

**Testimony**  
**Long-Term Care Committee**  
**Study for the Feasibility & Desirability of Establishing a**  
**Transition to Independence Program for Young Adults with**  
**Mental Illness**  
**Senator Dever, Chairman**  
**September 18, 2008**

Senator Dever and members of the Long-Term Care Committee, I am Wanda Bye, Assistant Director for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), North Dakota Department of Human Services. I am here to provide information to the Long-Term Care Committee regarding Transition Services provided through Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Human Services. There will be additional information provided by Susan Wagner, Human Services Program Administrator, Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse.

During my testimony in March 2008, I shared with you some information on the North Dakota Transition Steering Council. The information I am sharing with you today will be the progress made since that time. As recent as yesterday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, the Transition Steering Council met. During this meeting JoAnne Cashman, Director of the IDEA Partnership, NASDSE (National Association of Directors of Special Education), was present to assist in evaluating the North Dakota program and provide technical assistance in potential areas of need.

Through the cooperative efforts of the Department of Human Services, Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and many partners, we have developed the Transition Community of Practice (COP) Advisory Council. The [COP organizational chart](#) is provided to you today. I have provided you this information to identify the partners presently

involved in this process. A couple of the areas that I would like to bring to your attention: 1) The Community of Practice Eight Regional Transition Committees have been in place in each of the eight Human Service Center regions the past 3 years. There were members present at yesterday's state meeting from all 8 regions in addition to the partners listed. As a follow up to this meeting we will be going out to each of the regions during the next 6 months to provide technical assistance as needed in response to yesterday's discussion. 2) The Youth Advisory Council has recently been established through the Mental Health and Substance Abuse program. Susan Wagner will be providing you further information on this project. In addition, Vocational Rehabilitation will be funding a Youth Leadership Forum next summer, July 27-August 1, 2009. Training will be provided for 20 youth with disabilities to be better advocate for themselves. Freedom Independent Living Center, in Fargo, will coordinate the training event which will be held in Grand Forks.

Senator Dever and members of the committee, the last time I provided testimony, May 2008, I had recently returned from a Community of Practice Transition Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina. There was a team of four from North Dakota who participated in the conference: Gerry Teevens, Department of Public Instruction, Laurie Skadsem, Anne Carlsen School and Revel Sapa, Options Independent Living Center and parent of a young adult with a disability. I agreed to return and provide you information on additional strategies identified to keep the North Dakota Transition program moving forward. All activities are identified with an agency, person responsible and timeframe. Following are the strategies that have been identified for our 2008-2009 state plan:

## **Interagency collaboration**

- 1) Evaluate the function and membership of the State Transition Steering Council. (Process started September 17, 2008)
- 2) Bring Regional Transition Committee chairs to a planning meeting. (Process started September 17, 2008)
- 3) State VR and State DPI representatives will travel to regional transition committee meetings and follow-up on goals of the committees. Technical assistance will be provided as needed. (September 2008 to March 2009)
- 4) Organize agency participation in developing best practices in assessment needs for post secondary students.
- 5) Continue to provide seed grants to each regional transition committee to assist with projects related to their goals and priorities.
- 6) Compile data from VR "Summer Youth Job Coaching Pilot Projects" to determine potential for further projects. (Due October 1, 2008)
- 7) Compile data from the VR sponsored "Transition Camp" to determine potential for further projects. (Due October 1, 2008)

## **Professional Development and Technical Assistance:**

- 1) Sponsor Pre-conference training for educators at the VR/DPI state transition conference. (October 28, 29 & 30, 2008)
- 2) Continue work toward development of a youth advisory board. (group is active through Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse)

- 3) Continue technical assistance and training on transition requirements.

**Family training/empowerment:**

- 1) Begin local practice group on actively engaging parents in the transition process. (Pilot project is being proposed)
- 2) Educate parents at conferences and training activities such as: "Transition Fairs", webcasts, individual education plan (IEP) meetings regarding transition process and adult agency services.
- 3) State VR continue to develop working relationships with parent advocacy groups. (Enhancing services at the regional and state level)
- 4) Promote a "transition multi-agency information" strand for parents at the annual parent conference in North Dakota.

Susan Wagner will be providing additional information. I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or any time during your continued study of services.