

**Executive Summary**  
**Activities and Recommendations of**  
**The North Dakota School for the Deaf**  
**Future Services Plan Transition Team**

*“.... the excellence and successes of the past blended with the opportunities of the future.”*

Submitted to:  
**The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI)**

By:



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*“What matters deafness of the ears when the mind hears?  
The one true deafness, the incurable deafness, is that of the mind.”*  
----- Victor Hugo

## Executive Summary

### **The Task:**

The North Dakota School for the Deaf Future Services Plan Transition Team, a group of 13 individuals (attached) representing a broad-based constituency, selected and appointed by the ND Superintendent of Public Instruction was charged with the task of identifying a plan for and meet the changing needs of deaf and hard of hearing students and citizens of the state as mandated in HB 1013, Section 19 (attached).

### **The Process:**

The Department of Public Instruction contracted with the Consensus Council, Inc., a private, neutral third party, to facilitate the process and assist the Transition Team in developing and documenting their conclusion and recommendations.

The Transition team members participated in a series of 8 meetings, (October 2009 through June 2010) held in Bismarck and Devils Lake, and utilized a consensus-based decision-making process to receive, review, assess, distribute and evaluate a substantial quantity of information to drive its activities. A specific documentation process was employed to ensure that all aspects of the process were recorded and available for future reference.

The Transition Team defined its role and established a set of values that it agreed to utilize in making their decisions and forming their recommendations. In addition to the responsibilities of the Transition Team members to represent their respective constituencies, efforts were ongoing to encourage openness and transparency by providing opportunities for public participation and input and venues for the sharing and posting of information and materials.

The Transition Team intends its efforts to provide the ND Department of Public Instruction with a product that is not *“business as usual,”* but a *“reflection of the excellence and successes of the past blended with the opportunities of the future.”*

### **The Conclusions and Recommendations:**

The Transition Team addressed and responded specifically to each of the six (6) components identified in HB 1013. These recommendations are included in this summary (attached) and should be reviewed for their specific content. However, for the purposes of this summary, the themes and broader focus of the Transition Team’s conclusions will be highlighted.

#### **History and Tradition:**

The NDSD has a long, proud and successful tradition of providing a quality residential education to students who are deaf or hard of hearing. It is the Transition Team’s position that this history exemplifies the process of innovation and change and serves as the solid foundation upon which a quality set of services can be based for the future. This includes recognition of the individualized needs of the students, an acknowledgement of the diverse philosophies relative to deaf education, and a respect for cultural and social uniqueness. The Transition Team addressed and established as false the perception and fear that its mission was a camouflaged initiative to “close the school.” Rather, the Transition Team’s recommendations embrace and support the

continued availability of existing services in an integrated service-delivery system based on individual needs and choices. Additionally, the Transition Team supported the preservation of and access to the materials, artifacts and memorabilia (including the pond and the bridge) that reinforce the link/bridge from the past, to the present, and on to the future.

Continuum of Service:

Of significant note is the expanded scope of services that the Future Services Plan is expected to include – NDSD’s former focus on school age children has changed to a clear responsibility for services to infants through senior citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing. The expansion of this parameter and the respective charge that it conveys to the Department of Public Instruction cannot be adequately addressed without a reciprocal acceptance of the need for increased resources and support.

The Transition Team undertook an extensive process that first identified the profiles of the service populations and then moved on to inventory their respective needs, the services currently available, the existing gaps in services, and the proposed/potential service and program options needed to close the gaps.

The Transition Team recognized and accepted the fact that it was unrealistic to expect its product could include the answers to all of the questions, responses to all of the needs and a plan/blueprint that would address all of the issues. The Transition Team chose to address this limit and its responsibilities by embracing the concept of a comprehensive continuum of services and the establishment of an organizational structure within which such a continuum could develop, expand and respond to the current needs and those yet to be identified. Subsequently, it was also apparent to the Transition Team members that the actions, activities and initiatives necessary to establish and maintain the continuum could only be achieved by a steady and ongoing, long-term process endowed with the necessary resources, authority, oversight and flexibility. This became a primary focus and ultimately the “pillar” recommendation of the Transition Team.

