Testimony
Human Services Committee
Representative Kathy Hogan, Chairman
January 5, 2016

Chairman Hogan and members of the Human Services Committee, I am Trisha Page, Autism Coordinator with the Medical Services Division for the Department of Human Services. In May 2015, I was appointed as the chair of the Governor's Autism Spectrum Disorder's (ASD) task force. I am here today to provide the status of the state Autism Spectrum Disorder plan pursuant to N.D.C.C. 50-06-32.

The task force is comprised of 14 members appointed by the Governor, and includes a legislator, representatives from state agencies, providers, parents, and other professionals with an interest in autism. The task force meets four times per year and reviews early intervention and family support services, and programs that transition individuals from schools to adult day programs or employment. The task force developed a state plan that was presented to the Governor and legislature in 2014.

Over the next year, the task force intends to merge the goals set forth in the ASD task force's state plan by integrating the Collective Impact design (Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2011) with the intent outlined in N.D.C.C. 50-06-32. Collective Impact is a collaborative effort model with a common agenda to share ideas, costs, and information for better services and supports statewide, regionally, and nationally. This approach allows the state to maximize efficiency and effectiveness in regard to autism services. Outcome objectives are in the process of being set alongside of the Collective Impact implementation.

The task force continues to meet quarterly and have set future meeting dates through 2016 as follows: March 21, 2016; June 6, 2016; September 9, 2016; and November 7, 2016.

The task force work emphasizes the need for additional, autism-specific, targeted, in-depth training for educators, therapists, medical and mental health professionals, universities, residential facilities, first-responders, and supporting family members. Having autism services staff in the Department of Human Services has created a point of contact for autism resources across the state; however, families will continue to need assistance in connecting with available resources.

The ASD task force voted at the May 4, 2015, meeting to recommend adding additional task force members. The task force has discussed the need to include an adult with autism and a tribal representative.

As the task force continues to focus on Collective Impact, the need for in-depth, statewide training is expected to remain a key discussion topic. The effects of the collaborative efforts are allowing for mutually reinforcing activities, shared measurements, and common agendas.

Thank you for your time and I am available for questions.