

July 2005

HEALTHY NORTH DAKOTA AND WORKPLACE WELLNESS STUDY - BACKGROUND MEMORANDUM

Section 20 of 2005 Senate Bill No. 2004 provides for a Legislative Council study of the costs and benefits of adopting a comprehensive healthy North Dakota and workplace wellness program in collaboration with the State Department of Health, health insurers and other third-party payers, Workforce Safety and Insurance, interested nonprofit health-related agencies, and others who have an interest in establishing accident and disease prevention programs. A copy of the section is attached as Appendix A.

HISTORY OF HEALTHY NORTH DAKOTA

Governor John Hoeven initiated the Healthy North Dakota program in January 2002. The mission of the initiative is to inspire and support North Dakotans to improve physical, mental, and emotional health for all by building innovative statewide partnerships. The Healthy North Dakota Advisory Committee was formed in March 2002. Members of the advisory committee are listed in Appendix B. The priority areas of Healthy North Dakota include:

1. Tobacco use.
2. Substance abuse/mental health.
3. Healthy weight - Nutrition.
4. Healthy weight - Physical activity.
5. Health disparities.
6. Worksite wellness.
7. Community engagement.
8. Third-party payers/insurance.

Committees have been formed to focus on each of these areas across the state. In total, committees are comprised of more than 400 North Dakotans representing approximately 150 agencies, organizations, and businesses from across the state working to identify strategies for the Healthy North Dakota program.

HEALTHY NORTH DAKOTA STRATEGIES

The State Department of Health 2005-07 biennium budget request included a \$26.1 million general fund request for Healthy North Dakota strategies to address the leading causes of death in North Dakota--tobacco use, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity. The strategies identified to address these issues are listed below:

1. Healthy North Dakota recognition program - The recognition program will increase awareness and sustain stakeholder involvement in Healthy North Dakota. Activities involved in establishing the recognition program include overall coordination of the project; determining

which channels will be recognized, i.e., schools, worksites, health care providers, and/or communities; identifying criteria for the channels; identifying a monitoring system for the program; and developing the application/recognition process.

2. Baby-friendly hospitals - This program will develop two North Dakota hospitals into breast-feeding supportive hospitals. This will include overall coordination of the project, dollars to assist the two hospitals in achieving the objective, conducting focus groups to identify barriers and benefits, and conducting an overall social marketing campaign to convey the message.
3. Community challenge grants - This initiative will empower local communities to prioritize their own health problems and identify their own solutions for solving those problems. This will include coordinating the project, providing training, supporting two local coordinators, and providing grant dollars to implement the identified solutions.
4. Worksite wellness institute - This initiative will assist North Dakota businesses in establishing worksite wellness programs, which will ultimately result in a healthier workforce. This will include coordinating the project, identifying a centralized location for worksite wellness resources, providing training, and establishing a clearinghouse for distribution of resource materials.
5. Physical activity full-time equivalent (FTE) position - This FTE position will be a dedicated program manager in the State Department of Health to assure that consistent, accurate physical activity programming occurs. This FTE position will represent physical education and physical activity interests for the State Department of Health programs, such as cancer, diabetes, obesity, Healthy North Dakota, and provide training and technical assistance to Healthy North Dakota partners, local public health units, and other stakeholders.
6. Office of special populations - An office of special populations will allow the State Department of Health to work more efficiently in decreasing and eliminating health disparities in

North Dakota. This office would increase awareness of health disparities, develop and enhance networks with partners, develop a centralized clearinghouse for data related to health disparities, and engage the disparate populations in identifying strategies to eliminate health disparities specific to their populations.

7. Primary seatbelt - This initiative will include a social marketing approach to increase seatbelt use in North Dakota. Dollars will be used to conduct focus groups to identify barriers to wearing seatbelts and to develop a social marketing campaign to increase seatbelt usage.
8. Tobacco programs - This initiative will enhance tobacco prevention efforts in local communities by supporting proven, effective strategies to reduce tobacco use. Funds will support grants to enhance chronic disease prevention efforts for tobacco laws, support tobacco prevention and education activities in schools and communities, and promote cessation and provide nicotine replacement therapy for low-income populations trying to quit. This initiative will include overall coordination of the programs, technical assistance and training, and support for a grants manager, two local coordinators, a cessation coordinator, and public education coordinator.

FUNDING FOR HEALTHY NORTH DAKOTA AND WORKSITE WELLNESS

For the 2005-07 biennium, the Legislative Assembly appropriated \$485,746 of federal and other funds for the State Department of Health's Healthy North Dakota and worksite wellness program. Federal funds of \$350,746 are from the federal preventive health block grant and are used in part for funding 1.5 FTE positions. The \$135,000 of other funds needs to be raised by the department and is for the worksite wellness program.

In addition to the federal block grant funding, the Governor recommended appropriating \$517,766 from the general fund, including 2.5 FTE positions for the 2005-07 biennium for a worksite wellness program and the Healthy North Dakota program. The 2005 Legislative Assembly removed the general fund appropriation

and FTE positions and provided other funds spending authority of \$135,000 for the department to contract with a nonstate entity for a worksite wellness pilot program.

STATE EMPLOYEE WORKSITE WELLNESS PROGRAM

The 2003 Legislative Assembly approved Senate Bill No. 2060, which included a provision authorizing the Public Employees Retirement System to develop an employer-based wellness program. The program must encourage employers to adopt a board-developed wellness program by either charging extra health insurance premiums to nonparticipating employers or reducing premiums for participating employers. For the 2005-07 biennium, the Public Employees Retirement System will charge an additional health insurance premium of 1 percent for employers that do not participate in the wellness program.

STUDY PLAN

The committee may wish to proceed with this study as follows:

1. Receive information from representatives of the Healthy North Dakota initiative regarding the status of the initiative and planned activities.
2. Receive testimony from representatives of the Public Employees Retirement System regarding the worksite wellness program administered by the Public Employees Retirement System.
3. Receive information from the State Department of Health regarding the development of a worksite wellness pilot project.
4. Receive testimony from representatives of the State Department of Health, health insurers, and other third-party payers, Workforce Safety and Insurance, interested nonprofit health-related agencies, and others who have an interest in establishing accident and disease prevention programs regarding this study.
5. Develop committee recommendations and any necessary legislation to implement the recommendations.
6. Prepare the committee's report for the Legislative Council.

ATTACH:2