

**Budget Committee on Government Services
Representative Al Carlson, Chairman
North Dakota State Hospital Sexual Offender Program
September 22, 2005**

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, for the record my name is Alex C. Schweitzer, the Superintendent of the North Dakota State Hospital. I appear before you today to provide the committee with information on the sexual offender program at the North Dakota State Hospital.

Sexual Offender Program Capacity and Future Expansion:

The Sexual Offender program has now been in operation at the State Hospital since 1997.

The North Dakota State Hospital currently operates forty-two (42) beds for sex offenders in two units in the GM Building. The hospital at the time of this presentation has thirty-seven (37) sex offenders in the two units. Twenty-seven (27) of the sex offenders are committed for treatment, six (6) have been recommended to the district court for commitment and four (4) are scheduled for evaluation.

The hospital continues to track possible referrals to the sexual offender program through contacts with the Department of Corrections and states attorneys. The hospital is currently aware of at least five sex offenders that will be referred for evaluation in the next six months. As such it's likely that the 42 beds at the hospital's sexual offender program will be full in the very near future.

Page Two: Budget Committee on Government Services Testimony

The hospital plans to expand to a third sexual offender unit in the GM Building, because of the growing occupancy and security issues on the two current units.

Staffing:

The sexual offender units at the hospital require staffing to manage the population effectively and meet the hospital's accreditation standards. The proposed level of staff is essential to providing a safe and secure environment that prevents injury to staff and patients. These challenging and dangerous patients are involved in daily programming, so the hospital relies on ward structure, secure common areas and staffing to ensure safety and security. Thus, we need staff to supervise and manage patients in several different locations at one time, including ward activities, off ward recreational activities and therapy groups. The proposed staffing level also allows us to meet the standard of 31.5 treatment hours per patient per week.

The hospital needs to manage this population around the clock, 365 days per year. The hospital needs a ratio of one staff for every three patients on the Day and PM shifts and two staff for every five patients on the Night shift, in order to meet the above stated safety and security requirements. In addition we need professional staff to provide medical, psychiatric, treatment and evaluation services.

Budget and Cost Analysis:

The hospital's 2005 – 2007 biennial budget for the two sexual offender units of 42 beds is \$5,459,220. The total cost per sex offender is currently \$178.06 per day or \$64,992 per year.

The hospital is currently developing a cost analysis for the third unit and this will be shared with the committee when completed. Certainly, we will be able to share some of the professional staff from the current two units, but also some additional staff will be added to serve the anticipated increase in the sexual offender population.

Security in the Sexual Offender Unit:

The hospital recently completed a root cause analysis because of the elopement of a sex offender from the hospital's secure services unit during the month of August. The hospital is implementing numerous risk reduction strategies as a result of this analysis. The majority of the changes will require very little cost. The big-ticket items include replacing the windows in the building, ventilation in the building, the increased usage of sensors and cameras, the securing of common areas in the basement and the use of a fence around the building. The hospital is currently advertising for an architectural firm to produce plans and costs for this security project.

Thank you for the opportunity to present on the status of the sexual offender program at the State Hospital. I look forward to providing a tour of the sexual offender unit for the committee. I would also be open to any questions at this time.

