

**Testimony**  
**Commission on Alternatives to Incarceration**  
**Senator Joel C. Heitkamp, Chairman**

**April 21, 2008**

Chairman Heitkamp and members of the Commission on Alternatives to Incarceration, I am Dave Bosh, Chief Deputy of the Ward County Sheriff's Department in Minot, North Dakota. I am here today to provide the law enforcement perspective on a pre-booking alternative to incarceration model.

The Ward County Sheriff's Department has for years struggled with the questions surrounding persons with mental health challenges and chemical addictions. As a department that also runs a county jail, we are often used as a place of last resort for these persons, inappropriately at times. As a result, we face great liabilities and staffing difficulties. Our purpose for becoming involved in the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) model is to begin to develop the best alternatives for these persons and to develop an individualized plan that meets the needs of Ward County residents as well as others in our area. Our goal is to have the law enforcement community and the mental health

community work more closely together, in a structured and recognized plan, to provide the best level of care for these persons. Our current mental health options may or may not be sufficient and through cooperation, changes may have to be made.

Currently, our officers receive no training in recognizing mental illness at the state training academy. Our department will take the next step and members of our staff will soon be travelling to a train-the-trainer session in the Denver area so that we may train our officers. This forty hour training, partially locally funded and partially sponsored by the Saint Joseph's Community Health Foundation, will be the first step in the law enforcement response to this long term problem.

The role playing portion of this training receives highly favorable reviews as a useful tool to bring back to local agencies. Our officers expect to also sharpen skills in communication and de-escalation as well as recognizing various aspects of mental illness and chemical dependency. We will be attending this training along with state and local mental health professionals and other area first responders.

We are looking for lower intensive, non-criminal justice alternatives to incarceration. The Memphis Model is a nationally recognized, evidence based – best practice model. It is the model that our region of North Dakota has chosen as the goal that we will work towards. It will have to be tailored to our region and to our capabilities. We want to keep people out of jails and emergency rooms if those settings are not appropriate. Ultimately, we are looking for the best set of options to serve this portion of our citizenry to the best of our ability.

Thank you for your time.