

Testimony of Kristi Hall-Jiran
 To the Human Services Committee
 May 10, 2016

Chair Hogan and Members of the Human Services Committee:

I am Kristi Hall-Jiran, executive director of the Community Violence Intervention Center (CVIC) here in Grand Forks and I am honored to have this opportunity to share with you today.

I have been with CVIC since 1990, and after many years of working on intervening in violent situations AFTER lives have been shattered, we decided to take a new approach. Two years ago, we began to research the latest science involving the impact of violence, evidence-based solutions and viable preventive measures. We applied this research to our community and came up with our 2-Generation Plan to End Violence, which I am delighted to walk you through today. We will continue to make adjustments as we present it to the community and track our results. All of our plan is research based; because of time, I won't elaborate on each study used.

- Starting on the “dark side”, this paints a picture of what could happen if there were NO intervention in violent situations. Starting on the left, early trauma, such as exposure to violence, can cause neurochemical changes in children's brains that impair their ability to function and learn and can lead to aggressive and bullying behaviors.
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including domestic violence, are major risk factors with studies showing that individuals with ACEs had 3 times the rate of academic failure, 7 times the rate of alcoholism, 12 times the risk of suicide, and increased risks for heart disease, stroke, and other problems as you can see as you look down the left side of the page. Alarming, those with 6 or more ACEs actually have a life expectancy of 20 years less. And at CVIC, 88% of the children and youth served last year had two or more ACEs, and 36% had 4+ ACEs. Without intervention to stop the downward spiral, these children face an uphill battle.
- Moving on to the middle section, 40% of children in Grand Forks County – or 5,368 children – are exposed to violence. This is based on a national violence prevalence study extrapolated to Grand Forks County and includes ALL types of violence – witnessing domestic violence, dating violence, bullying, child abuse, and sexual assault.
- The middle of the page shows GF County children experiencing ACEs and the number experienced. As you can see, 47% of our kids have had no ACEs which is wonderful. Unfortunately, however, 13% have had 4 or more ACEs, which means 1,745 kids in Grand Forks County are at high risk for the dire outcomes I mentioned earlier.
- Without intervention now, these 1,745 children will grow up, become parents themselves, and pass on ACEs to their own children, and in just two generations, we will have nearly 5,000 *severely* traumatized individuals, at great risk for the effects of ACEs.

Moving on to the right side of the placemat, our community (and state) will stagger under the increasing costs of responding to the impact of trauma, such as educating children with learning

disabilities or emotional problem, rising juvenile justice costs, the impact from greater numbers who are unemployed, and escalating healthcare costs.

Remember, this is what will happen if we do nothing. The good news is we have an innovative plan to virtually end violence in Grand Forks County in two generations. Please turn your placemat over to see our plan.

We have learned that violence is predictable and therefore preventable. Our plan is based on this tenet.

Starting in the middle of the page, the three main aspects of our plan are laid out. We will provide safety for all people and guidance toward positive relationships, healing for every child in dire need, and healthy relationship education for every child in K-12.

Looking at safety on the left side of the page, through our capital campaign to build a new shelter, we will double our capacity. With access to shelter, victims' risk of re-assault actually drops 60-70%. With the local need for shelter up 69% over the past five years, we simply must ensure a safe place to go for all in need.

When looking at long-term safety, financial security is the No. 1 predictor of whether a victim of domestic violence will get free and stay free from abuse, so our plan also includes self-sufficiency services, like transitional housing and other supports.

Another important component is working with offenders to offer them assistance in ending their violent behavior. Our long-term plan is to triple the number of men completing our New Choices groups by 2025. We are seeing incredible results with our groups:

Of nearly 300 offenders completing our program between 2004 and 2013, we saw a drastic drop in system involvement within two years after completing program (through 2015):

- 70% decrease in law enforcement involvement needed at those homes.
- 88% decrease in criminal charges made for domestic violence.
- 88% drop in protection orders involving these men.
- Moving to the right side of the page, our plan includes providing healing for every one of those 1,745 kids I talked about earlier who are at great risk, using evidence-based therapies. Youth have credited our program with helping them to end suicidal thoughts, stay away from alcohol and drugs, and improve their academic performance, with over 90% of kids in our program showing improved coping skills and better performance at school. By reaching all these at-risk kids, we will improve countless lives AND save hundreds of thousands of dollars in education, juvenile justice, unemployment, and healthcare costs.
- Finally, we know that true social change will come only through educating ALL kids on healthy relationships, which will lead to a change in our social norms. Grand Forks has a

great start in this area, having been chosen as only 1 of 8 communities in the United States to implement a comprehensive plan to END children's exposure to violence of every kind.

- Our innovative plan involves age-appropriate healthy relationships curricula strategically provided at three developmental levels: elementary, middle and high school.
- More than 300 teachers have been trained in the curricula and 10,000 students are receiving prevention education in Grand Forks County, including 30 K-12 schools in 7 different school districts:
 - Education on respect for pre-school children.
 - Bullying prevention for elementary through high school students.
 - Positive friendship education for middle school students.
 - Healthy relationship education for high school students.
 - Coaching Boys Into Men for high school athletes: involving 30 coaches in 6 high schools and 8 sports. We have reached 600 male athletes thus far.
- By 2035, 100% of students in the county will receive the full 12-year curriculum. One result we expect is that bullying will continue to decrease (see graphic on placemat).
- Finally, looking back at the middle bottom of the page, you can see that our goal is to “flip the pyramid” from intervention to prevention. Violence prevention programs can reduce rates of violence by one-third to one-half. Other studies show returns of up to \$31 for each dollar invested in prevention. At CVIC, it costs \$821 to provide intervention services, while prevention costs just \$59 a person. If we invest more in prevention – and flip the pyramid – we will save both lives and resources.

I am aware that Chair Hogan often asks what those working on these issues would do with \$5 million. It is easy for us to apply that figure to our 2-Generation Plan to End Violence. We would use those funds to invest in our future as a community and state – finishing our capital campaign and shelter and ensuring safety, hiring the additional therapists we need to reach all the traumatized kids we know of (and thus preventing generations of trauma down the road), expanding our New Choices treatment groups, and continuing our widespread education on healthy relationships. If we could do this, the savings for our city and state down the road would be nothing short of miraculous. But the change in our citizens' quality of life and our children's future would be the true miracle.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. And thank you for your service to North Dakota. We appreciate the difficult decisions you make and the hard work you do every day on behalf of North Dakota's children and families.