

**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
REPRESENTATIVE JON NELSON, CHAIR
FEBRUARY 3, 2025**

**NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION
LISA BJERGAARD, DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF JUVENILE SERVICES
PRESENTING TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1012**

Chairman Nelson and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Lisa Bjergaard, and I am the Director of the Division of Juvenile Services (DJS) for the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. I am here to testify in support of House Bill 1012, and more specifically, support for the ongoing Title IV-E match dollars that allow community-based services to grow.

The DJS has enjoyed a long and productive relationship with the Child and Family Services Division (CFS) of the North Dakota Health and Human Services Department. Most recently, DJS has partnered with CFS to deliver an in-home based family intervention, Brief Strategic Family Therapy.

Brief Strategic Family Therapy® (BSFT®):

Brief Strategic Family Therapy® (BSFT®), an evidenced-based, family-focused intervention that treats the family system as a whole and is designed to:

- Prevent, reduce, and/or treat youth behavior problems.
- Improve family functioning, including effective parental leadership and involvement with the youth (Improve youth's behavior by improving family relationships).

The BSFT® Program targets children and adolescents between the ages of 6 and 17 who are displaying or are at risk for developing behavior problems, including substance abuse, conduct problems and delinquency. The BSFT® Program has been implemented as a prevention, early intervention and intervention strategy for delinquent and substance-abusing adolescents.

DJS can provide clinicians that deliver the therapy, but without the Title IV-E reimbursements and the state paid portion of the match dollars, this effort would be untenable. The evidence-based prevention and intervention services supported by this budget show great promise, provide a tremendous “bang for the buck”, and form the beginnings of what many of us in the child serving world have long hoped for: a robust network of child and family services that families can access without having to involve formal child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Thus far, the outcomes associated with the delivery of BSFT® are remarkable. BSFT® is designed to create change in the functioning of the entire identified family system. The clinical target is to develop stability in the family system and restore hierarchy of the parental figures. As of December 2024, 163 youth clients whose behaviors prompted referral to therapy were referred, and services impacted 411 family members. Families are reaching the clinical targets for their family plans after 3-4 months, and research suggests that progress towards symptom reduction will continue post intervention.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am always grateful for the opportunity to share with you the activities and operations of the youth and family serving division of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.