

Transportation and Disability Summit White Paper

Edited by Christy Jackson Carroll

Compiled by Karen Pearson, Chad DeCoteau, and Connie Irey

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As part of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, and with a strong belief that the American Dream belongs to everyone, three organizations formed a collaborative network to service individuals with developmental disabilities living in North Dakota. The network was named the North Dakota Developmental Disabilities Network (NDDDN), and includes: The North Dakota Protection and Advocacy Project, the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities, and the North Dakota State Council on Developmental Disabilities. The trio strives to assure that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families participate in the design of and have access to culturally competent community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion in all facets of community life.

The activities of each entity belonging to NDDDN fall within core emphasis areas established at the federal level. Emphasis areas include:

- quality assurance activities
- education and early intervention activities
- child-care related activities
- health-related activities
- employment-related activities
- housing-related activities
- transportation-related activities
- recreation-related activities
- other services available/offered to individuals in a community, including formal and informal community supports that affect quality of life

To gather current input on these emphasis areas, a series of summit meetings were designed. The summits were structured to encourage discussion and input from participants, and to gather information from professionals working in the emphasis areas. Each summit meeting covered one emphasis area, began with a keynote speaker, involved the audience in small group work, and featured a panel of presenters who discussed their particular experience with some aspect of the emphasis area. During the small group work, participants developed lists of actionable steps that may possibly be used by NDDDN agencies in future strategic goal planning. Results of the summit meetings are published in white papers and disseminated through websites to make information available to a broader range of constituents.

On October 20, 2009, the El Rancho inn in Williston, ND hosted the Transportation and Disability Summit. The summit opened with an explanation of the NDDDN and its purpose. Participants of the

workshop were introduced, and asked to identify their expectations for the summit. Identified expectations included:

- What's affordable, how to access it, etc. – Universal design
- Consumer feedback
- Network: Trends – Check affordability/availability
- What does exist now
- Fair and balanced between systems – Urban/Rural
- Expanded options for working clients – to and from work effectively
- Ideas/What we have now
- Trends/Fact finding
- Taking information back

Issues and challenges surrounding the transportation and disability included:

- Waiting time
- Education – Program implementation
 - Process/Procedures/ Policymakers
 - Informing those who need the info
- No-shows – both ways
 - Consumer
 - Transportation does not show (charged)
- Regional transportation – one town to another
- Getting input from people who need the service
- Access – Major – Train, Bus, Flights – Funding
- Hours of operation
- Lack of employees (buses, but no drivers)
- City/state/county systems don't work together
- Turf wars
 - City bus
 - Transit
 - Cab
 - All separated, not willing to play together

A.J. Mock from the Williston Council for the Aging/Northwest Dakota Public Transit was the keynote speaker. Mr. Mock presented an overview of the newly implemented public transit system in Williston, in which he was a key player. Mr. Mock also talked about the planning and negotiating that was involved in order to bring the change to fruition. He stressed the importance of having the right people in the decision-making positions and understanding the needs of the people who use the service most. Mr. Mock's presentation was very well received with many questions following the presentation.

Based on the information presented by the keynote speaker, four main topic areas were developed and written on flow charts, which were then placed around the room. Following the keynote presentation, summit participants were directed to pick the topics they were most interested in, and spend fifteen minutes in discussion to identify actionable steps that could address each topic area. This process was completed three additional times, which provided participants the opportunity to discuss all topic areas. Topic areas and actionable steps identified during the small group work included:

Consumer Responsibility:

State:

- Vote
- Voice your opinion
- Elect the right candidate
- Responsibility to become active in process
- Responsible use of services
- Get involved (LWO)

Local:

- Vote
- Use available services
- Voice your opinion
- Responsibility
- Equal access
- Show up for meetings (like today)
- Riders tell other people

Regionalization Process:

State:

- Plan for rural areas to connect to major transportation
- Allow for individualization
- Funding
- Get providers to work together

Local:

- Transit "Directors" continue working together (city/county)
- Funding
- Get providers to work together

Access:

State:

- Continue funding
- Follow through study bills (Transportation)
- Offer useable alternatives in all areas of state

Local:

- City/county agenda (keeping)

- On track transportation issue on the fare amount
- Increase wheelchair lift capacity as equipment replaced (accommodate electric chairs with larger people)

Both:

- Meeting notification – various ways
- Public meeting participation
- Making sure people are heard

Education:

State:

- Develop model to use for state
- Get a champion to help create a sustainable funding source
- Educate public
- It is a necessary service

Local:

- Involve people with disabilities on local boards
- Establish universal design
- PSA's on global and local benefits

After completion of the small group work, a panel presentation took place. Panelists shared their perspectives and experiences, identifying challenges they face, unmet needs they have identified, and potential solutions for those needs. The panel, composed of a combination of professionals and consumers, included:

Janelle Olsen – Disability Advocate with the ND State Protection and Advocacy Project. Janelle is vision impaired to the point she has not been able to get a driver's license so has had to rely on others or her feet to get her from one place to another.

Penny Pozgay – Outreach Specialist for the Williston office of Independence, Inc. She assists people with disabilities in receiving appropriate services to enable them to live more independently.

Charles Robinson – Executive Director of Opportunity Foundation, Inc.. Opportunity Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit corporation located in Williston created to support people who are developmentally disabled.

Dawn Olson – Consumer Liaison for North Dakota Center for People with Disabilities in Minot, ND.

Outcomes/Lessons Learned:

Upon completion of the panel discussion, participants of the workshop were asked to vote on what they felt were the highest priority steps that had been identified during the earlier small group work. Each participant was instructed to cast three votes, and had the options of voting for three separate issues, or

casting all three votes for one issue that they felt the strongest about. Actionable steps identified as highest priorities as well as the number of votes cast for each are as follows:

<u>Number of votes:</u>	<u>Issue</u>
6	Offer useable alternatives in all areas of state
5	Get providers to work together
5	Get a champion to help create a sustainable funding source
4	Continue funding
3	Develop model to use for state
3	Involve people with disabilities on local boards
2	Educate public
2	Establish universal design
2	Voice your opinion
2	Increase wheelchair lift capacity as equipment replaced (accommodate electric chairs with larger people)
1	Making sure people are heard
1	Use available services
1	Responsibility
1	Riders tell other people
1	It is a necessary service

The identified issues and proposed actionable steps can now be used to guide future strategic planning for the three partners of the NDDDN, providing the agencies with a road map of needs and priorities to reference when designing programs and work plans for the future. Although the summits were originally designed to elicit feedback from constituents on priority issues and actionable steps, indirect outcomes also resulted from the interactive group work, including:

- Networking among professionals from various agencies
- Education regarding services offered by agencies and programs
- Identification of new/increased priority areas for agencies
- Identification of possible funding sources for additional training
- Discussion of how agency personnel can collaborate on various issues

The primary objective of the Housing and Disabilities Summit to gather current information on issues and identify actionable steps was successfully met. As a result of the excellent interactive group work and lively discussion among attendees, participants unexpectedly identified individual action steps for themselves and their agencies.

NDDDN agencies now have current information to carry forward into planning processes. Using the information gleaned from the summit meeting, NDDDN members can structure work plans and design programs that are relevant to the needs of consumers and that ensure individuals with developmental disabilities have access to high quality programs and services that will promote self-determination, independence, productivity, integration and inclusion in all facets of community life.

Sponsored by the
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