To provide this structure and organization the Transition Team recommended that “... North Dakota establish the NDSD/State Center of Excellence (NDSD/SCOE) as the entity responsible for the maintenance and coordination of a comprehensive continuum of available and accessible services to meet the expanding and ever-changing needs of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing regardless of race, ethnicity, geographical location or age.” The Transition Team identified specific structures, roles and responsibilities relative to the NDSD/State Center of Excellence (attached). Conjunctive with this recommendation, the Transition Team recommended the establishment of the “NDSD/Center of Excellence Advisory Council (a previous iteration of this group was the NDSD Advisory Council which has not been meeting regularly for some time) with clearly defined responsibilities and reflecting a broad comprehensive membership including stakeholders/consumers, alumni, administrators, legislators, services partners and Future Services Plan Transition Team representatives. It is expected that this group will have an active role in the development and ongoing operations of the NDSD/State Center of Excellence.

The Transition Team acknowledged the need for further development of an actual strategic plan and an ongoing outcomes-based process to assess and evaluate needs, progress and effectiveness. The NDSD/State Center of Excellence will serve as the central responsible entity for research, data gathering and information (and referral) regarding issues related to deafness and hearing loss.

Partnerships/Collaboration:

The vision and mission of the NDSD/State Center of Excellence is one of partnership, cooperation and collaboration. The Transition Team rejects the idea of duplication of services and endorses the critical nature and value of working with existing providers and stakeholders on the local, state, regional and national levels. This same collaborative/partnership approach is envisioned for the development of new programs and services, sharing of information and best practices models, purchase and provision of fees for service, and an overall strategy that employs and utilizes the separate and combined knowledge, expertise, strengths and resources of all stakeholders (parents and families, local school districts, the ND Department of Human Services, ND Vocational Rehabilitation, colleges and universities, non-governmental organizations, state, regional and national associations, etc.) to meet the needs while developing and providing services directly only in those cases where it is not or cannot be done alternatively.

Empowerment/Advocacy/Information/Referral:

The Transition Team recognizes and supports the development of philosophies, values and services that promote and support the individual (and family). Noting that choice is a matter of individual freedom and should not be forfeited because of any disability, the Transition Team is cognizant of the fact that, if there are no attractive or accessible options available, the reality is that there is no choice. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing (and their families) must be provided with the information necessary to make a decision or choice, and assisted to develop and supported to exercise the skills needed to advocate for themselves. Similarly, deaf and hard of hearing individuals represent the most significant component of the stakeholder pool and should share in the processes, decisions and responsibilities of their own service plans and the planning for future services. The Transition Team considers this value to be intrinsic and integral to all aspects of the continuum of services.

Technologies:

The unique demographics and geography of North Dakota assert some challenging demands on the provision of and accessibility to services. Additionally, advances in care, treatment, and educational approaches are coming on scene with increasing speed. The Transition Team recognized this and determined that a significant level of effort and investment must be made in identifying, implementing and sustaining technologies that support these advances and opportunities and efficiencies they represent.

Efficiencies and Good Stewardship:

The Transition Team values the service needs of the “individual” and respects the costs of meeting those needs. These components are not mutually exclusive, but carry with them the need for an honest commitment to make the difficult decisions and budgetary

choices for the right reasons and, with both long and short-term goals in mind. “... There can be neither the expectation that the recommendations of the Transition Team will receive full funding on their own merit, nor that the investment needed to address these new opportunities will be funded at the cost of existing programs and services. Rather, the Transition Team realistically believes that a combination of these approaches must be adopted and that changes in the funding structure (reassigning existing funds and the appropriation of new funds) be thoughtfully considered and pursued in a phased-in approach with the needs of the individual being the determining factor.”

The Transition Team agreed that this approach should be true for the thoughtful and planned use of the campus and its facilities, as well as, the development of revenue generating activities. The Transition Team was appropriately concerned that a number of planning activities relative to both of these concerns were taking place simultaneously, and virtually without any communication and coordination between the groups involved. The Transition Team supported the basic goals of the various efforts, but recommended that they be joined and coordinated and that campus planning and efforts to generate revenue be done in sync with the Future Services Planning efforts (under the purview of the NDS/State Center of Excellence Advisory Council).

