

**Testimony
 Department of Human Services
 Government Finance Committee
 Representative Delzer, Chairman
 June 16, 2016**

Chairman Delzer, members of the Government Finance Committee, I am Russell Cusack, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation of the Department of Human Services (Department). 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 required Annual Report was accomplished through inclusion of a report of Committee activities in the federally required Annual Report of Vocational Rehabilitation to the Governor. An electronic copy of the report is available on-line at: <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/docs/2015-ndvr-annual.pdf>.

Members of the Committee include:

Member Name	Representing	Mandated positions
Bay, Tina	DHS Developmental Disabilities Division	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, Bruce	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

Nider, LouAnn	DHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation	Ex Officio: director of the dept of human services division of vocational rehabilitation, or the director's designee
Wittliff, Eric		One family member of an individual with a disability
Volk, Ryan	Dept of Commerce	Ex Officio: director of the dept of commerce division of workforce development, or the director's designee

Activity

The Committee meets on a quarterly basis.

Employment Survey:

The Committee is currently surveying individuals with Intellectual Disabilities who are provided employment service at Community Rehabilitation Programs to determine level of integration, average compensation, and identify barriers that exist to the individuals gaining integrated employment for wages at or above the federal minimum wage.

Results of the survey will support the Committee's goal to increase opportunities for individuals with disabilities who are of working age to obtain competitive and integrated employment as the first option.

Final survey results will be presented during the Committee's August 2016 quarterly meeting.

Expanded Supported Employment:

The Committee and the Department's Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation and Developmental Disabilities issued a Request For Proposal in June 2015 to provide integrated and competitive employment opportunities to individuals with Intellectual Disabilities that are currently employed in segregated work environments for earnings below the federal minimum wage. Contracts were awarded to four community rehabilitation providers: Community Living Services (CLS) - Fargo, Kalix - Minot, and in Bismarck to HIT and Pride, Inc. This is a three year project

and also includes training and technical assistance to the providers. The funding for this effort is 100% federal funds Vocational Rehabilitation received from the U.S. Department of Education.

The Committee is providing guidance to the project and will assist the Vocational Rehabilitation and Developmental Disabilities Divisions in addressing current policy issues that are found through this project as barriers to integrated and competitive employment.

I would be happy to answer any questions.