

Testimony
Human Services Committee
Representative Wieland, Chairman
January 17, 2012

Chairman Wieland, members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Doug Wegh and I am a County Social Service Director from Golden Valley/Billings and Hettinger Counties and an HCBS case manager. At the October 25th 2011 meeting of this committee, Marie Thompson, a case manager with Burleigh County Social Services provided comments regarding the Qualified Service Provider system. Her comments asked that the committee consider a rate increase for QSP's that work nights and weekends, and for those QSP's that travel to rural areas.

County Home and Community Based Case managers work diligently to keep our Elderly and Disabled individuals who want to remain in their own homes, safely there. Frequently those needs can be met by QSP's working in their client's homes during regular hours, Monday through Friday, but occasionally staff are needed nights and weekends. For some of us case managers, it is difficult to find a Qualified Service Provider to work during the week, much less a weekend. In the counties of Golden Valley and Billings, the County Social Service Board provides Inhome care services as a Qualified Service Provider. In 2011, I advertised for months before I was able to fill a vacant Inhome care position. There were no applicants for my part time position and there is only two other QSP's(1 agency and 1 individual) in Golden Valley County. I'm not aware of the agency provider having any staff in Golden Valley County. My staff at that office and I asked numerous individuals before one applied. There had been discussion about bringing in another County's inhome care staff to assist. Those additional costs would have been absorbed by Golden Valley/Billings County. At this point, Golden Valley/Billings County Social Services could not provide services on a regular basis to someone who also needed weekends and evenings. Other small counties have told me that if their agency quit hiring staff to go into people's homes, as homemakers and personal care attendants, they would have residents that wouldn't get services.

I have visited with my peers in larger counties and they struggle as well with finding QSP's. Several of the larger counties no longer have their own inhome care staff and look to the agency and individual QSP's in their county. In Cass County, I have been told that there are 134 QSP's(both agency and individual), but yet it can be challenging for them to find someone who

will service a client in Kindred, Enderlin, Tower City, Leonard, Hunter, and Alice. In Burleigh County, they have 65 QSP's(Agency and individual) on their list. They too, question if they will find a provider that will accept clients in Wilton, Wing, Baldwin or Reagan. Ward County has 49 QSP's(agency and individuals). They have rural communities, like Kenmare, Burlington, and Surrey. I have been told that Ward County has 159 clients on the Home and Community Based Services Programs with only 2 being served in the rural areas.

Case workers across the state have heard that some QSP's won't accept clients outside of the city limits. Others have heard that Agency QSP's will accept clients in the rural areas if they have existing staff there or if they can hire staff there.

I would ask that this committee consider some type of mileage reimbursement for those providers willing to venture outside of the city limits to provide services. Elderly and Disabled individuals of this state should be able to remain living in our rural areas and be able to receive services. I applaud this committee for tackling the issue of Qualified Service Providers and hope that there is some solutions for our rural areas. I look forward to your final report.

Thank you for your time. I am willing to answer any questions that you may have.