

**North Dakota Human Services Interim Committee
Qualified Service Provider Association of North Dakota
Testimony
August 2, 2011**

Hello, Chairman Wieland and members of the Human Services Interim Committee. Thank you for the time to speak. I promise to be brief. I am Chuck Stebbins, the Disability Resource Specialist for the ND Center for Persons with Disabilities (NDCPD) at Minot State University. I represent over 100 independent Qualified Services Providers (QSP's) across the state of North Dakota as part of the Qualified Service Provider Association of ND (QSPAND).

This past legislative session has proven to be a status quo one for independent QSP's as well as other human services providers across the state. "Human" services are part of North Dakota's infrastructure. They are not roads, curb cuts, oil or any other non tangible item. It is what it is "Human Services." During this legislative session, the QSPAND tried for an increase in wages and received an inflationary increase. That's good for just keeping up with the rising cost of everything else, but it does not address what independent QSP's are worth. QSPs are vital for helping people live in their own homes and communities. This translates into saving this state money by extending the time people are able to live in their homes rather than a nursing home. QSPs should be invested in and built upon; just as infrastructure is, not merely given an inflationary increase.

It was difficult to get an independent QSP to attend this meeting today to tell their story first hand, because they are working and most cannot find someone to fill in for them when opportunities like this come along. The QSPAND continues to work on that barrier of limited respite care by building the association across the state and particularly in rural communities.

I would like to encourage you to seriously look at ND's investment in QSP's through the upcoming interim study. The QSPAND can provide you with critical information you may need to make an informed decision on improving this vital service within the overall Home and Community Based Service (HCBS) system in ND. The QSPAND meets regularly; for your information I have included the most recent meeting summary that highlights some of the QSP's concerns.

Independent QSP's are the back bone of HCBS and are crucial to its success. Many elderly and people with disabilities are choosing to use HCBS and continue living in their homes for as long as possible rather than enter a nursing home. The increased choice of using HCBS is going to affect the availability of HCBS services. Increased funding for HCBS is vital to provide these necessary services. The cost of institutional care continues to go up and will continue to go up till it consumes more and more of the Department of Human Service's budget. In order to adequately provide HCBS to ND's elderly and people with disabilities, there needs to be a shift in how services are funding and prioritized. The infrastructure of HCBS is a good investment. I encourage the Human Services Committee, while studying the QSP system, to include in the study potential financial incentives to gather career minded people to provide this valuable and ever growing choice within HCBS.

I'm guessing that several of you in this room are baby boomers. I'm also betting that almost everyone in this room when given the choice when the time comes (and you know it will) will choose to live in their homes for as long as possible rather than enter a nursing home. QSPs will help you and other North Dakotans make this choice possible. Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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QSP Association of North Dakota (QSPAND)
Full Membership Meeting
Tuesday, June 28, 2011
Meeting Summary

Proposed Meeting Goals:

- To receive and discuss QSPAND reports and updates;
 - To discuss the needs and opportunities for QSP training;
 - To discuss, identify and outline the steps and activities necessary to ensure the sustainability of the QSPAND;
 - To identify and prioritize three goals that the membership can address and achieve before the end of the current year; and
 - To establish a future meeting schedule.
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Participants

Eleanor Messner, Margy Messner, Shirley Koslofsky, Janice Torgerson, Loretta Birdeno, Ramona Fraase, Ethel Grieger, Dana Lohnes, Frank Valente, Carole Lysne, Jack Warner, Fran Warner, Ryan Warner, Ashley Demarris, and Chuck Stebbins.

Facilitated by

The Consensus Council, Inc.

Welcome and Introductions

The participants were welcomed and a round of self-introductions was completed.

During the introductions, it was noted that this was the first meeting that the majority of participants have attended. The fact supported the need for the review of the Association's history and status included later on the agenda.

Additionally, several staff members of the Treasured Elders program (a reservation-based QSP recruitment, training and support initiative) were present. Dana Lohnes, Carole Lysne and Ashley Demarris provided the participants with an overview and description of that program.

Consensus-Based Decision-Making Process and Ground Rules

The consensus-based decision-making process and previously adopted ground rules were reviewed and affirmed by the participants.

Proposed Meeting Agenda and Meeting Materials

The participants accepted the proposed Meeting agenda and related meeting materials as presented.

December 2, 2010 Draft Meeting Summary

The Decembers 2, 2010 Meeting Summary (draft) was accepted without change or correction.

