



HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, April 27, 2022
Roughrider Room, State Capitol
Bismarck, North Dakota

Senator Judy Lee, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Members present: Senators Judy Lee, Howard C. Anderson, Jr., JoNell A. Bakke, Kathy Hogan; Representatives Gretchen Dobervich, Clayton Fegley, Dwight Kiefert, Alisa Mitskog*, Karen M. Rohr, Matthew Ruby, Mark Sanford, Mary Schneider, Randy A. Schobinger, Kathy Skroch, Michelle Strinden, Greg Westlind

Members absent: Senators Jason G. Heitkamp, David Hogue

Others present: Representative Joshua A. Boschee*, Fargo, member of the Legislative Management
See [Appendix A](#) for additional persons present.

**Attended remotely*

STUDY OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER PROGRAMS

Ms. Jillian Salmon, Senior Consultant, and Ms. Erin Leveton, Director, Health and Human Services, Alvarez and Marsal Holdings, LLC, provided an update ([Appendix B](#)) on their study of developmental disability services and autism spectrum disorder programs in the state. They noted:

- Developmental disabilities stakeholders have been interviewed and Department of Human Services' services were reviewed.
- Medicaid data will be analyzed to understand the status of programs.
- Comparisons will be made to national trends to determine recommendations for program changes.

Ms. Mandy Dendy, Legal Assistant, Protection and Advocacy Project, provided comments to the committee regarding the study.

Mr. Bruce Murry, Director, North Dakota Association of Community Providers, provided comments to the committee regarding the study.

STUDY OF EMPLOYMENT RESTRICTIONS IN PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Ms. Jessica Thomasson, Director of Community Inclusion, Department of Human Services, presented information ([Appendix C](#)) regarding options to address the "benefit cliff" in public assistance programs. She noted:

- A "benefit cliff" occurs when an individual loses public assistance program benefits as a result of an increase in earnings.
- Options to address the "benefit cliff" include using state funds to replace federal benefit funds lost, adjusting eligibility guidelines to enable a worker to continue to receive benefits, and providing a slow phase-out of benefits received.

STUDY OF DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES AND HUMAN SERVICE ZONE EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION

Ms. Sara Stolt, Chief Operating Officer, and Ms. Kristen Hasbargan, Director, Human Service Zone Operations, Department of Human Services, presented information ([Appendix D](#)) regarding human service zone employee compensation. They noted:

- The department is obtaining outside consulting services to review equity discrepancies among human service zone employees.
- The results of the consultant's review of compensation needs will be available for the 2023 regular legislative session.

Ms. Kim Jacobson, Director, Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone, provided comments ([Appendix E](#)) regarding human service zone issues.

OTHER COMMITTEE DUTIES

Integration of the Department of Human Services and State Department of Health

Mr. Christopher D. Jones, Executive Director, Department of Human Services, presented an update ([Appendix F](#)) on the status of the integration of the Department of Human Services and the State Department of Health. He noted:

- The new organizational structure will include divisions for public health, medical services, behavioral health, human services, and administrative functions.
- The integration of the departments will become effective on September 1, 2022.

Medicaid Quality Report

Ms. Amber Huez, Medicaid Quality Manager, and Ms. Caprice Knapp, Medicaid Director, Department of Human Services, presented a report ([Appendix G](#)) pursuant to Senate Bill No. 2135 (2021) regarding the department's Medicaid quality strategy. They noted:

- The department's quality strategy is data-driven and utilizes various goals and aims to optimize performance.
- The department's strategy utilizes the following aims and goals:

Aim	Goals
Healthier populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve behavioral health for members • Improve outcomes for members with substance use disorders • Improve health for members with chronic conditions
Better outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance provider support • Ensure access to care
Better experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance member experience
Smarter spending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on paying for value

Federal Public Health Emergency

Ms. Knapp provided an update ([Appendix H](#)) on the federal COVID-19 public health emergency. She noted:

- States will be given a 60-day notice before the end of the public health emergency.
- Each state will be required to prepare a plan regarding how the state will transition back to normal Medicaid operations.
- Each state will need to identify all Medicaid recipients and redetermine recipient eligibility to continue in the program.

Domestic Violence Services

Ms. Erin Prochnow, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Cass Clay, presented information ([Appendix I](#)) regarding domestic violence services offered by the organization. She noted:

- 100 percent of female homicides in the state in 2020 were due to domestic violence.
- YWCA Cass Clay provides emergency shelter services for over 1,300 women and children each year.
- In 2021, 133 families received rental assistance through the organization to divert the families from homelessness.

