

**Testimony before the Health and Human Services Committee  
Services for Pregnant Minors Study  
November 18, 2009**

Chairman Weisz and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Delores Friedt, Coordinator of Birth and Adoptive Family Services for the Department of Human Services (DHS). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the study resolution regarding services for pregnant minors.

The Department and specifically the Children and Family Services (CFS) Division provide funding and supervision for several child welfare programs administered by the counties in the state that serve children and families, including pregnant minors. These programs include child protection services, temporary care including foster care and shelter care for children (once the child is born the child can be placed in the same foster home as the mother, if appropriate) and family preservation services. The services such as individual and family therapy provided at the Human Service Centers in all eight regions of the state are also available to pregnant minors.

The Department coordinates services to pregnant women including minors as mandated by NDCC 50-06. In 1987, the legislature authorized expenditure of funds for services for single parents; in 1988 the CFS Division developed and initiated the Crossroads Program. The Crossroads Program is for young parents who are age 20 years or under and are the primary caretaker of their child. They must also be pursuing their high school diploma, through either regular curriculum, alternative high school placement or a GED program and are attending school on a regular basis. This program allows for the payment of the actual cost of child care up to a maximum monthly amount that is determined by the Child Care

Assistance Program which is administered through the Public Assistance Unit of the Economic Assistance Policy Division of the DHS. This program continues to be instrumental in assisting minors with children in working toward and achieving their goal of obtaining their high school diploma.

Crossroads program applicants are referred to their individual county social services offices by school personnel, guidance counselors and other professionals serving minors to apply for the program. The county social service staff assigned to the Crossroads Program (typically a social worker) will meet with the student to explain the program and complete the application. Once the application has been completed, the county worker will submit the application to the CFS. It is then processed and a letter approving the application is sent to the county. The county processes the monthly billing forms and child care payments are made based on the type of child care program the child is in. This can include a licensed day care center or group facility, family day care, a self declared provider or relative care. The county worker and school personnel involved with the student are also sent evaluation forms to complete for each semester the minor is enrolled in school to assess how the program is perceived by the minor and how the program has assisted the student to remain in school. The county worker is also instrumental in assessing any other needs that the student or their family may need and can assist with obtaining services to meet those needs.

Since the program's inception in 1988, the number of individuals served by the program has been as high as 121 applicants during the 1997-98 school year to 47 applicants in the 2004-05 school year. The current trend indicates between 50 and 60 applicants the past few years.

I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.