

LAKE REGION LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER

Emergency Communications ❖ Correctional Facility ❖ Residential Re-Entry Center

222 Walnut Street West
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January 21, 2025

To the North Dakota House of Representatives Human Service Committee:

This testimony is being sent to encourage the SUPPORT of HB 1337 that pertains to the funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment for individuals in jails. I have been a nurse in the jail setting since 2014. I began at Tri-County Community Corrections in Crookston, MN and have been full time in my current role at Lake Region Law Enforcement Center since June of 2023.

In December of 2023, LRLEC implemented the first ever substance use treatment for inmates in the state. This was done in collaboration with Evolutions Counseling and funded by the Substance Use voucher. To put into words how successful this program has been for our inmates is a difficult thing to do. We offer 9 hours/week of intensive outpatient therapy for inmates who are incarcerated. We have both male and female groups. The beautiful thing about the services being started in the jail setting is that the voucher stays active so when they are released there is a seamless transition to services outside of the jail setting (in Devils Lake they literally can go downtown and continue with Evolutions Counseling, the same provider they saw in the jail). An inmate can start treatment here and then continue on the outside day 1. This reduces the chance of relapse and also allows for continuity of care with Evolutions counseling.

There was a gentleman who was living in Roosevelt Park and wandering downtown. He would come in and out of jail for small crimes that all stemmed from his drinking. He was one of those inmates that I thought I would see for the rest of my career until his addiction ended up taking his life. This individual finally agreed to start treatment in the jail setting here and then, upon release, went to an intensive year+ faith-based treatment program. I have not seen him here since. Without the support, treatment, and continuity of care from Evolutions Counseling, I believe this inmate would continue to be in and out of our facility. This funding could lead to so many more stories of recovery.

Below is a picture of our men's group from a few months ago. They are pictured with some of our staff and Heather Gibbens from Evolutions Counseling. The inmates were featured in a story in the Devils Lake Journal (link included below picture). When they saw they were in the paper for something positive they were so proud. Some of the inmates had other group members sign their copy. One sent a copy to his family. It reminded them they were someone and that their recovery mattered. Inmates have also shared that having this opportunity in the jail setting and seeing jail staff be supportive has changed the overall dynamic of county jail from primarily disciplinary to restorative.

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People often ask how I like working in a jail. I give the same response all the time because it's TRUE. There are SO MANY nice people in jail. Most of them were drunk or high and did something dumb and illegal. Once they sober up, they are remorseful, kind and very often a result of something bad outside of their control that happened to them (trauma). Thank you for the funding to allow us to start this work and please support anything that can help us continue it.



[Evolution Counseling helps inmates with mental health and substance issues | Devil's Lake Daily Journal](#)

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Foss, RN, BSN
Lake Region Law Enforcement Center