#### **Next Steps:**

With the submission of the completed report, the “next steps” officially rest with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. It is understood that the recommendations of the Transition Team are just that, recommendations, that the Department of Public Instruction is under no obligation to accept all or any of them. It is the hope that the work of the Transition Team represents a valuable outline of opportunities based on the extensive work that they have done and the consensus that they have achieved.

The Transition Team has offered a number of specifics related to the tasks it was assigned, the needs and gaps in services, the development of a NDS/State Center of Excellence and other options. The Transition Team has provided an initial draft of a “phase-in” outline and its membership, to a person, has expressed a willingness to continue their involvement in the further development of the plan and its implementation. This may include efforts to secure support for the plan, legislative advocacy, and potential membership on the NDS/State Center of Excellence Advisory Council.

#### **Appreciation:**

This report and its recommendations would not have been possible without the consistent hard work, commitment, time, energy and goodwill of the members of the Transition Team and the support staff from the ND Department of Public Instruction. Their personal and professional investments and subsequent willingness to continue to work with and support the Future Services Plan truly reflect “the excellence and successes of the past blended with the opportunities of the future.” Their efforts are expected to have a positive impact for years to come.

**North Dakota School for the Deaf  
Future Services Plan  
Transition Team Members**

**NDS Future Services Plan  
Transition Team Contact List**

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**NDSD/State Center of Excellence**  
***“Serving all North Dakotans with Hearing Loss”***  
***OUTLINE and DESCRIPTION***

**NDSD/State Center of Excellence**  
***“Serving all North Dakotans with Hearing Loss”***

The North Dakota School for the Deaf/State Center of Excellence (NDSD/SCOE) will be responsible for the maintenance and coordination of existing services, identification and provision of expanded services, expansion of outreach services, development of a model/laboratory school and other related, non-duplicative services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**Basic Structure**

**Purpose:**

The North Dakota School for the Deaf/State Center of Excellence (NDSD/SCOE) will be responsible for the development, coordination and maintenance of a comprehensive continuum of non-duplicative services for all citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing (infants through senior citizens).

**Mission:**

To provide an environment in which individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can access the services and support that they may need to become and remain integrated, productive citizens of the state.

**Center of Excellence Values/Philosophy (adopted from the Transition Team’s Value Statements):**

- The focus will always be on the people (individuals and families) who need/receive/utilize the services.
- All services to be provided and developed will be of the highest – “best” - quality.
- Planning and services will be need-driven, responsive and flexible.
- All activities will reflect a leadership role that is current, and creative.
- The NDSD/SCOE will utilize a partnership/collaboration approach that incorporates tradition, proven strategies and innovative approaches.
- All related laws and regulations will be identified and respected.
- Fiscal responsibility and good stewardship will be stressed.
- Services will be based on a continuum that reflects a broad focus and comprehensive process encompassing all programs serving individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing in the state (infants to senior citizens).
- All services will be available and accessible to all individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- All services will be open to all North Dakotans regardless of race, ethnicity, geographical location or age.

**DPI Portfolio:**

The NDSD/State Center of Excellence will be established under the authority and jurisdiction of the ND Department of Public Instruction (DPI). As such, the ND Department of Public Instruction will be responsible to:

- Establish and maintain consistent state policies and philosophies regarding the education of and provision of non-duplicative services to ND citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Establish an administrative and managerial structure for the NDS/State Center of Excellence that provides management, oversight, planning, budget and fiscal services.
- Develop, implement, monitor and maintain a strategic service plan (comprehensive continuum of services) for the provision of education and other non-duplicative services to ND citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Gather, evaluate and maintain relevant statistics and data regarding the citizens of ND who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Explore and develop innovative/best practices models and partnerships with other state, regional and national educators and service providers.

