

Testimony
Health Services Committee
Senator Lee, Chairman
August 1, 2017

Chairman Lee and members of the Health Services Committee, I am Susan Foerster, Superintendent of the Life Skills and Transition Center, for the Department of Human Services (Department). I am here today to provide you an overview of programs and services of the Life Skills and Transition Center (LSTC).

Overview

The LSTC is a state-operated residential, vocational, and clinical services agency that provides services for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. This includes our intermediate care facility (ICF) and home and community based (HCBS) residential services. We are one of the service options for people in the continuum of care determined by their unique needs. The LSTC is subject to the same certification and accreditation guidelines as all other North Dakota community providers.

People are admitted to the LSTC only when their needs have been demonstrated to exceed community resources. All possible community resources are explored before admission to the LSTC is considered; with the goal being to discharge the person back to their home communities. Generally, people come to LSTC because they need the specialized expertise available due to behavioral or medical conditions that are complex and chronic.

The current population of people residing at the LSTC includes people admitted for a very short period of time for crisis support services (3-7

days), crisis stabilization services, or people that currently call the LSTC home.

Transition to the Community Committee

Transition efforts at the LSTC have been in place for a number of years. This effort was intensified by legislation in the 2005 session that required the Department to further transition individuals from the center to the community. The Department director convened a task force of stakeholders in 2005 to prepare a plan in response to the mandate from House Bill 1012 – Section 16, to transfer appropriate LSTC residents to communities. The superintendent of the LSTC chairs the task force and members include Department staff, community providers, family/guardians and community advocates. This committee continues to oversee transition to the community research and project efforts.

Subcommittees of the transition committee include:

- Special Project Subcommittee,
- Transition/Diversion Subcommittee,
- Safety Net and Crisis Support Services Subcommittee

Transition/Diversion

The LSTC works intensively with the Department’s Developmental Disabilities Division, community providers, regional staff, families/guardians and other stakeholders to provide clinical and staff activities to help people remain in their home communities and move back to their home communities. Transition plans are uniquely developed for each person through the interdisciplinary team process.

Each person’s family and team makes a decision of what part of the state an individual wants to move to – or can consider statewide referral. With

the explicit permission of the individual and any parent/guardian, we use the Therap software Referral System that all approved private providers access to accept referrals to consider for their services. This process has contributed to our population changing from nearly 150 people in 2000 to about 70 people in ICF services today.

Many people currently living at LSTC were not at the LSTC 10 years ago, as many people have also needed our services and have been admitted. From 2005 to 2015, of the 73 people who were admitted and left LSTC during that time, the average stay was 1.8 years and 85 percent came and left within 3.3 years.

Programs at the LSTC:

The LSTC provides residential, vocational and outreach services. Current services include residential beds, vocational slots, behavioral health caseloads, service events throughout the state, and CARES open cases.

Residential Services: The LSTC provides 24-hour comprehensive services and supports including medical and clinical programming. This includes services for adults with sexual offending behaviors, those requiring skilled nursing or behavioral health services, and services for youth in transition from the agency to community settings.

For residential beds, we currently support 53 people in the ICF adult program, 16 in the ICF youth program, and 11 adults in the HCBS (apartment living) program. This is a total of 80 people, but the overall residential numbers can range up to 90 people during a year.

Vocational Services: The Work Activity Program provides services for people at vocational work at LSTC and at sites in the greater Grafton

community. The LSTC is pursuing the purchase of the Job Service North Dakota building to relocate more Dakota East vocational services to the community.

Vocational, known as the Dakota East program, is increasingly operated off campus in the communities in the Grafton region. In addition to the 80 people served residentially that Dakota East supports during the day in school, work, and volunteer/leisure, the program assists four additional Grafton-area residents with their day activities.

Outreach Services:

The goal of our community outreach services to persons with disabilities, their families, and providers is to help people be successfully supported so they can remain in their communities. Specific components include:

- Independent Supported Living Arrangements (ISLA) - LSTC staff support individuals renting their own homes in local, community housing. Eleven people are currently served with space for 13.
- Clinical Assistance, Resources, and Evaluation Service (CARES) - A team of specialists including clinical and direct support staff provide a range of consultation services, including in-home and on-site supports in the community to prevent admissions and readmissions, and to assist in transitioning people from the LSTC. Referrals range from 25 to 50 people per year, and there are around 80 on-going cases. Annual service events range from 150 to 225 per year. The vast majority of people served are never admitted to LSTC.
- CARES Clinic – This service assures that people have access to physical, occupational and speech therapy services, adaptive equipment services, dental services and medical services and consultation. The CARES Clinic provides people with intellectual

and developmental disabilities in the region access to our specialized professionals on a fee-for-service basis. The caseload is around 250 to 300 people, and there are over 1,200 service events per year.

- Developmental Disabilities Behavioral Health Services - This team of psychologists and applied behavior analysts deliver behavioral assessment and intervention services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout North Dakota. They work on a fee-for-service basis to consult with providers and families through regional human service centers in all eight regions, work with more than 20 provider agencies, and have an ongoing caseload of 250-300 people statewide.

In Closing

The Transition Task Force, established in 2005, has been conducting an ongoing study of the reasons people are admitted to, remain at, and transition home from LSTC. We welcome the opportunity to share all that has been learned with this larger project.

Continued work is needed in transition and transformation of the LSTC:

- to fully define the safety net role of LSTC in a way that all stakeholders, DHS and community partners agree upon, and
- to expand the role of the Professional Services Institute on Developmental Disabilities to support private provider capacity to support people with developmental disabilities and behavioral health challenges.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.