Ms. Coiya Tompkins, Chief Executive Officer, Community Violence Intervention Center; Ms. Michelle Erickson, Executive Director, Abused Adult Resource Center; Mr. Christopher Johnson, Chief Executive Officer, Rape and Abuse Crisis Center; and Ms. Jill McDonald, Executive Director, Domestic Violence Crisis Center, presented information ([Appendix J](#)) regarding domestic violence services. They noted:

- The four largest domestic violence and sexual assault support agencies serve more than 7,000 survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.
- The total combined annual budget of the four largest domestic violence and sexual assault support agencies is approximately \$12.6 million. The budget includes state grants of approximately \$723,000 which is 6 percent of the total budget.
- The support agencies provide services under state-mandated laws relating to crime victim witness, supervised visitation and exchange, and domestic violence intervention.

Senator Hogan suggested the committee receive information regarding state funding provided for domestic violence services.

Mr. Andy Schneider, Sheriff, Grand Forks County, provided comments ([Appendix K](#)) regarding domestic violence services. He noted sheriff's deputies work closely with the Community Violence Intervention Center to provide assistance to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Mr. Mark Nelson, Chief, Grand Forks Police Department, provided comments ([Appendix L](#)) regarding domestic violence services. He noted police officers will assess the danger level of individuals harmed by domestic violence and can immediately connect victims to services provided by the Community Violence Intervention Center.

Ms. Haley Wamstad, State's Attorney, Grand Forks County, provided comments ([Appendix M](#)) regarding domestic violence services. She noted the Community Violence Intervention Center provided case information and support to 1,225 crime victims during 2021.

Early Childhood Services

Ms. Kay Larson, Director, Early Childhood Division, Department of Human Services, presented an update ([Appendix N](#)) on early childhood programs. She noted:

- The best in class program was authorized by the 2021 Legislative Assembly to provide quality early childhood experiences for children in the year before kindergarten.
- A total of 23 programs received funding during the 2021-22 school year and 2022-23 school year grants will be awarded in May 2022.

Refugee Resettlement Services

Ms. Holly Triska-Dally, State Refugee Coordinator, Department of Human Services, provided an update ([Appendix O](#)) on refugee resettlement services. She noted:

- The United States Department of State has authorized the settlement of 276 refugees and Afghanistan evacuees in the state during federal fiscal year 2022.
- Collaborations are being developed to enhance English language learning to maximize refugee participation in the workforce.

Permanent Supportive Housing

Ms. Heather Brandt, Manager, Community Based Behavioral Health Supports, Department of Human Services, provided an update ([Appendix P](#)) regarding permanent supportive housing services. She noted:

- Permanent supportive housing allows individuals to live in a private and secure place with access to supportive services needed to retain housing.
- House Bill No. 1012 (2021) directed the department to establish a funding methodology to distribute permanent supportive housing funding to eligible entities.
- An entity receiving permanent supportive housing funding must provide supportive services and report to the department regarding tenant outcomes.

Ms. Debra Johnson, Chief Executive Officer, Prairie Harvest Mental Health, provided comments ([Appendix Q](#)) regarding permanent supportive housing funding. She noted:

- Funding for permanent supportive housing was previously provided through contracts with human service centers.
- Housing agencies are now required to submit reimbursement requests for Medicaid-eligible expenses.

Home- and Community-Based Services

Ms. Nancy Nikolas Maier, Director, Aging Services Division, Department of Human Services, provided an update ([Appendix R](#)) regarding home- and community-based services. She noted:

- The state settled a lawsuit with the United States Department of Justice regarding access to home- and community-based services.
- The target population for providing services includes individuals over the age of 21 with physical disabilities and who are eligible to receive Medicaid long-term services and supports.
- There are several benchmarks, including the number of individuals diverted from being placed in a skilled nursing facility, used to determine if the state is increasing home- and community-based services.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Lisa Clute, Executive Officer, First District Health Unit, provided comments to the committee. She noted additional access to mental health and aging services supports is needed in rural areas of the state.

No further business appearing, Chairman Lee adjourned the meeting at 4:56 p.m.

Brady A. Larson
Assistant Legislative Budget Analyst and Auditor

ATTACH:18