

Testimony
Department of Human Services
Commission on Alternatives to Incarceration
Representative, Lisa Wolf, Chairman
March 24, 2010

Chairman Wolf and members of the Commission on Alternatives to Incarceration, I am Pamela Sagness, Prevention Administrator with the Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services. I am here today to provide information on the substance abuse prevention coordinators and the North Dakota community readiness survey.

North Dakota Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinators

The Department funds twelve (12) Prevention Coordinator positions throughout the state of North Dakota. The Division contracts with the Rural Crime & Justice Center of Minot State University for eight (8) regional prevention coordinators, located in each of the 8 human service regions. There are also four (4) tribal prevention coordinators representing Standing Rock, Three Affiliated Tribes, Turtle Mountain, and Spirit Lake. These coordinators provide innovative, culturally appropriate, substance abuse prevention strategies to local communities. Prevention Coordinators offer resources and materials, education programs for youth, families, and communities, drug- and alcohol-free events, multi-agency collaboration, and information on environmental strategies.

The prevention coordinators are focusing on five (5) primary goal statements: (Attachment A)

- Low awareness of substance abuse issue in ND
- High level of underage drinking & binge drinking
- High level of adult binge drinking
- High level of inhalant use among middle school students
- High level of prescription drug use about youth & adults

Prevention Coordinators and Safe Community Coordinators

I would like to briefly discuss the difference between the Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinators and the Safe Community Coordinators. The Safe Community Coordinators are funded by the Department of Transportation. Safe Community coordinators promotes injury prevention activities at the local level working to solve local highway, traffic safety and other injury problems by involving its citizens in addressing injury problems through the development of coalitions. The Department of Human Services and Department of Transportation meet regularly and collaborate in order to avoid duplication of services. Coordinators at the local level work as community partners and utilize one another as a resource and referral source. Therefore, the Prevention coordinators focus on Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) prevention while Safe Community Coordinators focus on Injury Prevention, specifically related to highway and traffic safety.

Community Readiness Survey

Lastly, in 2008, the Division funded a statewide community readiness survey in order to gauge the readiness of North Dakota citizens, professionals, and communities to take action regarding substance

abuse issues. The results of the survey suggest a readiness level of **denial/resistance** – meaning, at least some community members recognize that there is a concern, but there is little recognition that it might be occurring locally or **vague awareness** – meaning that most feel that there is a local concern but there is no immediate motivation to do anything about it.

Knowing the level of readiness for the state of North Dakota allows the Division and prevention system partners to plan strategies that will be appropriate for the community's needs. (Attachment B)

Thank you.