**NDS/State Center of Excellence:**

The NDS/State Center of Excellence will be staffed by qualified, experienced professionals who may be located on the NDS campus or in regional/outreach offices throughout the state. The NDS/SCOE will be responsible to:

- Identify, develop, manage and maintain a continuum of services that is available and accessible for/to North Dakota citizens (infants through seniors) who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Provide Long/Short Term Educational Services (summer programs)
  - Residential Services
  - Laboratory School
  - Non-traditional Educational Services Based on an “Open/Revolving Door with Wrap-around Services” Philosophy
- Maintain and continuously improve services to school age children (including traditional and non-traditional residential options).
- Maintain and broaden the scope of existing programming and services (infant, preschool, outreach, research, including Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program consultation (IEP), etc.).
- Establish and maintain quality standards that promote a statewide policy/philosophy on services and support consistency from community-to-community, school-to-school, and provider-to-provider.
- Provide a comprehensive information and referral service for individuals, families and the general public.
- Develop, provide and maintain a public education/information/awareness program regarding deaf and hard of hearing issues.
- Provide and coordinate data and research services as they relate to the full continuum of services.
- Serve as the focal, coordinating and support point for the exploration and utilization of technology and technology-based initiatives, and coordinate the implementation of specific options as they are deemed appropriate.
- Coordinate vocational services, employment placement and employment support services with other partners and providers in the state.
- Coordinate and provide social and deaf cultural programs and services.

- Serve as the coordinating partner for the expansion and monitoring (training, certification and accountability) of interpreter services.
- Identify and promote innovative best practices partnerships and models that support quality services and economies of scale at the local, state, regional and national levels.
- Establish, implement and maintain a plan for the management and effective utilization of the NDSO campus, its buildings and facilities (recognizing and supporting the history and traditions of NDSO).
- Coordinate, expand and provide cultural and social activities and opportunities for children and adults who are deaf or hard of hearing, their parents and families.

The NDSO/Center of Excellence Advisory Council will be reorganized and reestablished. Its membership will reflect a broad comprehensive representation of stakeholders including consumers, administrators, legislators, services partners and Future Service Plan Transition Team representatives. The Council must have clearly defined responsibilities to provide oversight, advice and recommendations regarding the management, direction and services provided by the NDSO/State Center of Excellence, and should be actively involved in strategic planning and accountability, and efforts to move the Transition Team’s recommendations from “paper to reality.”

**Potential Partners and Collaborators:**

The NDSO/Center of Excellence will not duplicate or assume the responsibilities of other groups, organizations or agencies, but will work in partnership and collaboration with stakeholders and service providers to identify and meet existing and changing needs and develop and provide appropriate, responsive services and programming.

Potential Partners

- Parents, Consumers and Advocacy Groups
- Schools and Special Education Districts
- Higher Education - Colleges and Universities
- Hospitals and Medical Facilities
- Alumni and Staff of NDSO
- Advocacy Organizations and Agencies
- North Dakota Department of Human Services (Vocational Rehabilitation, Aging Services, Regional Human Service Centers, etc.)
- Child Care Providers
- State and National Education and Service Providers
- AARP
- North Dakota Long Term Care Association
- North Dakota Centers for Independent Living (Bismarck, Fargo, Minot and East Grand Forks)
- North Dakota Dual Sensory Project
- North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind
- County/Area Public Health Units
- Service Groups and Organizations

**Service Populations/Profiles:**

- #1. Infants – 0 to 2 years

- #2. Preschool – 3 to 5 years
- #3. Elementary – 6 to 11 years
- #4. Junior High/Middle School – 12 to 15 years
- #5. High School (transition) - 16 to 21 years (or graduation)
- #6. Young Adults – 22 to 35 years
- #7. Adults – 36 to 64 years
- #8. Seniors Citizens – 65 years and older

### **Specific Examples of Essential/Core Services**

- Assessments and Evaluations
  - Newborn
  - Preschool
  - School age
  - Adults
  - Seniors
- Case Management Services
- Early Intervention Services
- Family Support, Training and Education Services
- Pre-school (Regional Preschool Programs) Services
- Language Training Services
- Interpreter Services
- Assistive Technology (including hearing aids) Services
- Consultations (including IFSP and IEPs)
- Information and Referral Services
- Advocacy/Mentoring and Peer Support
- Education and Consultation (school and special education districts) Services
- Audiology Services
- Vocational Services
- Mental Health Services
- Cochlear Implant Support Services
- Social and Cultural Support and Education Services

**North Dakota School for the Deaf  
Future Services Plan Transition Team Recommendations**

### **Recommendations Specific to HB 1013 - Section 19**

In providing these observations and recommendations, the NDS Future Services Plan Transition Team wishes to ensure that their work will not be viewed or handled as “just another study.” Rather, their efforts have been directed to provide the ND Department of Public Instruction with a product that is not “business as usual,” but a “reflection of the excellence and successes of the past blended with the opportunities of the future.” The members of the Transition Team are prepared to assist in carrying their recommendations forward in a realistic manner.

