



Testimony of Dana Schaar Jahner
Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas
July 23, 2014

I am Dana Schaar Jahner, representing the Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas (CHAD). CHAD works with its community health center (CHC) members and other community leaders to find solutions for improving health care options in areas of the Dakotas that are underserved. Community health centers offer a unique model with proven results for high-quality, cost-effective care customized to benefit the patient and communities being served. On behalf of CHAD, I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to provide further information on Certified Application Counselors (CAC).

There are currently four community health centers in North Dakota with 13 clinic sites providing primary medical care services in North Dakota: Coal Country Community Health Centers based in Beulah, Family HealthCare Center based in Fargo, Northland Community Health Center based in Turtle Lake, and Valley Community Health Centers based in Northwood. In addition, Community Health Service Inc. provides primary health care services for migrant workers and their families at multiple sites, including Grafton and Moorhead, Minnesota.

In 2013, community health centers received funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to hire and train federally Certified Application Counselors to conduct consumer outreach and education about and enrollment in qualified health plans (QHPs), Medicaid, or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). North Dakota's four community health centers offer consumer assistance at all 13 clinic sites. Through June 30, 2014, Certified Application Counselors have provided approximately 7,000 one-on-one assists to consumers; have assisted with roughly 2,100 applications submitted; and estimate 2,000 individuals have been enrolled in the Marketplace. Final numbers are expected from HRSA later this month.

It is important to note that these numbers are estimates and likely under-reported due to a number of factors, such as unclear reporting criteria in the early stages of the program. For example, a Certified Application Counselor assisting a mother with three children may have only indicated one assist when, in fact, all family members on the application should have been counted, for a total of four assists. In addition, during large public events, the degree of individual engagement, which constitutes assistance provided, is more difficult to gauge and measure consistently.

Estimated CAC Assistance Provided by ND Community Health Centers
October 2013-June 2014*

	CACs Trained	Assists Provided	Applications Submitted	Estimated Enrolled
Community Health Centers	20	6,746	2,100	1,943

*Estimates based on reports to HRSA.

Although open enrollment in the Marketplace has concluded for 2014, Certified Application Counselors remain engaged in helping consumers eligible for Medicaid, members of federally recognized tribes, and those who experience a qualifying life event which triggers a special enrollment period. Community health centers take a holistic approach to educating consumers on their options based on their specific health care needs, such as understanding how prescriptions needs are addressed in various plans. And, they have an ongoing commitment to continuing to support consumers in utilizing and retaining insurance because they have a vested interest in the community and meeting its health care needs.

Collaboration has been and continues to be a major component of the success of the Certified Application Counselor program at the state’s community health centers. Specifically, CHAD’s facilitation has unified the application counselors into one team to share best practices and challenges. Further, CHAD’s involvement has streamlined the process to create more consistency and continuity in how consumers are provided assistance. Finally, partnerships with other community organizations, tribal entities, and fellow Certified Application Counselors/Navigators have been instrumental in reaching consumers through cooperative education and enrollment events.

North Dakota community health centers expect to hire additional staff or train volunteers as Certified Application Counselors during the 2015 open enrollment period to meet the anticipated increase in demand for assistance. They remain committed to maintaining expertise in eligibility, enrollment, and the health care marketplace, as well as to providing free and impartial assistance to consumers so they may choose the best health insurance option to meet their needs.