



HEALTH SERVICES COMMITTEE

Thursday, August 31, 2023
Harvest Room, State Capitol
Bismarck, North Dakota

Senator Kristin Roers, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Members present: Senators Kristin Roers, Michelle Axtman, Jeff Barta, Judy Lee; Representatives Gretchen Dobervich, Kathy Frelich, Dwight Kiefert*, Carrie McLeod*, Alisa Mitskog*, Emily O'Brien*, Todd Porter

Member absent: Representative Robin Weisz

Others present: See [Appendix A](#)

*Attended remotely

At the request of Chairman Roers, Mr. Brady A. Larson, Assistant Legislative Budget Analyst and Auditor, Legislative Council, reviewed the [Supplementary Rules of Operation and Procedure of the North Dakota Legislative Management](#).

STUDY OF THE COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF NORTH DAKOTA

At the request of Chairman Roers, Mr. Larson presented a memorandum entitled [Study of the Comprehensive Health Association of North Dakota - Background Memorandum](#).

Mr. Jon Godfread, Insurance Commissioner, and Ms. Chrystal Bartuska, Life and Health/Medicare Division Director, Insurance Department, presented information ([Appendix B](#)) regarding the Comprehensive Health Association of North Dakota (CHAND). They noted:

- CHAND was created to provide health insurance coverage to individuals who were denied coverage through private health insurance.
- The federal Affordable Care Act provides health insurers may not deny coverage due to pre-existing conditions.
- An October 2022 review of the CHAND program recommended the program be dissolved and enrollees be transitioned to private health plans.

Mr. Scott Miller, Executive Director, Public Employees Retirement System, presented information ([Appendix C](#)) regarding the transition of CHAND enrollees to Public Employees Retirement System administered health insurance plans. He noted:

- The current Dakota Retiree Plan is fully funded through premiums and adding high-risk individuals to the plan could cause significant increases in premium amounts.
- Adding nongovernmental employees to a government plan could result in the plan losing government plan status.

Ms. Megan Houn, Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Policy, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota, responded to committee questions regarding CHAND.

STUDY OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

At the request of Chairman Roers, Mr. Larson presented a memorandum entitled [Study of the Delivery of Emergency Medical Services](#).

Mr. Christopher Price, Department of Health and Human Services, presented information ([Appendix D](#)) regarding emergency medical services (EMS) in the state. He noted:

- The current EMS services in the state include 96 basic life support ground ambulance services, 15 advanced life support ground ambulance services, 5 industrial ambulance services, 106 quick response units, and 5 air medical service providers.
- The average ambulance response time in the state is 8 minutes and 36 seconds, with quicker response times in metropolitan areas and slower response times in rural areas.
- Challenges facing ambulance services include workforce shortages and financial sustainability.

Mr. Price reviewed the following schedule comparing licensed EMS personnel in the state in August 2023, August 2022, and April 2020:

| | August 2023 | August 2022 | April 2020 |
|--|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Paramedics | 688 | 648 | 661 |
| Advanced emergency medical technicians | 109 | 95 | 97 |
| Emergency medical technicians | 1,703 | 1,818 | 2,003 |
| Emergency medical responders | 1,547 | 1,743 | 2,073 |

Ms. PJ Ringdahl, Regional Adviser, North Dakota EMS Association, provided comments ([Appendix E](#)) regarding EMS in the state. She noted a recent survey of ambulance services found major challenges for EMS include staffing shortages, the inability to recruit new members, and training expenses.

Mr. Adam Parker, North Dakota EMS Association, provided comments ([Appendix F](#)) regarding EMS in the state. He noted:

- The main sources of revenue for rural ambulance services include service reimbursement, local property taxes, and rural EMS assistance grants.
- The median cost per ambulance call is \$1,893.
- Based on the current funding model only 45 percent of ambulance services can generate enough revenue to hire a partially paid crew.

FENTANYL AWARENESS REPORT

At the request of Chairman Roers, Mr. Larson presented a memorandum entitled [Fentanyl Awareness Campaign Report](#).

Ms. Kodi Pinks, Unit Director, Surveillance & Data Management, Department of Health and Human Services, provided a report ([Appendix G](#)) regarding unintentional drug overdose deaths. She noted:

- The overdose death rate has increased from 0.98 per 10,000 individuals in 2019 to 1.71 per 10,000 individuals in 2022.
- On average, 2 residents of the state die each week from an unintentional drug overdose.
- Most individuals that have an unintentional overdose are under the age of 39.

Ms. Laura Anderson, Director, Behavioral Health Policy Division, Department of Health and Human Services, presented information ([Appendix H](#)) regarding efforts to expand statewide awareness of fentanyl drug overdose dangers. She noted:

- The Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee has hosted two listening sessions to gather public input regarding efforts to reduce opioid misuse.
- There are four licensed opioid treatment programs in the state with 1,022 active participants.
- From October 2022 through July 2023 a total of 19,891 naloxone kits were distributed with 708 known successful overdose reversals using naloxone.

STUDY OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH BRAIN INJURY

At the request of Chairman Roers, Mr. Larson presented a memorandum entitled [Study of Brain Injury Services - Background Memorandum](#).

Ms. Rebecca Quinn, Program Director, North Dakota Brain Injury Network, presented information ([Appendix I](#)) regarding services to individuals with a brain injury. She noted:

- Brain injuries can be caused by external events including a fall or vehicle accident or by an internal event such as a stroke or aneurysm.
- Each year an estimated 5,500 individuals in the state sustain traumatic brain injury.
- More than 13,000 individuals in the state have a long-term disability from a traumatic brain injury.

No further business appearing, Chairman Roers adjourned the meeting at 2:15 p.m.

Brady A. Larson
Assistant Legislative Budget Analyst and Auditor

ATTACH:9