

Long-Term Care Committee
Senator Dever, Chairman
Tuesday, May 20, 2008

Chairman Dever and members of the Long-Term Care Committee, I am Wanda Bye, Director of Field Services for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Department of Human Services (DHS). I appreciate the opportunity to appear before this committee. I am here to provide you with a brief update as to national activities for transitional youth.

As previously provided in testimony, VR Transition Services aim to help remove or minimize existing barriers to employment for eligible youth. A stronger focus on transition-age services is occurring at the federal, regional, and state level. I co-chair the North Dakota State Transition Steering Council, along with Gerri Teevens of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The steering council is expanding its membership to include other stakeholders concerned with transitional youth.

Gerri and I recently participated in the 5th Transition Community of Practice Meeting with members from 11 other states and several national organizations. I will provide you today with information as to that group's efforts and focus, as well as summer transition projects in North Dakota.

The Community of Practice model includes an interagency state team as well as regional/local teams. North Dakota shared information regarding the regional communities of practice that have been put in place in ND; projects supported through collaboration of DPI and VR; and the transition training module created for General Education teachers.

North Dakota's plan to strengthen our services includes:

- Organization of a youth leadership network;
- Including a national representative in our state meeting; and,
- Beginning a practice group on actively engaging parents.

The VR Division has set aside funding for regional transition projects. Recently, the opportunity to apply for special program grants was made available to stakeholders, resulting in additional transition projects that will be implemented in North Dakota this summer. These will include:

- Minot (Dakota Boys & Girls Ranch)
- Devils Lake (Four Winds School District)
- Fargo (School District)
- Bismarck (Hit Inc. working with School District)
- We are also providing \$15,000 for a one week transition camp at Camp Grassik in August

These will be evaluated at the end of the summer to see if it is something we may try expanding next summer. These projects were offered to all Schools (34 special education districts) all 8 regional transition committees. Student focus was for students entering their senior year next fall and eligible or referred to VR.

I will be available to present more complete testimony at your June meeting regarding North Dakota's state plan for transition services. That concludes my testimony today; I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.