



North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities

Chairman Wieland & Members of the Human Services Interim Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide information regarding the North Dakota ASD Task Force recommendations.

I am Lori Garnes from Minot State University, North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities (NDCPD). I have a Ph.D. in special education and am an associate professor in the Department of Special Education. I have been an observer of the process used by the ND ASD Task Force as they prepared recommendations for services in North Dakota.

NDCPD is a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). There is at least one UCEDD in every state and North Dakota's center for excellence is at Minot State University. The center's mission is: To provide service, education, and research which empowers communities to welcome, value and support the well-being and quality of life for people of all ages and abilities.

In fulfilling our mission, NDCPD applied for and received a series of grants and contracts related to improving services for persons with ASD. As a university, we have a unique ability to research and identify best practices in the ASD field and the ability to communicate that information to various consumers.

These grants and contracts are not meant to be an ongoing provision of services for the ASD community. Rather, the purpose of these grants is to assist the state to build the infrastructure for services so that when the grants end, the state is in a position to carry on the provision of services. Our current grant is Supporting Autism in North Dakota (SAND) which is a State Implementation Grant for Improving Services for Children and Youth with ASD awarded through the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

The ND ASD Task Force has met numerous times to discuss, plan and share information about ASD services in North Dakota. The Task Force has completed research and conducted surveys, including input from families and providers, to

aid in its deliberations. The Task Force has thoughtfully put together recommendations as requested by the Human Services Interim Committee.

I am not a member of the ASD Task Force, nor is any member of NDCPD's SAND project. To be sure to provide full disclosure, Dr. Darren Dobrinski is a member of the task force and also a faculty member of the Minot State University Department of Psychology. He does not work on the SAND grant, but has participated in assessing children in the state to determine if they have an ASD.

My role with the task force has been to educate and support its deliberations. I am a special education expert and have been called upon to provide technical assistance and help Task Force members understand established best practices in the field.

I assert that the Task Force compiled a comprehensive plan for the state to improvement services for persons with ASD. It may not be possible to implement all of the task force recommendations in one step but I encourage you to:

1. Use the ND ASD Task Force recommendations as a template for how to provide research-based, best practice services to people with ASD and their families. If the plan is not implemented in one step, please consider a longer term plan to eventually roll out all of the recommendations.
2. Provide for the personnel that will be needed for the coordination and implementation of the plan. Currently, the SAND grant funds three staff positions and a secretary. These positions will be gone once the SAND grant is completed in August 2014. The Task Force's request to fund one director and support person is reasonable.

While other suggestions have been presented to you, it is my opinion that the Task Force plan is 1) comprehensive, 2) based on input from all constituents, 3) includes researched best practices in the field, and 4) likely to make a substantive improvement in services for persons with ASD. This is an opportunity for you to make a life-changing decision.

Thank you for your consideration. I will be happy to answer any questions.