#### **Task #1:**

*“Review the needs of all deaf and hearing-impaired persons throughout the state and develop a plan to provide comprehensive outreach services to all North Dakota citizens who are deaf or hearing-impaired.”*

#### **Transition Team Observations and Recommendations:**

The Transition Team spent a significant portion of its time on this task. The Team developed a series of profiles (age groups) and compiled extensive information regarding available services, gaps in service, and recommended/needed services for each profile group (See: *Service Needs Grid*, Addendum #6). The Transition Team believes that this work represents information that is significant, not only within the current service environment, but also as a key component in planning and service development (strategic plan).

This effort must be considered in conjunction with the primary recommendation and central pillar of the Future Services Plan, the establishment of the NDS/State Center of Excellence (a recommendation that is more specifically defined in a later section). The focus of future services, as envisioned by the Transition Team, is one of:

- Developing and defining a clear mission;
- Identifying needs and service gaps;
- Collaborating and partnering with other groups, agencies and organizations to provide the services; and
- Establishing a structure with the authority, resources and flexibility to address these points in a specific and ongoing manner.

#### **Task #2:**

*“Explore the development of partnerships with other states relating to the provision of residential and educational services to individuals who are deaf or hearing-impaired.”*

#### **Transition Team Observations and Recommendations:**

The current trends, demands and changes relative to educational and other services for individuals who are deaf or hearing-impaired are neither unique nor exclusive to North Dakota. While these factors are being addressed by other states in a variety of ways, the NDS Future Services Plan Transition Team chooses to recommend and endorse an ongoing, open relationship with all providers. The Team expects that this type of

approach will foster the identification of potential partnerships and encourage the establishment of a network of partners and collegial relationships that will support the development of the types of partnerships and initiatives envisioned by the Legislature.

It must be noted that NDSB is an active member of the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD) and NDSB staff participate in monthly conference calls and attend regional and national CEASD conferences. Additionally, the ND Department of Public Instruction and other groups and organizations are engaged in local, state, regional and national organizations that support this type of approach. The Team recognizes that it is not identifying or recommending specific partnerships at this time, but wishes to compliment the existing and potential options with the clear understanding that the proposed NDSB/State Center of Excellence will be the organizing and coordinating catalyst for future endeavors.

Currently, there are no “out of state students” enrolled at NDSB. However, ND Century Code 25-07-05 clearly allows for this option -

“A child who is deaf or hearing-impaired but who is not a resident of this state may be admitted to the School for the Deaf, provided the annual cost of the child’s education, as determined by the superintendent of public instruction is paid on behalf of the child in advance of the child’s admission and on a yearly basis thereafter. The school may not admit a child who is not a resident of the state to the exclusion of a child who is a resident of this state.”

Based on the Individualized Education Program (IEP) planning process, North Dakota students could be placed at an out-of-state program with tuition based on the fee structure of the specific agency.

The Transition Team believes that these two options represent a tiny fraction of the potential opportunities that exist to effectively, efficiently and economically address “.....the development of partnerships with other states relating to the provision of residential and educational services to individuals who are deaf or hearing-impaired” in North Dakota.

The Transition Team recommends that the NDSB/State Center of Excellence Advisory Committee take an active interest and role in this component and suggests that efforts to pursue these types of partnerships be identified, prioritized and addressed through the strategic planning process.

**Task/Goal #3:**

*“Review current research and national trends in the provision of services to students who are deaf or hearing-impaired.”*

**Transition Team Observations and Recommendations:**

The values developed and adopted by the Transition Team throughout their work reflect a desire that any proposed services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing be of the highest quality, and that ND be seen as a leader in the field. Consistent with this

goal, the Transition Team reviewed specific documents and materials throughout their meetings to build their awareness of current research findings as well as local, state, national and international trends in the education of deaf or hard of hearing individuals. Further, expert representation on the Transition Team contributed relevant research data and reported current developments from national conferences as needed.