QSPAND Reports and Updates

QSPAND - History and Background

Chuck Stebbins provided the participants with an overview of the Association, its purpose and mission, its accomplishments, its organizational structure pointing out the following:

- The QSPAND began as a grassroots effort supported by the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) and is intended to provide a “voice” for QSPs;
- Current membership of the QSPAND is just over 100;
- There are no dues required for membership;
- The application for membership is very simple (on page);
- Membership is restricted to “non” agency QSPs;
- The QSPAND website (www.qspand.org) is in the process of update and revision, but contains background information regarding the Association (including summaries of previous meetings);
- The Association is governed by the Full Membership with a volunteer Steering Committee providing support activities between meetings (anyone interested in serving on this committee should contact Chuck Stebbins);
- The Association currently functions as a “loose association” – the paperwork for filing as a non-profit organization is currently on hold pending contact with MIG staff to move the process forward. The MIG program has agreed to pay the necessary filing expenses and one-year of the premium costs for board liability insurance;
- A 20-minute informational video (funded through the Money Follows the Person Grant and featuring several QSPAND members) is nearing completion. Chuck Stebbins will provide DVD copies to members upon request (it was also suggested that it be posted or “linked” on the QSPAND website).

2011 Legislative Session Update

Chuck Stebbins told the participants that the state’s 2011 legislative session could best be described as “fruitless” regarding QSP issues and concerns.

Although the QSPAND had developed a legislative platform and efforts were made to provide information directly to individual legislators and to broader groups including committee testimony, the efforts to effect a pay raise and better compensation for travel/mileage did not attract the interests of legislators in either house. QSPs did receive (consistent with other state employees) a cost of living increase that will take effect on July 1, 2011.

Mr. Stebbins stressed, and the participants agreed, that efforts to positively impact the legislature regarding QSP concerns and issues must be vigorous, ongoing, and organized. He suggested that the Association be actively involved in efforts during the interim. These efforts would include specifically identifying areas of QSP interest and priority (a clear legislative platform), contacts with legislators in all districts and areas of the state stressing these priority issues, and a calendar and plan to engage the governor, the Department of Human Services, and county officials. Policymakers and the general public must be informed and educated about “what QSPs are” and “what QSPs do,” along with

the issues and concerns that affect them and the services they provide. It was also noted that the focus of this effort is the provision of quality home-based services by qualified professionals who are adequately trained, supported and compensated.

QSP Training Needs and Opportunities

The Association members present were asked to discuss and identify their most important training needs and they developed the following list:

- **Billings** – QSPs have ongoing issues and problems completing and submitting their billings. Additional training and support would enhance their ability to complete these forms correctly and time efficiencies for them and state staff would be improved.
- **Appropriate/Correct Documentation** – QSPs receive very little training and support regarding documentation practices and requirements. Training and support in this area would improve their efficiency, help them to organize their work more effectively, gain a better understanding of the process, and may have a significant effect upon the workload of state workers as they process the related documentation.
- **Timely Payments** – Payments provided to QSPs through the state billing system are often delayed. This is caused by a number of factors and additional training and support provided to QSPs on their billings and documentation processes may be significant in resolving some of these problems.
- **Understanding the QSP Authorization** – The individual authorization is the key component to the documentation and billing process. As such, QSPs would likely benefit from training and support in understanding this critical piece of the process and its pivotal relationship to services, documentation, billing and payments.
- **Self-employment Issues and Understanding** – The majority of QSPs are self-employed. This requires that they not only possess and maintain the skills necessary to provide quality, professional services to their consumers, but they must have the knowledge and ability necessary to operate as an independent businessperson – a set of skills that many of them need to develop. Training and support in this area is needed to help them function appropriately and legally within the system.
- **Practical Experience (shadowing/mentoring)** – QSPs are required to be appropriately trained and certified before they are qualified to provide direct services to consumers. However, in many situations, as is the case in most professions, the best way to improve their skills and gain new ones is through practical experience. QSPs would benefit from the opportunity to shadow experienced QSPs or to have an experienced QSP mentor available to them.
- **Continuing Education** – QSPs are required to meet basic skills training and performance levels to be certified. Following the initial certification, they must be re-certified through an established process on an annual basis. While this provides a sound foundational basis for their work, QSPs are interested in and would benefit by opportunities to expand their knowledge and professional capabilities through a continuing education process.

