

Testimony
Department of Human Services
Human Services Interim Committee
Representative Hogan, Chairman
July 26, 2016

Chairman Hogan and members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Trina Gress. I am the Vice President of Employment Services at Community Options. The Brain Injury services that have been funded by the North Dakota Legislature in recent years have made a tremendous impact on the lives of our citizens. I am here to tell you more about our Brain Injury programs.

The Skill Smart program is a pre-vocational program that was funded out of the 2009 Legislative Session to assist individuals to reintegrate into their community through volunteer and skill building opportunities. We work to develop the individual's skills in a variety of areas, including confidence, memory, communication and social skills, among others. On average each individual meets with us 6 hours per week. Currently we service 40 individuals per month in this program and there is a 12 person waiting list.

The next step in services is the Work Start program which is the return to work program that was funded during the 2015 legislative session. This program is based on an evidence based supported employment model that proves work is recovery! The goal of the program is to get the individual working in competitive employment so they can start earning a paycheck.

Currently we are serving 25 individuals per month. Of those 25 slots, there are 18 individuals who are working an average of 20 hours per week at an average wage of \$9.96 per hour.

Please also see Nathan Schantz's testimony which explains his experience of living with a Brain Injury. Thank you for your time and attention in this matter.