

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

Major issues identified to date include:

1. Tribal welfare issues

- a. An Indian tribe's option to operate its own TANF program;
- b. The potential related benefits and costs to the state and the tribes;
- c. The state's financial role in tribal TANF programs;
- d. The impact of changing tribal TANF caseloads, high reservation unemployment rates, and the need for client job skills; and
- e. The impact of tribal job training efforts and JOBS employment training contract issues.

2. TEEM implementation

- a. The status of the statewide implementation of TEEM;
- b. Actual work participation rates compared to rates required by federal legislation;
- c. Assistance caseload reductions and reasons for the changes;
- d. The need for adequate available child care, employment opportunities, transportation, life skills and employment training for clients;
- e. The role of the private sector;
- f. Related changes to the RESPOND computer system;
- g. The status of biennial expenditures as compared to appropriations for TANF and child care block grant programs;
- h. The potential need for administrative changes or federal waiver terminations, subject to approval by the Legislative Council; and
- i. The need to develop criteria for clients eligible for the 20 percent exception allowance to the 60-month lifetime benefit limit.

3. Evaluation efforts

- a. The status of a federally funded evaluation of the state's welfare reform effort;
- b. The focus of the evaluation on the implementation of TEEM and client progress in

- meeting established goals, including obtaining and sustaining employment; and
- c. The possibility of a tracking component included in the evaluation.
4. **Recently passed federal legislation**
- a. Receive information on the children's health insurance program (CHIP); the monitoring of this program has been assigned to the Insurance and Health Care Committee; and
 - b. Receive information on the welfare-to-work block grant program.

5. **Other areas**

- a. Receive reports from committee members on the Welfare Reform Task Force;
- b. Receive reports from committee members on the Child Support Committee; and
- c. Receive testimony from the Higher Education Welfare Task Force.

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