

**Testimony
Health and Human Services Committee
Tuesday, March 23, 2010
Services for Pregnant Minors Study**

Chairman Weisz and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Shari Doe, I'm the Director of Burleigh County Social Services. Today I am representing the North Dakota Association of County Social Service Directors. I will discuss county services available to pregnant minors.

All economic assistance programs, SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program), Medicaid, TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) are available to pregnant minors. However, for most all cases, eligibility for the programs is based on the pregnant minor's parent's income. Rarely do we see a pregnant minor who is not living at home. However, for Medicaid, federal rules do allow us to look at the minor's income if she has lived apart from her parents and has not been dependant on their income for at least three months. This would be the case of a pregnant minor in foster care (foster children are categorically eligible for Medicaid). Using parent's income to determine Medicaid eligibility for pregnant minors can be problematic when the parent's income disqualifies them for Medicaid and the family does not have health insurance or the family's health insurance coverage does not include maternity benefits.

TANF eligibility for a pregnant minor is based on their parent's income (if the pregnant minor lives at home). However, once the baby is born, a minor parent living at home may apply for TANF for the child without regard to parent's (grandparent's) income.

Counties administer the Crossroads Program. Crossroads is a childcare assistance program to help assure minor parents finish high school. The only eligibility requirement for the Crossroads Program is that the parent remains in high school. Crossroads pays daycare costs while the minor parent is working towards a high school diploma. Crossroads also offers limited case management for young parents, with the goal of keeping the young parent in school. And though this program is used by minor parents

following the birth of their child, they often come in and apply for Crossroads prior to the birth of the child.

Some county social service agencies in North Dakota use Parent Aides to work with the pregnant minor. A parent aide can go into the home and assist the pregnant minor with all sorts of tasks from getting to and from prenatal care appointments to budgeting for baby's needs. Several counties have electronic (Baby Think it Over) dolls to use for parent education. In certain situations, counties can use Safety and Permanency funds to assist pregnant minors.

Other local services available to pregnant minors include WIC (Women Infants and Children) Supplemental Food Program; Health Tracks; Healthy Families, a home visiting program for pregnant and post partum minors and their infants available in Grand Forks, Nelson, Burleigh and Morton counties, and OPOP (Optimal Pregnancy Outcome Program).

Chairman Weisz that concludes my testimony. Thank you for the opportunity and I will answer any questions the committee may have.