

## **Support SB 2209**

### **North Dakota House Judiciary Committee**

**March 5, 2025**

Chair Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Jonnica Norick, and I serve as the Bismarck region site manager and Lead Forensic Nurse for Central Dakota Forensic Nurse Examiners (CDFNE). I am testifying today in support of SB 2209, a bill that will continue critical forensic nursing services for victims of violence across our state.

Today I want to highlight the work forensic nurses in our state do, the survivors we serve, and why continuing this program is not just beneficial, but is essential.

What sets forensic nursing apart is the specialized one-on-one comprehensive trauma informed care we provide to individuals experiencing some of the most traumatic moments of their lives. Our nurses are trained to recognize, document, and respond to injuries caused by sexual violence, strangulation, physical assault, domestic violence, and child abuse or neglect. Our training includes specialized courses in treating adult/adolescent and pediatric patients, clinical training, and ongoing education.

In addition, through the pilot program passed by the ND legislature in 2023, CDFNE nurses completed the Interpersonal Partner Violence Nurse Examiner (IPVNE) certificate program offered by the International Association of Forensic Nurses. This advanced training enhances our ability to provide care to victims of violence and reinforces our role as essential members of multidisciplinary response teams—an evidence-based best practice in addressing violence. Research shows that forensic medical exams conducted by trained forensic nurses improve health outcomes for victims and significantly increase prosecution rates for perpetrators.

Important elements of our work include detailed charting, precise measurements, swabbing for DNA collection, collection of debris evidence, collection of clothing, individual photographs of injuries, and use of specialized equipment such as colposcopes and alternative light sources—elements that are crucial not only for medical care but also for providing tools for victims seeking justice through legal proceedings. These exams are intricate sometimes lasting 6-8 hours, as we aim to provide trauma-informed care that makes victims feel safe, seen, and supported. Forensic Nurses are also trained to testify in court.

Under the pilot program passed by the legislature, CDFNE nurses provided trauma-informed forensic medical exams to 62 individuals experiencing domestic violence, child abuse or neglect from February 1 to December 31, 2024. I've attached a breakdown of these statistics and others to the end of my testimony. These numbers represent real people—children, adults, and families—seeking care after unthinkable experiences. Behind every statistic is a story and I would like to share a few of them:

**Victim #1: Age 78** The victim was admitted to the ICU due to severe injuries after being beaten with a club for approximately 10 minutes. The exam included 149 photos documenting physical abuse injuries, including open wounds on her head that required 14 stitches and a hairline wrist fracture. The victim worked closely with our forensic nursing team and an advocate from their local advocacy agency. The pilot program enabled us to also provide follow-up care, including additional examinations to monitor healing and ongoing support through the advocate.

**Victim #2: Age 16** The victim reported physical abuse in a foster family placement. He described being grabbed by the neck and experiencing difficulty breathing due to pressure applied to his chest. During our examination, we identified tenderness in his collarbone, prompting us to refer him for an X-ray. The imaging confirmed an unhealed collarbone fracture, aligning with the findings from the initial forensic examination.

**Victim #3: Age 4** The victim presented with confirmed abuse, including kicking and hitting, which resulted in bruising across her body. Our documentation included 89 photos of physical abuse. Further examination revealed that her legs had been submerged in scalding hot water, causing burns. Bruising on her neck and ears was consistent with strangulation.

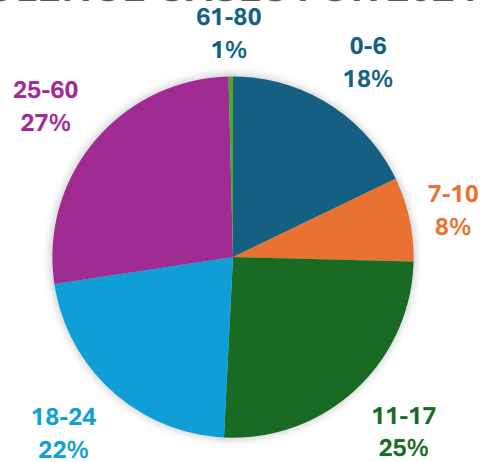
Each of these stories reinforces why continuing this program is so important. Without access to forensic nursing services, these individuals may not receive the compassionate care they need, and opportunities for justice may be lost.

