

LEGISLATIVE AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In late 1970 during the Nixon Administration, Congress passed the Family Planning and Research Act. The philosophy behind the Act is that every person of childbearing age has the right to control her fertility and the number and spacing of her children, regardless of income. This Act resulted in the first federal funds available for private and public agencies to develop family planning programs to serve low-income women. Before the Family Planning and Research Act, family planning services for low income North Dakotans were practically non-existent, especially for those ineligible for public assistance. Services available through the private sector were too expensive for low-income individuals. Prior to the Act, the first and only public agency that offered family planning services in North Dakota was Fargo Community Health. Because of insufficient donations, that agency had to limit services to a small number of clients.

In 1970, as a result of this legislation, six local health departments and private non-profit agencies in North Dakota established their own independently operated family planning programs, designed primarily to serve low-income women. Jamestown, Grand Forks, Bismarck, Fargo, Williston, and southeast North Dakota were allocated funds directly from DHEW (Department of Health, Education and Welfare).

In 1972, the six agencies were combined into the single statewide family planning program (North Dakota Family Planning Program) administered by the North Dakota Department of Health. Since that time, the number of delegate agencies has varied based on availability of funds. There are currently nine delegate agencies with an additional eight satellite-outreach offices, which provide family planning services.