

Testimony
Department of Human Services
Government Services Committee
Senator Sorvaag, Chairman
April 2, 2014

Chairman Sorvaag, members of the Government Services Committee, I am Russell Cusack, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation of the Department of Human Services. I am here today to provide a report on the activities of the Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities.

Purpose

The purpose of the Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities is to further the goal of considering competitive and integrated employment as the first option when supporting individuals with disabilities who are of working age to obtain employment. The Committee was reconstituted through 2013 Senate Bill 2271, which included an expanded membership and placed greater emphasis on competitive and integrated employment for people with disabilities.

Activity

The Committee has held two meetings. Activities of the Committee have included: drafting bylaws, receiving appointments to the Committee from the Governor's Office, and coordinating activities with other entities involved in improving the employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

The required Annual Report was accomplished through inclusion of a report of Committee activities in the federally required Annual Report of Vocational Rehabilitation activities to the Governor. Quarterly meeting dates have been scheduled for 2014.

The members of the committee are:

Member Name	Representing	Mandated positions
Bay, Tina	DHS Developmental Disabilities	Ex Officio: head of the dept of human services developmental disabilities programs, as identified by the executive director of the dept of human services.
Gross, Vickay	Protection and Advocacy	Ex Officio: director of the protection and advocacy project, or the director's designee
Kourajian, Chad	Lee Enterprises	One community employer representative
Murry, Barb	ND Assoc of Community Providers	Executive director of the ND association of community providers or designee of the director
Teevens, Gerry	Dept of Public Instruction	Ex Officio: superintendent of public instruction's director of special education, or the director's designee
Vardanega, Paul		One individual with a disability
Wescott, Cheryl	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation	Ex Officio: director of the dept of human services division of vocational rehabilitation, or the director's designee
VACANT		One family member of an individual with a disability
VACANT	Dept Of Commerce	Ex Officio: director of the dept of commerce division of workforce development, or the director's designee

The Committee is building its organizational foundation and simultaneously learning about the priorities and plans of other workgroups that are promoting integrative employment. The current North Dakota Employment Work Groups/Committees are:

- Employment Learning Community (ELC)**
 ELC is a network of state and private providers of disability services and advocates interested in developing strategy and policy that supports integrated employment outcomes for individuals with an Intellectual Disability.
- Olmstead Commission/Policy Academy-Subcommittee on Employment**
 Priority One: Individuals with disabilities in ND will have access to competitive employment in the real world.

- **State Community of Practice on Transition – Employment Subcommittee**
The system promotes and improves the scope, opportunity, and quality for youth with disabilities to adequately prepare for life and career beyond high school.
- **Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Committee**
The committee meets quarterly to advise the department on program and policy developments to help meet the needs of individuals with traumatic brain injuries and their families.
- **NDACP – Employment Options Committee**
The goal of the committee is to share best practices, stay abreast of changing CMS policy, make recommendations to referral agency on policy and procedural changes, and increase awareness of employment first practices, Olmstead, and DOJ actions.
- **North Dakota APSE – Employment First**
Promote employment opportunities for all people through local, regional, and national networks.

See [Attachment \(A\)](#) for additional detail on these committees/groups.

I would be happy to answer any questions.