Today we have an opportunity to send a clear message that victims of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect in our state matter, their stories matter, and their healing matters. I ask for a DO PASS recommendation on SB 2209.

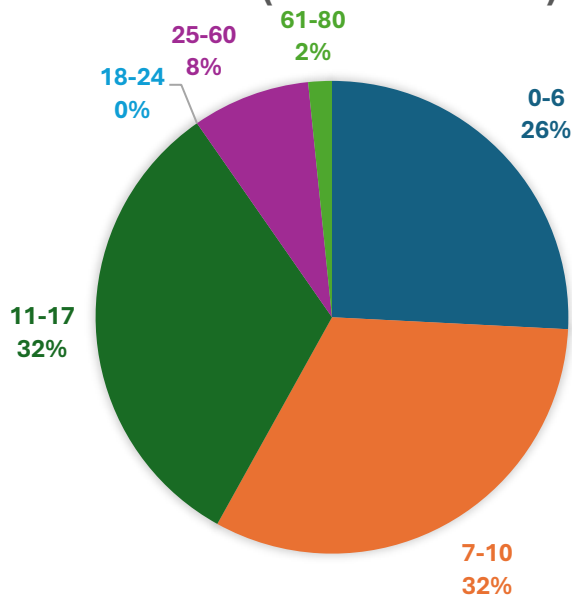
Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to supporting survivors of violence. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Jonica Norick  
Bismarck Site Manager and Lead Forensic Nurse  
Central Dakota Forensic Nurse Examiners

## CENTRAL DAKOTA FORENSIC NURSE EXAMINERS SEXUAL VIOLENCE CASES FOR 2024 TOTAL 252



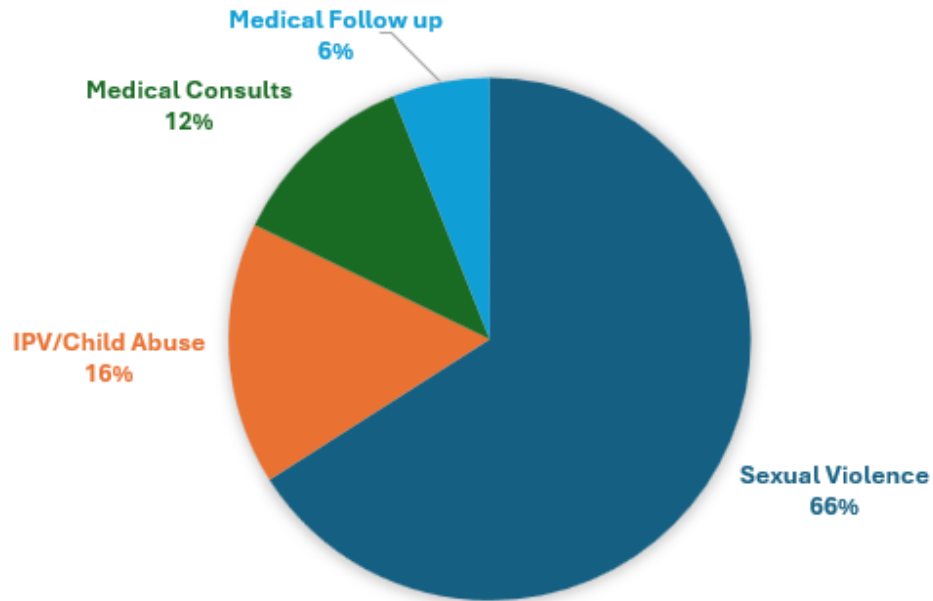
## DV/CHILD PHYSICAL ABUSE AND NEGLECT TOTAL 62 (FEB-DEC 2024)



Please note:

The IPV/Child Abuse numbers are for Feb-Dec 2024 only

## CENTRAL DAKOTA FORENSIC NURSE EXAMINERS MEDICAL SERVICES PROVIDED IN 2024



Please note:

In addition to the medical services highlighted in these graphs, CDFNE also provides public education, awareness, and prevention efforts across western North Dakota.