Following is a brief outline of areas covered in the presentations, documents, reviews, discussions and reports:

- History of NDS
- Education Philosophies
- Current Services
  - NDS
  - Local Schools
  - DPI
- Facility Inventory
- Demographics – Current and Future Projections/Trends
  - Youth/Adults
  - Rural/Urban
- Past Initiatives/Studies
- Public Input
  - Parents/Families
  - Students/Alumni
  - Educators
  - General Public
- Best Practices
  - National Programs and Trends
  - State Programs and Trends
  - Local Programs and Trends
- Economic Concerns/Issues – General and Specific
- Local/State Impacts and Options
- Budget Info/Issues
- Various Articles and Publications

A comprehensive listing of the documents, resources and other information reviewed by the Transition Team was referenced earlier.

**Task #4:**

*“Meet regularly with a transition team appointed by the superintendent of public instruction consisting of representation from the legislative assembly, parents of school for the deaf, students, school for the deaf employees, members of the Devils Lake community, school for the deaf alumni, and others.”*

**Transition Team Observations and Recommendations:**

Previous sections of this report have provided a broad perspective of the meeting process. The Transition Team values the energy, efforts and commitment of its members and is comfortable that it has “done its work” throughout this initiative. The materials, specifically the meeting summaries, provide a more detailed description of their activities and discussions and Transition Team members encourage the recipients of this report to review those materials. All of the information and materials may be accessed on the NDSO website: [www.ndsd.gov](http://www.ndsd.gov).

**Task #5:**

*“Explore the feasibility of implementing revenue-generating activities at the school for the deaf.”*

**Transition Team Observations and Recommendations:**

There are efforts currently underway at NDSO to develop and expand operational services and options that can serve as revenue generators. These include:

- Rental of unused space (current entities renting space include EduTech, Department of Commerce, Protection and Advocacy, Head Start, and Martial Arts Program);
- Provision of Interpreter Services; and
- Tuition for ASL (American Sign Language) IVN classes from participating North Dakota high schools through the Northeast Education Services Cooperative.

Under the direction of the current administration and with the expected assistance and direction of the NDSO/State Center of Excellence Advisory Council efforts must be continued and expanded to identify other options and avenues to generate revenues. These include the more efficient and effective use of campus buildings and facilities (rentals), development of fee-for-service options, expansion of partnership options and collaborative ventures with local, state and regional partners, and collaborative use of buildings and facilities with other education partners (Devils Lake Public Schools, Lake Region State College, the Area Vocational Tech Center, the local Parks Department, and Adult Education).

**Task #6:**

*“Develop a long-range site and facility plan for the school for the deaf campus.”*

**Transition Team Observations and Recommendations:**

There are multiple processes underway to address the issue of long-range site and facilities planning on the NDSO campus. Although these have been initiated with the very best of intentions, it must be noted that there has been little or no contact, communication or coordination between the various groups. The absence of a coordinated approach has resulted in a number of misunderstandings and concerns. Timeline and fiscal pressures have further magnified the problems.

The Transition Team questions the logic of developing a “master” plan for the use of NDSU campus facilities and buildings before the Future Service Plan has been developed (the mission should be clearly established and carefully considered in relation to the use of the existing or potential facilities).

Concerns were raised regarding plans for the campus as they relate to the recognition and preservation of the NDSU history and tradition (i.e., the pond and bridge, and the materials currently stored in the Trades Building).

Funds (\$800,000) were appropriated by the 2009 Legislature to make needed improvements to the Trades Building with the intent that it would be marketed and utilized as a potential source of income. Because of the context within which these efforts have proceeded, no decisions have been made to-date and, consequently, it has not been possible to identify a potential renter or secure the necessary financial leverage to cover the full costs of renovation. The Transition Team is concerned that legislators may be frustrated that this effort has not moved forward and agreed to support the efforts of the DPI to initiate the basic updates needed to bring the Trades Building up to current building, safety and accessibility codes. This approach would prepare the building for further renovations which can be identified and determined at a later date, and still move the process forward in a considered and thoughtful way.

