

**Presentation to the Energy Development and Transmission Committee
McKenzie County Social Services Testimony
Prepared by Desiree Sorenson, McKenzie County Director
September 3, 2015 – McKenzie County Courthouse**

As a result of the attached statistics, we face new challenges on a regular basis. Families are more transient, living in campers or moving from the household to household of friends and family. Multiple families are residing in one single apartment or home. This increases the amount of time it takes for workers to locate and address issues with families. Language and cultural barriers makes it difficult to communicate and address issues. The agency has had to access translation services in order to adequately communicate with the clients. There continues to be a rise in cases with concerns for physical abuse (discipline with objects). Families are moving here from others states or countries where it is not considered abuse to use objects to discipline their children. We continue to receive many concerns with domestic and familial violence. Marijuana is legalized in other states and the families do not see the need to stop since they have a medical card or it is legal where they are from. There continues to be an increase in drug exposed children. Children are being exposed to drugs such as methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin, to name a few. There is a higher safety risk for staff due to the unpredictable behavior of individuals under the influence of these drugs. As a result, we have to send two staff or request law enforcement assistance. Safety with in the office has been a concern due to unpredictable behavior and concerns for angry clients when they are told they do not qualify for services.

When there is an increase in Child Protection cases you can usually anticipate an increase in Foster Care and In Home Case Management. One of the trends seen is there are more infants and young children in foster care. This can be contributed to the increase in the number of children removed at birth. These removals are a result of the baby or mother testing positive for drugs at birth. At times the babies are transported to the hospital in Minot due to complications as a result of the drug exposure. We have recently hired another full time employee to work with the In Home families.

The Economic Assistance programs have seen an increase in the alien population which is served. There are increased requests for emergency Medicaid services for illegal/undocumented aliens. There are increased requests for medical and food assistance for Licensed Permanent Residents (Green card). There is an increase in the Refuge population as they are relocating here from Fargo for work. There is an increase in the single individual population under the age of 65 applying for medical services due to Medicaid Expansion. Due to the decline in oil there is an increase in request for medical and food assistance from intact families. This is due to the applicants being laid off due to the decline in the oil and gas industry. Individuals and families are unable to make ends meet and meet their nutritional

needs due to high rent costs. The agency receives SNAP applications that are expedited (emergency) however clients are not eligible due to the high shelter costs and capped Federal rent deduction. There is an increase in individuals who apply for Medicaid in order to receive help with Mental Health and Drug or Alcohol abuse. The lack of community resources in these areas results in a greater dependency on public assistance and decreased ability for clients to become self-sufficient.

The clients are in need of a variety of services including mental health, addiction, medical, dental, and child care. Many times these services are not readily available to the clients due to wait lists or lack of these services directly in the community. Clients need to travel to Minot, Dickinson, Williston, or Bismarck in order to access services such as inpatient mental health and addiction services.

The parents/caregivers are unable to readily access the services they need in order to address their issues. There are no resources in the community for the Refugee population.

The Home and Community Based Service Program which serves the elderly/disabled population has seen a steady decrease in the number of clients served in the past six years.

Additional positive changes in

McKenzie County Social Services:

2 people trained to complete fingerprinting/background checks needed for Daycare staff, becoming a foster parent, and for home study's needed.

1 employee trained in ND Child Passenger Safety Certification.

Desiree Sorenson LSW, CD

McKenzie County Social Service Director

McKenzie County

Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to address the challenges in day to day operations as a result of the oil impact on our community.

These impacts affect many areas from the clients we serve, the work force and the mental health and addiction services available in the community.

	<i>Calendar Year</i>						
	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	
Total Budget	677,378	815,940	890,198	1,088,176	1,286,757	1,663,749	1,841,351
							*1,995,012

* 2206 Bill restricted the budget- \$1,995,012 would have included an additional Family Service Specialist and additional Eligibility Worker position.

Number of Social Service Employees	12	12	12	12	14	17	18
Number of CPS Cases per year	98	98	110	141	167		
					As of 8/1- 88	As of 8/1- 110	
Foster Care # of children each year	16	28	25	31	38	40	
						As of 9/1	
Medicaid Enrolled Recipients (Not Cases) by County (Includes TANF and Foster Care)	742	731	737	698			
Liheap Cases	90	60	39	38	36		
Snap monthly issuance of Dec		\$75,573	\$72,319	\$56,820	\$54,568	\$60,361 as of 7/15	
Medicaid Expansion Cases	NA	NA	NA	NA	38	94	
						As of 7/15	
HCBS Clients	May 2010- 34	32	36	April 2013- 19	May 2014- 18	Aug 2015- 16	
Licensed Daycares			4	5	16	11	
						* working on 5	
Census Data	6395	7012	7965	9297	10996		