Participants were asked to identify the training options and opportunities that are currently available to them. The following list is the result of their discussions:

- Certified Nurse Assistant (CAN) Training;
- Books and Other Informational Literature;
- Next Steps Training/Curriculum (reservation-based);
- General Opportunities (direct and indirect – including conferences, association meetings – Alzheimer’s Association, AARP, ND Elder Caregivers Program, The Family Caregivers Program, etc.)
- Internet Training Opportunities and Programs (North Dakota State University and Veterans Administration websites)
- Lake Region State College (Devils Lake) – for initial training and recertification only – requires a referral by the QSPs county case manager

QSPAND Sustainability – Issues and Plans – The Future

The past role of the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) in the history and development of the QSPAND was discussed. Participants were told that the financial and staff support for the organization from MIG will end with their grant. Although there is a possibility of a limited extension, the grant itself is scheduled to end on December 31, 2011.

The participants discussed a number of options and concerns and agreed on the following:

- The QSPAND is an important organization that provides its membership and the QSP profession with a voice in development and provision of quality in-home services. As such, the Association will continue as a “stand alone” entity with its membership open to all QSPs who are not affiliated with agency providers.
- The Association chooses to become a legal entity and wishes to pursue the filing of the paperwork/application for 501(c)(3)/non-profit status. As a legal entity it will be able to apply for, receive, and administer grants. As a part of this the Association chooses to
 - Confer and collaborate with Chris Burd (Treasured Elders Program) to determine what grants and other funding opportunities may be available.
 - Work with and through the MIG staff to complete and file the application and necessary forms for non-profit status (work on this is still pending and the MIG has committed to supplying the funds to cover the costs of the filing fees and the first year’s premium on board of directors insurance).
- Development of an expanded membership and active participation of members is recognized as a significant factor in sustaining the Association and will have to be addressed.

Identification of 3 Goals to Address and Accomplish by December 31, 2011

The participants identified the following goals and their attendant activities as priorities to be addressed and achieved prior to December 31, 2011.

Goal I. Sustainability:

“The QSPAND is a significant organization that provides its membership and the QSP profession

with a voice in development and provision of quality in-home services. As such, the Association will continue as a “stand alone” entity with its membership open to all QSPs who are not affiliated with agency providers.”

- See “QSPAND Sustainability – Issues and Plan – The Future” section above.

Goal II. Legislative Agenda:

Efforts to positively impact the legislative processes must be active, ongoing, and organized and include an energetic program during the interim. These efforts should specifically identify areas of interest and priority (a clear legislative platform), promote contacts with legislators in all districts and areas of the state stressing the Association’s priority issues, and develop and implement a calendar and process to engage the governor, the Department of Human Services, and county officials. Policymakers and the general public should be informed and educated about what QSPs are, what they do, and the issues and concerns that affect QSPs and the services they provide.

- Establish a QSPAND Legislative Committee (Chuck Stebbins, Eleanor Messner and Carmel Hettich) to develop, implement and monitor an organized, coordinated legislative strategy with a work plan and synchronized calendar.
- Survey the QSPAND membership to identify and prioritize issues and concerns.
- Engage legislators (panel presentation at a QSP Full Membership meeting) regarding the legislative process and QSP issues.
- Preview, approve and distribute the QSP video.
- Develop an education/information/marketing plan (coordinated with Goal #3) to tell the story of QSP services and needs.
- Identify and stress specific cost savings and efficiencies related to a comparison of QSP Services and In-Home Placements vs. Nursing Home Placements (including the personal and emotional benefits to consumers).

Goal III. Membership:

Development of an expanded membership and active participation of members is a critical and significant factor in sustaining the Association.

- Establish a Membership Committee to plan, initiate and coordinate efforts.
- Develop a Broad based marketing plan that includes a review of existing materials, the development of any needed materials (possibly to include a QSPAND logo), the incorporation of the QSP video and website and integration of these efforts with those of the Legislative Strategy Committee.
- Update the list of QSPs (to include family providers) and utilize it as a tool to identify and approach potential members (access to this list will be shared with all current members for their use in approaching potential members – Carole Lysne will provide members assistance in accessing this material).
- Develop and distribute a recruitment mail out or Internet package.
- Re-initiation of the QSPAND newsletter and contact groups and organizations with shared missions to have informational material and “links” added to their newsletters and websites.