The Transition Team concluded and agreed that the efforts already underway by the NDSU Facilities Committee, EAPC (contracted architects/engineers), and the Future Services Plan Transition Team should be merged and the collaborative group encouraged to consider and support the current and future (long-term) mission and needs of the NDSU/State Center of Excellence concept. Additionally, these efforts should leverage every opportunity for the full and efficient use of the buildings and grounds in partnership with the community, state and local service providers and private entities (area Head Start and Lake Region Human Services were noted as logical partners). Further, any plan for campus facilities should recognize and support the preservation of the NDSU history and traditions and should integrate the NDSU historical “treasures” currently stored in the Trades Building into a more accessible and open campus-wide display that can be maintained for alumni, guests and posterity.

### **Costs/Cost Issues**

Consistent with the Transition Team’s established values, both the education and service needs of “the individual” and the costs of meeting those needs must be addressed.

There can be neither the expectation that the recommendations of the Transition Team will receive full funding on their own merit, nor that the investment needed to address these new opportunities will be funded at the cost of existing programs and services. Rather, the Transition Team realistically believes that a combination of these approaches must be adopted and that changes in the funding structure (reassigning existing fund and the appropriation of new funds) be thoughtfully considered and pursued in a phased-in approach with the needs of the individual being the determining factor.

The Transition Team debated and considered cost comparisons between the provision of services in the existing residential model versus community-based inclusion models (NDSB vs. local school districts). The Transition Team concluded that, beyond establishing some general parameters, this effort is neither possible nor reliable because of the significant variance in factors between these two models and the service differentials incumbent upon the specific needs of individual students as identified in the Individualized Education Program (IEP). It is just not possible to compare the two. Additionally, the sources of the funds may influence the numbers and cause them to be suspect.

**Primary Recommendation:**

The primary conclusion and recommendation of the NDSB Future Services Plan Transition Team is that North Dakota establish the NDSB/State Center of Excellence (NDSB/SCOE) as the entity responsible for the maintenance and coordination of a comprehensive continuum of available and accessible services to meet the expanding and ever-changing needs of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing regardless of race, ethnicity, geographical location or age (See: *NDSB/SCOE Description, Addendum #6, and NDSB/SCOE Phase-In Outline, Addendum #7*).

As indicated under Task/Goal #1, this recommendation encompasses the specific needs, identifies the mission and focus of future services, and establishes the necessary structure, authority and resources needed to take advantage of the opportunities identified in this effort. The previously referenced documents are intended to supply some of the specifics of how, what and when.

**Additional Recommendations:**

The following recommendations represent components or aspects of future services that may be assigned or come under purview of the NDSB/SCOE, but are significant enough that the Transition Team chose to highlight them separately. Additionally, several of them may require legislative assistance or action.

- Establish a uniform, consistent process for training, certifying and monitoring ASL interpreters in numbers that will meet the existing and future needs.
- Establish a universal infant screening program in all birthing hospitals.
- Establish ASL as a credited option for foreign language requirements in all North Dakota high schools and be considered under the same designation within the university system.
- Review, reorganize and reestablish the NDSB/Center of Excellence Advisory Council with clearly defined responsibilities and reflecting a broad comprehensive membership including stakeholders/consumers, administrators, legislators, services partners and Future Services Plan Transition Team representatives. Activities of this group would also include:
  - An active and involved leadership role with broad representation of the stakeholders who would be directly responsible to advocate for the FSP and support the NDSB transition;
  - The development of a strategy to tell the NDSB/SCOE Story;
  - The development and implementation of a strategy to assist DPI in moving the necessary bills through the legislature;
  - The provision of supporting information, testimony and material to the legislature and the public;
  - The prioritization of the needs and “phase-in” process; and

- The development, implementation, and monitoring of the NDS/SCOE strategic plan.

**NDS Accreditation Issues:**

Regrettably, the Transition Team became aware of some issues and concerns related to the accreditation of the NDS high school program very late in the process. The Transition Team's reaction was to recommend that the Department of Public Instruction and the NDS's administration formalize agreements with Local Education Agency (LEAs), the Devils Lake Public School District, and distance learning providers to ensure the availability of student-centered choices based on the needs identified in each student's Individualized Education Program – in short, options to assure that students receive an accredited diploma upon satisfactory completion of their high school curriculum. The Transition Team has requested and is seeking further information and clarification regarding this issue and is, at the time of this report, awaiting a response from the Department of Public Instruction.