**Redefining Juvenile Justice for North Dakota Youth**

December 2, 2020 Webinar providing an overview of proposed changes to ND’s Juvenile Justice Laws – 67th Legislative Session

The webinar begins with background information from Lisa Bjergaard, Chair on the Commission of Juvenile Justice. Lisa details the process back to the 2017 Legislative Session and all the different stakeholder groups participating in what eventually became the work of the legislatively created Juvenile Justice Commission. The Commission has a strong desire to create meaningful legislation for juvenile justice in North Dakota and has presented a significant revision of laws relating to juvenile justice for North Dakota youth. The Uniform Juvenile Justice Act has not been updated since its adoption in 1969 and it does not reflect the changes in the fields of medicine, mental and behavioral health, education, etc. This legislation is an effort to fix gaps and encode appropriate authority into ND’s juvenile justice system.

The webinar continues with information from Karen Kringlie, Director of Juvenile Court – Unit 2, who gives an overview of the proposed changes. She explains the difference between CHIPs (Children in Need of Protection, what is currently legislated as deprivation) and CHINS (Children in Need of Services). She talks about the decriminalization of unruly behavior and how this legislation creates pathways for families to access services without a referral to juvenile court. The legislation also seeks to clarify rules and responsibilities, it requires more from human service zones and schools while limiting juvenile courts from taking delinquent type actions against nondelinquent children. Juvenile court will still handle cases of minors in consumption and minors in possession while other noncriminal cases will be diverted to services outside of juvenile court. The law also broadens a youth’s right to counsel.

Finally, the webinar concludes with Carlotta McCleary, Executive Director of NDFFCMH & NDMHA (ND Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health and Mental Health Association of ND), giving a discussion of what these potential changes could look like for ND youth and families. She relates these proposed changes to personal experience and professional experience by showing some of the effects of current juvenile justice laws and enforcement efforts and speculating how these proposed changes may provide needed recognition and service to youth who are in need of services, not criminal prosecution.