



**HEALTH SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Monday, September 16, 2024  
 Roughrider Room, State Capitol  
 Bismarck, North Dakota

Senator Kristin Roers, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**Members present:** Senators Kristin Roers, Michelle Axtman, Jeff Barta, Judy Lee; Representatives Kathy Frelich, Dwight Kiefert, Carrie McLeod, Alisa Mitskog, Emily O'Brien, Robin Weisz

**Members absent:** Representatives Gretchen Dobervich, Todd Porter

**Others present:** Representative Eric James Murphy, Grand Forks  
 Laura Anderson, Kodi Pinks, Christopher Price, and Tim Wiedrich, Department of Health and Human Services; Chrystal Bartuska, Insurance Department; Judy Dettmer and Jill Ferrington, National Association of State Head Injury Administrators; Megan Houn, Blue Cross Blue Shield; Mark Johnston, Tyler Price, and Rebecca VandeKieft, Avel eCare; Rebecca Quinn, North Dakota Brain Injury Network; and Joshua Wynne, University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences  
 Beth Dittus and Austin Gunderson, Legislative Council  
 See [Appendix A](#) for additional persons present.

**It was moved by Senator Barta, seconded by Senator Axtman, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the March 18, 2024, meeting be approved as distributed.**

**STUDY OF BRAIN INJURY SERVICES**

Ms. Rebecca Quinn, North Dakota Brain Injury Network, and Ms. Judy Dettmer and Ms. Jill Ferrington, National Association of State Head Injury Administrators, presented information ([Appendix B](#)) regarding a study of brain injury services. They noted the following findings:

Area	Findings
Care and treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gaps exist in the continuum of care from acute care to community-based services and within other settings such as substance use programs and criminal legal systems.</li> </ul>
Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While there is infrastructure for brain injury resource facilitation, expansion of this support is needed.</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specifically identified underserved areas include the American Indian population, those engaged in the criminal legal system, and individuals from rural areas of the state.</li> </ul>
Behavioral health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a lack of brain injury informed providers as well as a lack of providers.</li> </ul>
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A lack of awareness of brain injury and eligibility requirements for special education services.</li> <li>A lack of supports for people with brain injury transitioning from high school to work or a different educational setting.</li> </ul>
Behavioral health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A lack of options for behavioral health supports for people with brain injury.</li> <li>A critical gap in housing which includes availability of and affordability of housing.</li> </ul>
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gaps in self-advocacy and caregiver advocacy skill training.</li> </ul>

## STUDY OF THE COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF NORTH DAKOTA

At the request of Chairman Roers, Mr. Brady A. Larson, Assistant Legislative Budget Analyst and Auditor, Legislative Council, distributed bill drafts relating to closing the Comprehensive Health Association of North Dakota (CHAND) [[25.0386.01000](#)] and relating to providing an appropriation to the Insurance Department to pay assessment costs of the CHAND program [[25.0387.01000](#)].

Ms. Chrystal Bartuska, Life and Health/Medicare Division Director, Insurance Department, reviewed the bill drafts and responded to committee questions.

Ms. Megan Houn, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota, provided comments regarding the bill draft to close the CHAND program. She suggested the bill draft be amended to provide that assessments for the CHAND program are charged based on actual claims rather than projected claims.

**It was moved by Senator Lee, seconded by Representative Mitskog, and carried on a roll call vote to amend the bill draft relating to closing the CHAND program to provide that assessments are based on actual claims and that the bill draft, as revised, be approved and recommended to the Legislative Management.** Senators Roers, Barta, and Lee and Representatives Frelich, Kiefert, McLeod, Mitskog, O'Brien, and Weisz voted "aye." No negative votes were cast.

## STUDY OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Ms. Beth Dittus, Counsel, Legislative Council, provided an overview of a bill draft [[25.0113.02000](#)] regarding distressed ambulance services.

Ms. PJ Ringdahl, Regional Advisor, North Dakota EMS Association, Mr. Tim Wiedrich, Health Response and Licensure Division, Department of Health and Human Services, and Mr. Christopher Price, EMS Director, Department of Health and Human Services, provided comments and responded to committee member questions regarding the bill draft and emergency medical services in the state.

**It was moved by Senator Lee, seconded by Senator Barta, and carried on a roll call vote that the bill draft relating to distressed ambulance services be approved and recommended to the Legislative Management.** Senators Roers, Barta, and Lee and Representatives Frelich, Kiefert, McLeod, Mitskog, O'Brien, and Weisz voted "aye." No negative votes were cast.

Mr. Mark Johnston, Ms. Rebecca VandeKieft, and Mr. Tyler Price, Avel eCare, provided an overview of emergency medical telemedicine. They noted:

- Emergency medical telemedicine can be used to assist emergency medical services providers and hospital emergency room staff.
- Behavioral health telemedicine is being provided in schools in the state.
- Telehealth psychiatric services are being provided in correctional facilities.

Chairman Roers distributed a bill draft [[25.0077.02000](#)] regarding liability protection for 988 and 211 hotline operators. She noted she is planning to sponsor the bill and it will not be a committee bill.

Mr. Austin Gunderson, Counsel, Legislative Council, responded to committee member questions regarding the bill draft.

## HYPERBARIC OXYGEN THERAPY

Dr. Joshua Wynne, Dean, University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, presented information ([Appendix C](#)) regarding hyperbaric oxygen therapy. He noted:

- Hyperbaric oxygen therapy delivers 100 percent oxygen in a pressurized chamber to treat wounds and medical conditions.
- Increased pressure in the chamber helps fight bacteria and stimulates the release of growth factors and stem cells, promoting tissue healing and new growth.
- The school is working with hospitals in the state to install hyperbaric oxygen chambers in the hospitals.

## FENTANYL DEATHS REPORT

Ms. Kodi Pinks, Unit Director, Surveillance and Data Management, Department of Health and Human Services, provided a report ([Appendix D](#)) regarding unintentional drug overdose deaths. She noted:

- The overdose death rate has increased from 0.98 per 10,000 individuals in 2019 to 1.44 per 10,000 individuals in 2022.
- On average, 2 residents of the state die each week from an unintentional drug overdose.
- Most individuals who have an unintentional overdose are under the age of 39.

Ms. Laura Anderson, Director, Behavioral Health Policy Division, Department of Health and Human Services, presented information ([Appendix E](#)) regarding efforts to expand statewide awareness of fentanyl drug overdose dangers. She noted:

- The Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee has hosted listening sessions to gather public input regarding efforts to reduce opioid misuse.
- There are four licensed opioid treatment programs in the state with 1,125 active participants.
- From October 2023 through July 2024 a total of 25,800 naloxone kits were distributed with 707 known successful overdose reversals using naloxone.

## OTHER BUSINESS

**It was moved by Representative Mitskog, seconded by Representative O'Brien, and carried on a voice vote that the Chairman and Legislative Council staff be requested to prepare a report and the bill drafts recommended by the committee and to present the report and recommended bill drafts to the Legislative Management.**

**It was moved by Representative Mitskog, seconded by Senator Barta, and carried on a voice vote that the committee be adjourned sine die.**

No further business appearing, Chairman Roers adjourned the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

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Brady A. Larson  
Assistant Legislative Budget Analyst and Auditor

ATTACH:5