

WELFARE REFORM STUDY RESPONSIBILITIES AND MAJOR ISSUES IDENTIFIED TO DATE

This memorandum provides a summary of the committee's study responsibilities regarding the monitoring of welfare reform in North Dakota and tribal welfare reform issues and major issues that have been identified to date as a result of the committee's study.

COMMITTEE STUDY RESPONSIBILITIES

Monitoring welfare reform implementation -

Section 31 of 1997 House Bill No. 1012 provides for the monitoring of North Dakota's welfare reform implementation efforts to determine the effectiveness of welfare reform.

Implementation of the temporary assistance for needy families (TANF) program study - Section 82 of 1997 House Bill No. 1226 provides for a Legislative Council study of the implementation of the TANF program that is to address the following issues:

- The simplification of all public work programs into a single system;
- Providing a work force preparation and placement program;
- Establishing performance-based outcome measures for all contractors;
- The caseload ratio established in North Dakota Century Code Section 50-09-20.1 (65 cases to one worker);
- The training and expertise of the managers administering the training, education, employment, and management (TEEM) programs; and
- The development of a tiered system of benefit support and incentives.

Federal waiver terminations - North Dakota Century Code Section 50-06-01.8, as amended by 1997 House Bill No. 1226, provides that subject to the approval of the Legislative Council, the Department of Human Services may terminate any waiver secured under this section if necessary or desirable for the statewide implementation of the TEEM program.

Responsibilities relating to the revised administration of the TANF program - North Dakota Century Code Section 50-09-29, as created by Section 76 of House Bill No. 1226, provides the requirements for the Department of Human Services administration of the TANF program and provides exceptions to the administrative requirements subject to the approval of the Legislative Council. Attached as an appendix is a copy of the related provisions of Section 76 of House Bill No. 1226.

State/tribal welfare reform issues - Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 4030 directs a study of welfare reform issues relating to the relationship of the state and Indian tribes within the state.

MAJOR ISSUES IDENTIFIED TO DATE

The major issues identified to date include:

1. The option under TANF for an Indian tribe to operate its own TANF program, the potential benefits to the state and the tribes of tribal TANF programs, the state's financial role in tribal TANF programs, and the impact of changes in the Balanced Budget Reconciliation Act of 1997 on tribal TANF programs.
2. The impact of tribal job training efforts on welfare reform.
3. The status of federal funding for an evaluation of the state's welfare reform efforts. A federal grant of \$25,000 was received for the design of an evaluation plan. The evaluation plan has not received federal funding.
4. The new welfare-to-work program in the Balanced Budget Reconciliation Act of 1997 which allows states to provide employment services to TANF recipients. The state's implementation and funding of matching costs need to be addressed.
5. The availability and affordability of adequate child care, "life skills" and job training, adequately compensated jobs, and transportation to assist in welfare reform efforts.
6. The Department of Human Services changes that may be necessary to the administration of the TANF program, including changes necessary to meet federal requirements.
7. The need to continue to monitor federal changes to the TANF program.
8. The status of the statewide implementation of the TEEM program.
9. The impact of the spring 1997 storms and flood on the availability of child care and the implementation of welfare reform efforts.
10. The status of changes to the RESPOND computer project relating to TANF/Medicaid program changes.
11. The role of the private sector in welfare reform.
12. The need to monitor clients after they exit assistance programs.