

Testimony
Senate Bill 2195
Senate Human Services Committee
Senator Judy Lee, Chairman
January 28, 2013

Chairman Lee, members of the Human Services Committee, I am Jan Engan, Director for the Aging Services Division of the Department of Human Services. I am here today to provide information about Vulnerable Adult Protective Services (VAPS), service trends, and the current VAPS system in North Dakota.

With the projected increase in the state's aging population, the ability to access services to support a safe and healthy environment has the potential to increase demands in the area of Elder Rights. A 2010 study published in the American Journal of Public Health reports approximately 11 percent of elders experience some type of abuse. This study did not include elders with dementia; however, it reported this population to be at an even greater risk of mistreatment. Nationally, research estimates indicate 1 in 14 cases of elder abuse is reported, and that elder abuse is under-identified and under-reported (1998 National Elder Abuse Incidence Study). [Attached to my testimony](#) you will find additional information in a question and answer format that addresses the various elements surrounding elder abuse.

In 1989, the Legislative Assembly enacted legislation to provide protective services to vulnerable adults, which is codified as North Dakota Century Code Chapter 50-25.2. Section 50-25.2.02 requires the Department of Human Services (DHS), with the advice and cooperation of county social services boards, to develop, administer, and implement a program of protective services for vulnerable adults; and further provides

these entities are not required to implement or enforce a VAPS program if the Legislative Assembly did not provide an appropriation to support the implementation and enforcement of the program. In 1998, all eight regional Human Service Centers (HSC) began the provision of VAPS. From 1998 to 2013, VAPS was provided either directly by the Division at the HSC or through a contract with a County Social Services entity. At this time, the Division provides Older Americans Act federal funds in the amount of \$50,000 from Title VII, Chapter C (Programs for Prevention of Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation) and \$210,000 from Title IIIB (Supportive Services). Additionally, VAPS staff facilitates community coalitions in Regions IV, V, and VII. The coalitions have board membership that represents other human service organizations, county staff, law enforcement, and attorneys. They meet to discuss the status of elder abuse and to provide education to the membership and the community.

This past October, the Division implemented a new data collection system that is designed specifically to track the reports of suspected abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or exploitation. From October 1, 2012, through January 25, 2013, there have been 316 intakes from all regions of the state. An intake begins the screening stage for an assessment (investigation) or for providing information and education. Intake calls moved to the assessment stage are then determined to be substantiated or unsubstantiated for abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation. Calls considered to be substantiated are prioritized based on severity and include a face-to-face visit for further assessment and action.

From October 1, 2012, through January 25, 2013, there were 72 reports with allegations where a home visit was conducted. Forty-four were

substantiated reports and these included 30 cases determined as self-neglect, nine cases determined to be neglect, four cases determined to be exploitation, and one case determined to be abuse.

I would be happy to address any questions that you may have.