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## **ACUTE PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT COMMITTEE**

Monday, October 25, 2021  
Room 322 Learning Resource Center Building  
North Dakota State Hospital  
Jamestown, North Dakota

Representative Jon O. Nelson, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**Members present:** Representatives Jon O. Nelson, Emily O'Brien, Randy A. Schobinger, Michelle Strinden; Senators Kyle Davison, Dick Dever, Kathy Hogan\*, Tim Mathern

**Members absent:** None

**Others present:** See [Appendix A](#)

*\*Attended remotely*

**It was moved by Senator Davison, seconded by Senator Mathern, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the September 28, 2021, meeting be approved as distributed.**

### **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEEDS OF INCARCERATED ADULTS**

Dr. Amy Veith, Clinical Director, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, presented information ([Appendix B](#)) regarding behavioral health services available at the James River Correctional Center (JRCC) and James River Minimum Unit (JRMU). She noted:

- JRCC is a medium security level prison on the State Hospital campus with 437 beds and 399 residents as of October 18, 2021;
- JRMU is a minimum security level prison on the State Hospital campus with 60 beds and 55 residents as of October 18, 2021;
- JRCC employs 14 behavioral health staff and JRMU employs 4 behavioral health staff who are educated and licensed in addiction counseling, clinical mental health counseling, social work, marriage and family counseling, professional counseling, and psychology;
- Behavioral health services available to residents at JRCC includes the thinking for a change program; cognitive behavioral interventions for substance abuse, cognitive behavioral interventions for sexual offenders; the conflict resolution program; the new pathways to healthy relationships program; the advanced practices and sexual offending maintenance program; the nurturing parenting program; a Dungeons & Dragons role-playing group; and a lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender support group;
- Behavioral health services available to residents at JRMU includes the thinking for a change program, cognitive behavioral interventions for substance abuse, the new pathways to healthy relationships program, the advanced practices program, and the nurturing parenting program;
- The Special Assistant Unit of JRCC includes 24 resident beds and 4 observation cells for residents who are unable to be successfully housed in general population areas of JRCC, including residents transferred for acute psychosis needs, a lack of medication compliance, serious and persistent suicide or self-harm attempts, general mental health stabilization, or behavioral issues;
- Goals of the Special Assistant Unit include stabilizing mental health of residents in order for residents to live safely and effectively in general population housing or the community, providing guidance and foundation to obtain insight into mental illness and treatment, and stabilizing and improving mental health symptoms and concerns through creative and individualized programming; and

- Areas of need at JRCC include specialized housing space, specifically for the Special Assistant Unit, programming space for life skills areas and group services, and the recruitment and retention of qualified behavioral health staff.

The committee toured the JRCC grounds and facilities, including the Special Assistant Unit.

## **ACUTE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALIZATION AND RESIDENTIAL CARE**

### **Mental Health Trends, Incarceration Rates, and Sentencing Statistics**

#### **Supreme Court**

Ms. Sara Behrens, Staff Attorney, State Court Administrator's office, Supreme Court, presented information ([Appendix C](#)) regarding incarceration rates and sentencing statistics of individuals with mental illness in the Southeast Judicial District. She noted:

- Statistics regarding incarceration rates and sentence terms of defendants who are mentally ill are not available because personal characteristics of defendants are not collected by the courts; and
- Data is not available related to a perceived trend of individuals in the Southeast Judicial District who are released by the State Hospital and later commit a crime being sentenced to longer-than-average prison terms to continue treatment through the correctional system.

#### **Murphy Law Office**

Mr. Paul C. Murphy, Murphy Law Office, presented information regarding mental and behavioral health trends and needs in the state, including incarceration rates and sentencing statistics of individuals with mental illness. He noted:

- Mental and behavioral health concerns are often lifelong conditions for most individuals;
- If mental and behavioral health services are provided to individuals at younger ages, the individuals may not enter the corrections system in future years; and
- Insurance providers often do not provide adequate coverage for mental and behavioral health services.

### **Mental and Behavioral Health Services Available and Services Needed**

#### **Mosaic Wellness Center**

Mr. Jonathan Franklin, Co-Founder, Mosaic Wellness Center, presented information ([Appendix D](#)) regarding behavioral health services available in rural communities and any recommendations of additional services and needs in the state. He noted:

- The national average of residents per mental health provider is 373 residents to 1 provider, North Dakota's ratio is 510 residents to 1 provider, and Wells County has a ratio of 3,982 residents to 1 provider;
- There is a need for psychologists and other behavioral health professionals in rural areas of North Dakota;
- Other behavioral health needs of rural North Dakota include additional psychiatric beds, telehealth equipment and programs, facilities for group therapy and parenting classes, grief therapy funding, afterschool programs for children ages 12 and older, funding for post-traumatic stress disorder treatment of first responders, and funding for transportation costs for these services; and
- Mosaic Wellness Center intends to open a facility in Harvey to provide mental and behavioral health services for rural North Dakota, including marriage and family therapy, addiction counseling, play therapy, behavioral therapy, trauma therapy, and psychology services.

In response to a question from a committee member, Mr. Franklin said the behavioral health professional needed most in the Harvey region is a play therapist for young children.

#### **North Dakota Hospital Association**

Mr. Tim Blasl, President, North Dakota Hospital Association, presented information regarding acute psychiatric hospitalization, residential care, and behavioral health services available and any recommendations of additional services and needs in the state. He noted of the 47 hospitals that are members of the North Dakota Hospital Association, 7 hospitals have an inpatient acute psychiatric care unit.

