

TESTIMONY

Human Services Committee

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Department of Public Instruction

Chairman Hogan and members of the Human Services Committee – My name is Gail Schauer and I am the Director of Teacher and School Effectiveness for the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI). On behalf of the Department, I am here to provide information regarding mental health training provided by school districts pursuant to section 5 of 2015 Senate Bill (SB) 2048.

Section 5 refers to NDDPI compiling information on mental health training provided by school districts to determine the feasibility and effort of the training required in SB 2048 Section 2. The NDDPI developed a Youth Mental Health Training Fact Sheet which you have in front of you. Section 2, which is in the front page box, relates to school districts providing eight hours of youth mental health training once every two years to all elementary, middle and high school teachers and administrators. The training must include 1) understanding of the prevalence and impact of youth mental health disorders; 2) knowledge of mental health symptoms, social stigmas, risks and protective factors; and 3) Awareness of referral sources and strategies. This fact sheet also includes background on North Dakota mental health data and offers suggestions on ways to implement the youth mental health training.

Districts have two years to provide eight hours of youth mental health training; as this was effective July 2015 we are in early implementation and our data may not reflect actual numbers. However, I do have data reflecting the last six months. Up to now, NDDPI has

received over 150 calls and/or emails requesting more information on the youth mental health trainings requirements.

Districts have the flexibility to implement this training in a way that best meets their needs. The fact sheet provides suggested ways to provide this training (page 3). One training that meets the intent of the law is the Youth Mental Health First Aid training through the National Council of Behavioral Health. In March 2015, NDDPI trained a cadre of instructors in this nationally researched-based program. To date there have been 10 trainings in North Dakota with 290 participants trained. There are five more trainings scheduled over the next few months with an anticipated 150 participants.

The elementary mental health training (page 3) is underway. In December 2015 a cadre of instructors were trained. These instructors will be providing training to staff in their home schools. It is anticipated that additional instructors will be trained in June 2016, allowing these instructors to train more school staff in the upcoming years.

Other suggestions are listed and I just want to point the second bullet on page 4, which encourages school districts to access local professional community members (e.g., social workers, counselors, psychologists, etc.) to provide training. NDDPI developed an additional resource that includes a list of local professional community members, resources (toolkits, guidebooks, presentations, powerpoints, videos, books, webinars, and websites) and a list of research or evidence-based programs. This resource can be found at <https://www.nd.gov/dpi/SchoolStaff/SafeHealthy/MentalHealthTraining/>. These resources have been developed to assist school districts as they set up youth mental health training for their staff.

At the end of this school year, districts must report on the youth mental health training through the STARS system. Since districts have two years to implement this training, the data will be limiting but will provide an indication of the progress made.

In addition, we have received some anecdotal data. It is interesting to note comments made before and after the training. School staff are generally very surprised to see the alarming data showing the percentage of mental health issues in children; they get excited to learn about practices and strategies that can be put into place to help them; they wonder what mental health services are in their local area; they wonder how rural areas can meet the challenges when services are often so far away; and one of the biggest concerns is when families do seek services for their child, there are usually waiting lists two to three months away and what should they do to help in the meantime.

As per SB 2048, NDDPI will be providing a report to the legislative management regarding mental health training provided by the school districts by July 1, 2016.

Thank you for your time and support in children's mental and behavioral health. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.