- Share and distribute information about QSPs and the Association through conferences, trade shows, hospitals, clinics, Indian Health Services Clinics, Veterans Administration Clinics throughout the state.
- Ask members to assist in recruiting in any way possible including bringing a friend to a meeting.
- Develop and provide member only training that will attract non-members and enhance the value of QSPAND participation.

Future Meeting Schedule

Steering Committee Meeting

Chuck Stebbins will schedule a Steering Committee conference call (to include Chris Burd) in the next several weeks. Steering Committee members will be polled and notified.

Full Membership Meeting

The next meeting of the Full Membership will be Tuesday, August 23, 2011.

10:30 to 3:30 Central Time

Carrington, ND

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by group consensus.

Purpose of QSPAND

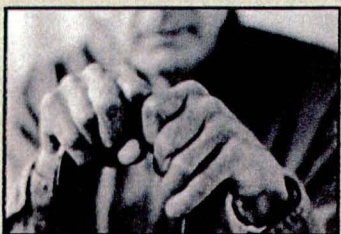
The services provided by an independent qualified service provider (QSP), are extremely important to the individuals served. QSP professionalism and personal growth are important as well. Now more than ever QSPs need the support from peers. That is why efforts are underway to establish a network of independent QSPs. This network is called QSPAND, or Qualified Service Provider Association of North Dakota.

Philosophy Statement

QSPAND endorses a collaborative approach and supports a model of client-centered services, based on consumer choice in the least restrictive environment possible.

Mission

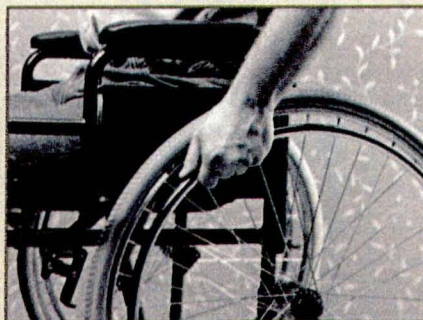
QSPAND will provide a network of mutual support while improving the quality of QSP services and enhancing the role of the QSP.



Benefits of joining QSPAND

Membership in the QSPAND is made up of independently contracted ND QSPs (persons utilizing their own billing number for services they have provided).

- A unified voice and place at the table with policy makers (legislators and government officials) to discuss and address issues related to QSPs (standards, salaries, benefits, etc.);
- Public recognition of the role and responsibilities of the QSP—become an identified, credible member of the continuum of care;
- A network of mutual support for QSPs;
- Improved and expanded continuing training and educational opportunities;
- Improved opportunities for respite care; and
- Develop and provide opportunities for QSPs to receive training and improve skills.



Critical Issues

QSPAND will work to educate legislators and policymakers regarding issues that are critical to improving the work of QSPs. Some of these issues include:

- Improve continuing education opportunities.
- Secure appropriate travel reimbursement.
- Study and improve the efficiency of the current paperwork/reporting & billing/payment system.
- Increase referrals to QSP services by improving communication with individuals and family members.
- Monitor and address rate of pay, benefits, and cost of living needs for QSPs including equalize rate and compensation disparities.



Available in Alternative Formats

QSPAND Membership Form

- ☐ Yes, I want to become a member of the QSPAND. *I am currently an individual QSP with a QSP number.*
(No membership fee.)

Name (Mr./Mrs./Ms.)

Mailing Address

Phone

Email

Mail, fax or email this form or for more information please contact:

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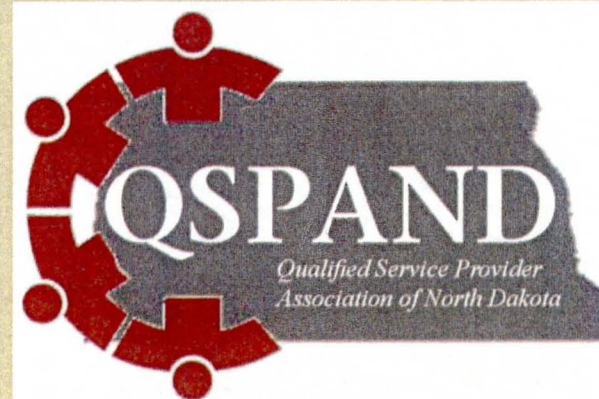
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**Qualified Service Provider Association
of North Dakota**



**For more information visit our
website at:**

www.qspand.org