

**Testimony**  
**Health Services Committee**  
**Thursday, July 28, 2011**  
**North Dakota Department of Health**

Good afternoon Chairperson Lee and members of the Health Services Committee. My name is Arvy Smith, and I am the Deputy State Health Officer for the North Dakota Department of Health. I am here to provide information on the programs and services available to provide health care in rural areas of the state.

Contrary to what the general population might believe, the *state* Department of Health provides a very small amount of direct health care – defined as care of a patient provided personally by a staff member including treatment, counseling, self care, patient education, and medication administration (Mosby's Medical Dictionary, 8th edition. © 2009, Elsevier). Generally, the NDDoH provides population health – preventive systems and services to improve the health of the entire population – such as regulatory systems to ensure the population is breathing clean air, drinking clean water, and has access to quality health care and food and lodging establishments; surveillance and vaccine to control infectious diseases among the population; data to understand what is killing the population or making us ill; and education to encourage us to avoid behaviors that make us ill. The only exceptions are in our oral health program where a few temporary employees provide fluoride varnish and sealants to prevent tooth decay, in emergencies where we have established an emergency medical shelter and certain employees provide some of the direct care and where we provide supportive services such as laboratory analysis and coordination of care for children's special health services.

The services the NDDoH provides that are related to this study of health-care delivery in the state are enabling (funding) or supportive services such as the following:

- Funding for Ambulance Services Staffing and Training
- Funding for Medical Loan Repayment Programs
  - Dental New Practice Grants Century Code 43-28.1-10 \$5,000 annually for 5 years = \$25,000 (Funding allows 2 new grants per year)
  - Dental Loan Repayment Program Century Code 43-28.1 \$20,000 per year for 4 years = \$80,000 (Law allows 3 new dentists per year)
  - Physician Loan Repayment Program Century Code 43-17.2 Physicians @ \$22,500 annually for 2 years = \$45,000 (Funding allows 3 new physicians per year)

- Medical Personnel Loan Repayment Program Century Code 43-12.2 Originally, Health-Care Provider @ \$2,500 annually for 2 years. Law changed to increase to \$7,500 annually for 2 years = \$15,000 (Funding allows 3 new medical personnel per year)
- Funding for Primary Care Administration
  - National Health Service Corps funding to University of North Dakota, School of Medicine and Health Sciences Center for Rural Health for administration, recruitment and placement activities for physicians, nurses, dentists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and mental health professionals receiving scholarship and loan repayment grants
  - Funding provided to University of North Dakota, School of Medicine and Health Sciences Center for Rural Health to identify and designate health professional shortage areas
  - The J-1 Visa Waiver program provides a foreign medical school graduate, who has received advanced training and completed a residency program in the United States, a waiver to stay in the U.S. as an exchange visitor and serve in a designated workforce shortage area
- Vaccines Supplied by the Federal Government – federal vaccine is supplied to any enrolled health-care provider in the state, including local public health units.
- Funding for Maternal and Child Health – Contracts with 27 local public health units, four non-profit entities and two American Indian Reservations to provide direct health-care services including maternal care, well child checkups, newborn home visits, immunizations, oral health services, school health and genetic services.
- Funding for Family Planning Program – Contracts for reproductive health-care services for men and women at 18 locations throughout the state. This program gives preference to low-income, adolescent and women-in-need populations. Services include Pap smear, breast exam, testicular exam, basic infertility services, pregnancy planning, a broad range of birth control methods including abstinence, and STD and HIV testing and counseling.
- The Donated Dental Services grant – Provides oversight to dentists that provide essential dental care for disabled, elderly and medically compromised individuals who cannot afford care.
- Women Infants and Children (WIC) Program – Funding is provided to various WIC sites to provide supplemental food and nutritional counseling for low-income pregnant mothers and their infants up to age 5. They also conduct a nutrition assessment including height and weight measurements, blood work (for anemia screening only) and nutrition questionnaires.
- Local Public Health State Aid Grants – Provides flexible funding to local public health units, which coupled with local tax dollars, provide public health nursing services through home and office visits. Local public health

agencies are expected, and often required, to provide services and reach people that private and other governmental agencies fail to adequately address. They are also required by state law to provide services to North Dakota citizens regardless of ability to pay. Public health nursing office visits provide the following:

- Blood Pressure, Blood Sugar, Hemoglobin and Urinalysis Screenings
- Ear checks (infection, wax)
- Ear Irrigations
- Throat Cultures
- Tuberculosis Testing
- Lipid profile
- Foot care
- Immunizations
- Medication monitoring and setup
- Therapeutic procedures by doctor's order (i.e., dressing changes, suture removal, catheter care, etc.)

Public health home visits provide the following:

- High-risk infant follow up care
- Medication monitoring – medications are set up and nurses monitor compliance
- Assessments – blood pressures, weight monitoring, blood sugars
- Case Management and referrals to other services within the community

Public health nurses also serve as a resource for schools to provide health screening and education and limited nursing services, such as administering medication or treatments. Another important role is with communicable disease services including tuberculosis and skin and scalp conditions (such as impetigo or head lice).

- The Hospital Preparedness Grant provides funding to hospitals to purchase certain emergency room equipment to prepare them to respond to disasters.

Chairman Lee, members of the committee, this concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.