#### **Altru Health System**

Ms. Janice Hamscher, Executive Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer, Altru Health System, presented information ([Appendix E](#)) regarding acute psychiatric hospitalization, residential care, and behavioral health services available and any recommendations of additional services and needs in the state. She noted:

- Altru Health System provides behavioral health services for residents of northeastern North Dakota, including adult, children, and adolescent outpatient treatment services provided by psychiatrists and licensed social work counselors;
- Altru Health System operates a 23 bed, inpatient psychiatric program for adults and adolescents, which has experienced more demand for services than beds available;
- The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has increased the need for acute psychiatric care in the state and the State Hospital is unable to meet the increased demand;
- Northeastern North Dakota has enough demand for 70 to 80 additional inpatient psychiatric beds;
- Barriers for behavioral health services in northeastern North Dakota include an insufficient number of local inpatient beds, delays in finding an acceptable facility, holding patients for extended periods of time, and lack of safe transportation for patients with acute psychiatric needs that requires ambulance responders to be away from their local communities;
- A service not offered by Altru Health System in the Grand Forks area that is of need in the area is for substance abuse and chemical dependency services; and
- Altru Health System would support higher education programs to provide tuition assistance for psychiatrists, therapists, and other health care students to help address behavioral health workforce shortages in the state.

In response to questions from committee members, Ms. Hamscher noted:

- The amount of insurance reimbursement for mental and behavioral health services, specifically for acute psychiatric services, would need to increase for Altru Health Systems to consider building an acute psychiatric care unit;
- Insurance reimbursement is not available for mental and behavioral health services provided to hospitalized individuals through telehealth resources but is available for individuals in outpatient facilities;
- Altru Health System provides outpatient acute psychiatric services to children younger than 12, but children in need of inpatient acute psychiatric services are referred to other community providers; and
- Altru Health System is considering a partnership that would allow for the transfer of behavioral health patients to a new location, resulting in an expansion of the 23 bed inpatient psychiatric program.

### **State Hospital Services, Utilization, Condition, and Needs**

Dr. Rosalie Etherington, Chief Clinics Officer/State Hospital Superintendent, Department of Human Services, presented information ([Appendix F](#)) regarding behavioral health services provided at the State Hospital; bed capacity and utilization, including buildings currently occupied and buildings no longer in service; and future bed capacity and utilization needs of the State Hospital and patients ([Appendix G](#)). She noted:

#### **State Hospital Services and Utilization**

- Behavioral health services available at the State Hospital include residential substance use disorder treatment, residential sexual offender treatment, residential transitional living, outpatient substance use disorder treatment, outpatient adult forensic assessments, outpatient youth forensic assessments, and outpatient restoration treatment;
- The State Hospital has 100 inpatient acute psychiatric beds but 25 beds have been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to establish an isolation area for residents that test positive for COVID-19;
- Of the 73 inpatient beds filled at the State Hospital in October 2021, 24 beds were for rehabilitation patients, 22 beds were for geropsychiatric patients, 16 beds were for acute psychiatric patients, 7 beds were for restore-to-competency patients, and 4 beds were for jail patients;
- Of the 51 residential beds filled at the State Hospital in October 2021, 30 beds were for sex offender patients, 13 beds were for substance use disorder patients, and 8 beds were for transitional living patients;
- The State Hospital services 1,000 to 1,200 patients a year;
- On average, patients at the State Hospital are referred for admission from private hospitals (41 percent), local admissions primarily emergency room referrals from Jamestown and Devils Lake (24 percent), residential substance use disorder programs (17 percent), jails for psychological evaluation (12 percent),

and forensic referrals for assessment of criminal responsibility and sex offenses (6 percent);

- The State Hospital receives patients needing inpatient acute psychiatric hospitalization services primarily from Cass County, Burleigh County, Williams County, and Grand Forks County;

#### **State Hospital Condition and Needs**

- The estimated combined deferred maintenance expense of buildings on the State Hospital grounds, which were built between 1916 and 1984, is approximately \$51.23 million in the near future and \$148 million in total;
- The administration building, employees building, and all faiths church are scheduled for demolition in spring or summer of 2022;
- 76 percent of mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and structural systems have deteriorated and have exceeded their useful life expectancy;
- Future capacity and utilization needs of the State Hospital include screening for all State Hospital admissions, expansion of community services, expansion of intensive community treatment services, development of a statewide crisis system, expansion of substance use disorder residential services, contracts for local private hospital beds, geropsychiatric skills nursing facilities, and teleforensic assessments;
- Three options for the future of the State Hospital have been developed by the Department of Human Services, including the construction of a new State Hospital facility, renovating the LaHaug Building and New Horizons Building, and renovating all patient areas of the State Hospital; and
- The Department of Human Services supports the construction of a new State Hospital facility, which would improve patient outcomes, improve patient and staff safety, create operational efficiencies, and remove the need for 40 full-time equivalent State Hospital positions.

The committee toured the State Hospital grounds and facilities, including the power plant, all faiths church, administration building, Gronewald Middleton Building, New Horizons Building, and LaHaug Building.

No further business appearing, Chairman Nelson adjourned the meeting at 3:25 p.m.

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Levi Kinnischtzke  
Senior Fiscal Analyst

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