

## TESTIMONY

Mr. Chairman, Committee members and friends. I am Bryan Quigley, Director of Mountrail County Social Services (MCSS). Mountrail County is the home of extensive oil development and has part of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation within its boundaries. Stanley is our county seat. Some will want to talk about collaboration, but when one is an "Indian County".....we as a social service agency have to live collaboration.

Mountrail County Social Services has a strong commitment to collaboration with the Three Affiliated Tribes (TAT) in the providing of services. Following are some examples of how we live collaboration:

1. Mountrail County Social Services (MCSS) provides outreach to the Parshall and New Town communities two times each month. Two eligibility workers spend two full days each month in the outreach offices taking applications, doing interviews, answering questions, etc. We have worked with TAT Social Services to assure these services are utilized. Eligibility workers have a very open working relationship with numerous tribal offices such as Tribal General Assistance, Fuel Assistance, Child Care Assistance, MinniTohe Health Service, Commodity Office, Child Support Office, Native Employment Works Office and Office of the Special Trustee.
  2. Jurisdiction issues are difficult to sort out. We have had cases where it takes weeks to sort out. When we receive a Child Abuse and Neglect report, the normal procedure is an immediate referral to TAT Social Services. If jurisdiction is in question, we involve the appropriate entity to get it figured out. The safety of the child is the primary issue, thus inaction on questionable jurisdiction cases is not an option. On cases with "mixed" jurisdiction, workers from the TAT and MCSS work together. In cases where jurisdiction is not known, we move forward doing the assessment and continue to research jurisdiction. MCSS has had cases that went both ways. In
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one case, the TAT Social Services had custody of a child for a number of months and once enrollment was sorted out the case was transferred immediately to MCSS, as the child was not enrollable. In another case MCSS completed the assessment, facilitated the removal and a few weeks later found that the child was enrollable. In both cases each entity responded and focused on the child/children. Dual jurisdiction Child Protective Services cases present a different dilemma as they require two social service agencies and often times, two court systems, to work together. The numbers of these types of cases are few but will likely increase over time.

3. MCSS has five licensed foster homes. TAT Social Services has utilized our homes for placement. The bottom line for MCSS is that the focus needs to be on the child and not protecting our turf.
  4. On the subject of foster care and child abuse and neglect there is an area that needs extensive collaboration. This area is funding! I can safely say every Tribal Social Service program in the state is underfunded and understaffed. Caseloads of 30 to 40 children (or more) per worker hurts children and families. A concerted effort needs to be made to fund the programs. One can argue the federal government and tribal government needs to step up to the plate. In the spirit of collaboration, each one of us in this room needs to play a role. The state and counties have historically abdicated any responsibility and instead indict the federal and tribal systems. The children and the families are the only ones paying a human cost for this abdication.
  5. MCSS collaborates with TAT, area churches, Camp of the Cross of Garrison and other entities to do a Dreamcatchers Servant Camp each year. This results in the renovation of two to five homes each year on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. MCSS works with contacts to identify homeowners/families that need home repairs completed. Camp of the Cross facilitates a week of camp where 20-30 youth and adults converge on homes in the New Town/Parshall communities.
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In the past five years, 26 houses have received major work/renovation at a nominal cost.

The question was asked about how counties include the Tribe in the budgeting process. This question can best be answered by making three key points:

1. Direct involvement in the development of the county social service budget is minimal. Our budget is published each year and public hearings are held before the finalization of the budget.
2. Indirectly, MCSS budgets to provide quality services. Our clientele in Economic Assistance programs is 75% to 80% Native American. We budget to meet the needs of our citizens.
3. Home and Community Based Service (HCBS) has an average caseload of 80 to 100 elderly or disabled individuals. In this program 50% to 60% of the clientele are Native American. The program reimburses QSP's to provide care. Some of the QSP's are family members and other times the individual requests the services offered via the county. MCSS has one full-time IHCS and four part time IHCS positions. Thus, we budget to provide the needed services to our elderly and disabled citizens.

I want to thank the committee for listening to the testimony provided. It is in the spirit of collaboration that I extend an invitation to each of you to become a member of your local Child Protection Team. Being part of that team will help you understand the need to live it, and not just talk about it.

Thank you for your time.

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