

**Budget Committee on Human Services
Human Service Center Study
Senator Dever, Chairman
July 11, 2006**

Chairman Dever and members of the Budget Committee on Human Services, I am Tim Sauter, Regional Director of the West Central Human Service Center. I am here today to provide you with an overview of the West Central Human Service Center (WCHSC).

The West Central Human Service Center provides a variety of services to residents of the following ten North Dakota counties: Burleigh, Emmons, Grant, Kidder, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan, and Sioux.

The presentations you will hear today will focus primarily on the Human Service Center reporting format developed by the Legislative Council.

I will be presenting trends, concerns and budget data related to the West Central regional area.

During this past year we have seen an increase of 7% in demand for services. This includes mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability services. In the area of services to persons with developmental disabilities, we have seen a significant growth in clients served. In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2001 we served 774 individuals, and in SFY 2005 we served 942. Of that group, we served 128 individuals under the age of three in SFY 2001, and 253 in SFY 2005. Vocational Rehabilitation has seen an increase in persons with severe disabilities.

While alcohol continues to be our number one drug problem, we are seeing increases in clients coming to us with problems with methamphetamine and

prescription drugs. Poly-substance abuse and dependence coupled with co-occurring mental health issues, and legal problems creates an increasing challenge. Sixty percent of the individuals served in our adult addiction program are referred by probation and parole, with many others being referred directly by the courts. We are seeing an increasing demand for pre-sentence evaluations, also. West Central is the treatment provider of adult drug court and is the primary provider for juvenile drug court in Bismarck.

Until recently WCHSC has been fortunate in that we had little difficulty filling vacant addiction counselor positions. However, since April of 2006, we have had three addiction counselors retire, with two of those positions still vacant, and no applicants responding to our job announcement. This puts additional stress on our existing staff. It has increased our wait time for adults seeking services, and we have temporarily suspended some programs.

We continue to have a minimal number of residents from Region VII enter our two institutions. We are able to do this because of the broad array of services available in the Region, and the partnerships we have developed with other providers and the advocacy groups.

Despite this, there have been gaps in services the past two years. We have been unable to secure a provider for safe beds for children, and for short-term residential services for adolescents receiving substance abuse treatment. We are currently negotiating with an agency to provide these services. As we prepare our 2007 – 2009 budget request, we will be considering additional funding needed for the residential services for adolescents. Additionally, we have been without a child psychiatry specialist. Child psychiatry has been an identified need across the state. To meet this need, we are negotiating with a nurse practitioner that has a specialty working with children.

While we continue to face a variety of challenges in providing services to the residents of Region VII, staff continue to demonstrate their dedication to the people we serve. The majority of staff working at West Central Human Service Center have an average of ten years experience or more. The majority of clinical staff have an advanced degree or license. Our employee retention rate for 2005 was 90.88%. I believe their commitment to our mission, the relationships they have established with the people they serve and with their co-workers, along with our employee benefit package are primary contributors to our ability to retain staff. The other Regional Directors have presented testimony about the need for staff salaries to be more competitive. Region VII is no different than the other regions. We have difficulty competing with the private sector, county social services, and tribal entities when it comes to salary, also. To offset this disparity and to meet the needs of their families, one in four employees are engaged in employment outside of the Center. This includes all levels of employees. All this aside, 88% of adults receiving clinical services at West Central Human Service Center identify that they are satisfied with the services they received, and 91% are satisfied with the services their children received. Eighty-three percent identify that they have improved their ability to deal with their daily problems. Results of the Fiscal Year 2005 Vocational Rehabilitation Client Satisfaction Survey show a satisfaction rate of 97%.

➤ **Total Budget Overview**

For the 2005-2007 biennium the West Central Human Service Center began with a total budget of \$18,587,469 and 124.5 authorized FTE's. The following identifies changes since the start of the biennium. These changes are the result of the centralization of the billing process, the transfer of Child Care Licensing staff, the sharing of Psychology staff, the change in delivery of infant development

services to a provider contract, and a change in funding client services in the Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP).

- Transfer funding for Centralized Billing to Central Office.....(\$53,709.00)
- Transfer funding from BLHSC for shared Psychologist.....\$25,330.00
- Transfer funding to NCHSC for Child Care Licensing.....(\$51,118.00)
- Transfer FCSP Client Service Funding to Central Office.....(\$67,354.00)
- Transfer of (1.0) FTE to Centralized Billing
- Transfer (.5) FTE to NCHSC for Child Care Licensing
- Transfer of 3.0 FTE from other HSC's to address client-to-DD case manager ratios
- Transfer 1.0 FTE from BLHSC for Rehabilitation and Support services.

This leaves a current budget for West Central of \$18,440,618 and 127.0 FTE.

Budget concerns going into the next biennium will include increased energy prices, putting upward pressure on our rental rates as well as the travel costs for state vehicles, ITD's increase in telecommunications rates, and the ability to keep up with an increasing salary market for our employees.

I will now provide a brief description of each program area.

Attachments

- WCHSC Budget – Total
- WCHSC Budget – Administration
- WCHSC Budget – Child Welfare Services
- WCHSC Budget – Disabilities Services
- WCHSC Budget – Heritage Program
- WCHSC Budget – Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
- WCHSC Budget – Older Adult Services
- WCHSC Budget – Older Americans Act Contracts
- WCHSC Organizational Chart