

Budget Section
Representative Ken Svedjan, Chairman
Department of Human Services Request for State Hospital
Sex Offender Program
June 14, 2006

Mr. Chairman and members of the Budget Section for the record my name is Alex C. Schweitzer, the Superintendent of the Department of Human Services Institutions, the North Dakota State Hospital and Developmental Center. Thank you for allowing me to present on the Department of Human Services request for the North Dakota State Hospital Sex Offender Program.

The occupancy level in the sex offender program at the time of this report is 49 sex offenders, with 37 patients in commitment status, 9 patients recommended for commitment and 3 patients currently being evaluated. The hospital has referral information on 7 more sex offenders who need to be scheduled for evaluation in the next three months.

The hospital has experienced two major incidents on the sex offender unit within the last nine months, an elopement by a sex offender and an attack by a sex offender on a staff member. Lately we are experiencing the admissions of very difficult and dangerous patients whom require heightened security and safety measures. The potential for more major incidents are highly likely unless we make some major changes in this unit. As such, we have instituted a number of safety and security changes to protect staff and other patients from the more potentially volatile patients. The current two sex offender units are also over capacity and overcrowding heightens the chances of incidents.

The capacity issues and the increased dangerousness of admissions to the sex offender unit have resulted in a need for additional space and staff.

Currently we are seven (7) patients over capacity in the two sex offender units and as mentioned we have seven (7) individuals scheduled for evaluation. Given this information, the hospital has been planning to open a third unit as of July 2006 and will have fourteen (14) patients in occupancy by the fall of 2006. The third unit will have capacity for twenty (20) patients. The hospital has hired all eleven (11) of the staff approved at the March Emergency Commission meeting to provide for higher staff to patient ratios because of the increased numbers of patients having violent and aggressive behavior. The Emergency Commission has also approved the addition of eight (8) more staff for the opening of the third unit contingent on the Department providing more information to the Budget Section.

The chart in Attachment A. outlines the industry standard of staff to resident ratios for managing the sex offender population at the State Hospital. The breakdown of new staff additions includes one (1) evaluator, one (1) program staff and seventeen (17) direct care staff. Of the seventeen (17) direct care staff, four (4) were assigned to Secure 1, the unit with the most aggressive patients, three (3) to Secure 2 and ten (10) to the new third unit. The total salary and benefit cost for the additional 19 positions for one year is \$650,000.

Attachment B. contains the current status of the State Hospital budget, both for traditional services and secure services (sex offender program).

Again thank you and I would be happy to respond to any questions.