoor activities, whether its kayaking, hiking or exploring new places. My involvement in my church community is a source of joy.

Beyond my role at Federation of Families, I am actively engaged in healthcare improvement efforts collaborating with national entities such as AAP, NCIL, Parents Rising, and Every Life. These partnerships allow me to contribute to the broader conversation and drive positive change in our healthcare systems.

I am genuinely excited to be a part of the Federation of Families. I look forward to getting to know each of you and working together to create a brighter future for families and youth!

Beth Larson-Steckler  
blsteckler@ndffcmh.com

## Press Release: Burgum Appoints former Texas HHS Executive Wayne Salter to lead ND Health and Human Services

Thursday, January 11, 2024 - 10:00am

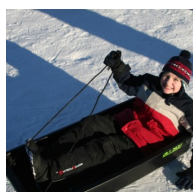


BISMARCK, N.D. – Gov. Doug Burgum today announced the appointment of former Texas Health and Human Services executive Wayne Salter to lead the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), citing his more than 25 years of experience and leadership in human service programs, strategic planning and process improvement to better serve citizens. Salter will begin his role as HHS commissioner on Jan. 22.

Salter served as deputy executive commissioner of access and eligibility services for Texas Health and Human Services from September 2017 to June 2023, providing executive leadership to a workforce of more than 9,000 team members responsible for the administration of public assistance and community-based services and support programs. He previously served three years as associate commissioner for Texas HHS Access and Eligibility Services and 17 years with the Florida Department of Children and Families, including as deputy director of the Public Assistance Division.

"Throughout his career, Wayne has demonstrated a strong commitment to serving the needs of vulnerable populations and ensuring that essential human services are delivered efficiently and effectively, and that experience will serve North Dakotans well," Burgum said. "His skill at leading large organizations, his deep understanding of complex social support programs, and his dedication to harnessing technology and implementing innovative solutions will help drive HHS into the future. We look forward to him bringing his capable leadership to the outstanding team at HHS as we continue working to improve services, become the healthiest state in the nation and ensure we're meeting the health and well-being needs of all North Dakotans."

## NACAC-Helping Kids Survive and Thrive in Winter



North Dakota presents many challenges during the winter, but maintaining the mental health of ourselves and our family members in colder and darker days can be a challenge. The North American Council on Adoptable Children ran an article that we think is filled with good ideas.

Here are some excerpts from that article.

“Winter Blues-Because people with mood disorders, learning disabilities, and sensory processing issues are often highly sensitive to change and transitions, the decrease in daylight hours, colder weather, breaks in routine, and high emotions around the holidays can cause children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs), sensory processing disorder, depression, anxiety, and other challenges to face additional symptoms and obstacles.

For examples, as the days get colder, they also get shorter. This change in duration and intensity of sunlight can cause shifts in our internal clocks and increase melatonin production, creating a number of additional symptoms for children with certain disabilities, including:

- Changes in circadian rhythm, resulting in struggles to fall asleep or wake up and feelings of lethargy throughout the day
- Feelings of unhappiness, irritability, depression, and anxiety
- Tendencies to withdraw from social events and activities
- Struggles with motivation and productivity”

“Finding Solutions-

Engage in high sensory or high energy indoor activities. A lot of winter blues come from feeling stuck indoors and being unable to burn off energy. Despite the cold weather, you can still create opportunities for play, growth, and making connections such as:

- Having dance breaks throughout the day
- Creating scavenger hunts
- Building forts, setting up tents, and creating miniature cities inside
- Visiting indoor parks and gyms for swimming, trampolining, ice-skating, or other activities
- Doing winter chores together—for children who are able, work like shoveling snow or ice can help burn energy and calm down kids with ADHD or sensory processing issues
- Playing with snow in a sink or bath tub
- Planning a “beach day” where you wear summer gear indoors, play games, and make burgers and hot dogs
- Rearranging bedroom furniture or painting the walls
- Baking cookies

You can read more ideas from NCAC [here](#).

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## From the Archives: Mental Health Advocacy Network Podcast. Crisis Response System



In 2022 Mental Health Advocacy Network recorded nearly two hours of audio with the (then) Superintendent of the North Dakota State Hospital and Director of the North Dakota Human Service Centers, Dr. Rosalie Etherington about the mental health crisis response system. Because we wanted to record content that was at once understandable for the general public yet substantive enough to make each listener feel like an expert on the topic, we decided to separate them into two episodes.

By listening to episodes 2 and 3, you should be able to have a pretty good idea about:

- What are the definitions of serious mental illness (SMI) and serious emotional disturbance (SED)?
- What is a mental health crisis and what kind of a system should be in place to address a mental health crisis?
- Does North Dakota have a mental health crisis response system as defined by best practices?
- How well is North Dakota’s crisis response system serving each of our regions, and how does the existing crisis response system fare in meeting the needs of adults and/or children?

You can find the Youtube Links to Episodes 2 and 3 below:

[Episode 2: An Analysis of the ND Mental Health Crisis Response System \(Pt.1\)](#)

[Episode 3: An Analysis of the ND Mental Health Crisis Response System \(Pt.2\)](#)

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North Dakota Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health  
cmccleary@ndffcmh.com (Email)  
PO BOX 3061  
Bismarck, ND 58502

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