



North Dakota Hospital Association

Vision

The North Dakota Hospital Association will take an active leadership role in major Healthcare issues.

Mission

The North Dakota Hospital Association exists to advance the health status of persons served by the membership.

**Testimony before the Health and Human Services Committee
Regarding Mental Voucher Pilot Program
October 7, 2010**

Chairman Robin Weisz and Members of the Committee:

I am Jerry Jurena, President of the North Dakota Hospital Association (NDHA); I am here today in support of exploring the possibility of a Pilot Voucher Program to enhance the availability of Mental Health Services across our state.

Before accepting my position with NDHA I was the CEO of Heart of America Medical Center in Rugby, North Dakota for 15 years and I have been a rural Hospital Administrator in four states since 1979. During my years as a Hospital Administrator I have seen the growing need for Mental Health Services. In Rugby over the last 15 years we have struggled with how to access or find available medical professionals to meet the Mental Health needs of patients in our service area. What we found on numerous occasions was there was not a Mental Health Physician available for consultation or to accept the patient. Weekends were the most difficult times; staff spent hours making calls trying to obtain appropriate care; many times a temporary fix was the solution, minimal care and medication.

We need to develop a proposal and then a plan to alleviate the lack of Mental Health professionals available in all areas of the state. Doing nothing adds to the cost of providing Health Care by backing up other available services, the lack of available resources is consuming resources that would be better utilized with other patients not to mention the duplication of services provided to the same patient on a frequent basis as we were not able to address the needs the first time.

The problem is; there are not enough Mental Health Professionals available to meet the needs. We have to explore alternatives to address this issue. This is an issue that has come before the Legislative Committee of NDHA on several occasions. It is crucial that a solution be explored and developed. The lack of professionals providing Mental Health services is affecting all of the health care services.

Respectfully,

Jerry E. Jurena
President