

**Department of Human Services
Health Services Committee
Senator Judy Lee, Chairman
April 12, 2012**

Chairman Lee, members of the Health Services Committee, I am Dr. Andy McLean, medical director of the North Dakota Department of Human Services. I thank you for this opportunity to provide information on issues affecting recruitment and retention of psychiatrists in the state system.

The mission of the North Dakota Department of Human Services is “to provide quality, efficient, and effective human services, which improve the lives of people.” Behavioral health care, which encompasses the areas of mental health and addiction services, is an essential part of human service delivery. As such, we need well-trained clinicians to provide this care.

The Department of Human Services utilizes psychiatrists in a number of ways. We have psychiatrists providing care at the North Dakota State Hospital, both in direct care of patients as well as in collaboration with advanced practice registered nurses. Currently we have four general adult psychiatrists (full or part-time) at the State Hospital, as well as a consulting child psychiatrist. We are currently recruiting for two more psychiatrists.

A majority of the regional Human Service Center psychiatrists were trained through the University of North Dakota School of Medicine, either in medical school, residency, or both. The Department currently employs nine full-time psychiatrists, and one part-time contracted psychiatrist that were trained at the University of North Dakota. The total number of regional Human Service Center psychiatrists is 17. Currently the Department of Human Services has a total of 21 psychiatrists.

The Department has become more creative in our resource allocation by utilizing Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (with psychiatrist consultation), sharing positions between the two institutions and eight regional human service centers, and using tele-psychiatry. There are three advanced practice nurses doing psychiatric care at the State Hospital. The Department is a strong proponent of “growing our own” and has three registered nurses employed by the State Hospital completing their Advance Practice RN certification. The total number of prescribing nurses at the regional Human Service Centers is ten (some are part-time/contracted); the total for the Department of Human Services is 14.

The State Hospital and regional Human Service Centers serve as training sites for the University of North Dakota Medical School. The Department of Human Services gets positive reviews from both students and residents regarding their experiences. In addition, many other behavioral health care and addiction treatment interns rotate through Department of Human Service sites. Southeast Human Service Center is an American Psychological Association accredited training site for PhD level psychologists. We have been successful in recruiting many providers through our training programs.

I would offer the following comments in respect to recruitment and retention of psychiatrists in the public sector. Historically, despite offering higher salaries, the western part of the state and the State Hospital has had the most difficulty recruiting psychiatrists. An out-of-state psychiatrist has recently accepted a position for North Central and Northwest Human Service Centers. This past year, the Badlands Human Service Center’s contracted psychiatrists retired. The Department was able to fill the gap with tele-psychiatry services, and subsequently recruited from within the Department. A State Hospital psychiatrist left for the Human Service

Center position, and will be doing both in-person care and tele-psychiatry. Another psychiatrist from out of state worked at South Central Human Services for about a year and left for personal reasons. Again, shifting from within the Department, a State Hospital psychiatrist has filled that position while another psychiatrist assists via tele-psychiatry.

Interestingly, likely due both to North Dakota's good economy and our more proactive recruitment strategies, the Department has received more interest in its psychiatric openings than ever before. Like most of the nation, many of the Department's practitioners are older and a number of psychiatrists and advance practice nurses will be retiring in the next few years. The practice preferences seem to be psychiatrists choosing outpatient over inpatient settings and urban over rural settings.

Factors that would likely improve recruitment/retention would include:

- Approval of the State Hospital as a National Health Service Corps loan forgiveness site.
- Increased exposure of psychiatry residents to other parts of the state.

Factors that will allow us to meet the need for psychiatric services among more vulnerable populations include:

- Tele-psychiatry services
- Flexibility of staffing within the department
- Collaboration with advanced practice registered nurses
- Collaboration with primary care, particularly those in underserved areas, such as federally qualified healthcare centers.

I would be happy to answer any questions.