

## Testimony

## Human Services Interim Committee

January 7, 2014

Good afternoon Chairman Damschen and members of the Committee. My name is Trina Gress, I am Vice President of Employment Services at Community Options, Inc. I stand before you today and represent Community Options and the customers we serve. Throughout our entire agency we provide residential and employment services to approximately 1000 customers (some with disabilities and some without). Since July 1, 2012, we have served a total of 39 customers with TBI. Currently, we have 27 customers across the state of North Dakota in pre-vocational skills and mentoring services, also known as the TBI Program. The TBI Program offers prevocational services such as job shadows, situational assessments, and trial work experiences to achieve work readiness. Additional services that may be provided include: resume writing services, mock interview practice, application submission and job coaching if needed.

The world of TBI in North Dakota is a large puzzle and we need to continue to work together to figure out each piece and how each fits into the puzzle to make services work for individuals with TBI and their families. Community Options' TBI program is only one small piece to this large puzzle, however, since Community Options has entered into a contract with Department of Human Services we have seen inconsistent services or lack of services thus resulting in the need for additional or expanded services to ensure the continuum of care for individuals with TBI.

Community Options believes a missing piece to the puzzle is that North Dakota needs Day Programming for individuals with TBI. Currently, individuals can either choose one of two services - social/recreation or pre-vocational both of which are extremely limited in hours of services. Even if combined, these two services do not equal a full day of services. Under the current human services system, Day Programming is not provided for individuals with TBI. Community Options recommends Day Programming to be offered up to 8 hours per day to individuals with TBI. Day Program is defined as the following:

A day program assists individuals in acquiring, retaining, and improving skills necessary to successfully reside in a community setting. Services may include assistance with acquisition, retention, or improvement in self-help, socialization, and adaptive skills; provision of social, recreational, and therapeutic activities to maintain physical, recreational, personal care, and community integration skills; and development of non-job task-oriented prevocational skills such as compliance, attendance, task completion, problem solving, and safety; and supervision for health and safety.

Community Options feels another missing piece is that North Dakota needs long term Extended Services for individuals with TBI that are working. As mentioned before, Community Options TBI program works with the individual to provide pre-vocational services so they may become employed.

However, once employment is obtained there is a lack of Extended Services to assist in maintaining that employment. Currently in North Dakota, there are only 6 Extended Services slots available to individuals with TBI. Community Options has seen that when Extended Services are not provided, the individual with a TBI may lose or quit their job. Extended Services are defined as:

Supports provided for individuals employed in the community. Supports are provided as needed for each individual by a job coach. Initial job placement and stabilization and training is provided through the Supported Employment Program and Extended Services is the long term follow up.

Community Options also believes residential services are a large missing piece to the puzzle. There is a lack of supported living arrangements. The individual with a TBI may not need nursing home level of care but they may not be able to live independently either. In the current North Dakota human services system, there is no middle ground, thus there is a need for community based supported living supports. Supported Living Arrangements are defined as:

Residential services which provides support to individuals living in their own home or apartment setting. Services may include instruction in budgeting, shopping, laundry, etc. Support is provided on an intermittent basis and is generally less than 20 hours per month.

Community Options believes the one final missing piece to this puzzle is case management services for the individual with TBI. In the current human services system, we have case management for individuals with Development Disabilities, Mental Illness, and Substance Abuse but we do not currently provide case management services to individuals with TBI nor do these individuals fit into one of these above categories thus a family member plays this part. According to the data collected at the regional Human Service Centers from March 4, 2011 to March 22, 2012 there were 2,519 individuals with a mild TBI, 715 individuals with a moderate TBI, and 278 individuals with a severe TBI. A total of 3,512 people who are in need of case management services but not receiving it. Case Management is defined as:

Provides the connection between individuals who receive services and the system of publicly-funded services. Case managers establish eligibility for services and authorization for federal funding, and assist individuals in accessing needed medical, social, educational, residential, vocational and other services. They also provide ongoing review of client outcomes and satisfaction, and coordinate, monitor and evaluate the services provided.

In conclusion, Community Options recommends the following things:

1. Establish Day Programming for up to 8 hours per day to assist individuals in acquiring, retaining, and improving skills necessary to successfully integrate into the community.
2. Expand the existing Extended Services for individuals with TBI. Provide additional slots for Extended Services so more individuals with TBI can receive the supports needed on or off the job to maintain employment and be a successful person in their community.

3. Establish Community Based Supported Living Arrangements to support individuals living in their own home or apartment setting
4. Establish a Case Management system for individuals with TBI.

In conclusion, ND has made great strides in the last two legislative sessions to recognize and improve services to the TBI population. Thank you for your hard work to make those changes happen. However, we need to continue to work together to develop new pieces to this puzzle because there are still many pieces missing thus resulting in a lack of continuum of care for individuals with TBI.

Thank you for your time. Questions?