

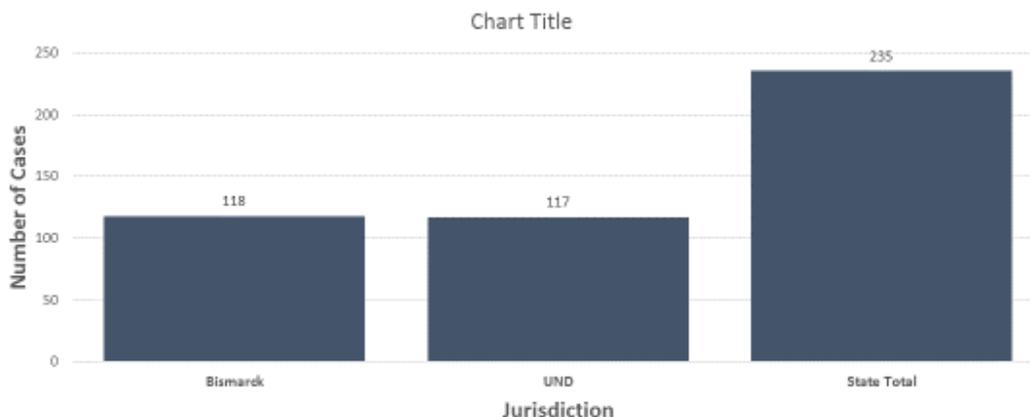
**Testimony
Health Services Interim Committee
10:10 a.m., July 27, 2016
North Dakota Department of Health**

Good morning Chairman Lee and members of the Health Services Interim Committee. My name is Corey Saylor, and I am the Office Administrator for the Office of the Forensic Examiner of the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH). I am here today to present information regarding death investigation in North Dakota.

Regional Updates through the Contract with the University of North Dakota

From January through June, 2016, there have been 235 coroner cases accepted for autopsy in North Dakota. Of these, 118 (50%) were accepted by the Office of the Forensic Examiner in Bismarck and 117 (50%) were accepted by Department of Pathology at the University of North Dakota. The contractual agreement with UND continues to alleviate the pressures of the increase in forensic cases in North Dakota.

**Coroner Cases Accepted for Autopsy, by Jurisdiction
North Dakota, January through June, 2016**



With regard to a systems approach to death investigations in North Dakota, the NDDoH’s assessment is that our current system of county coroners works very well for the rural nature of North Dakota. It is a system that has improved tremendously since the Office of the State Forensic Examiner was established in 1995. In 2014, a working group outlined recommendations to improve our current system and those recommendations were presented to this committee on July 20, 2014. Most of those recommendations focused

on continuing education for local coroners and law enforcement officials regarding death investigations. The NDDoH continues to look for gaps and improve our system. The death investigation work group was started in 2014 to help identify areas for improvement. This group last met on April 4, 2016. This group is scheduled to meet again in August 2016.

Dr. William Massello, State Forensic Examiner, will be providing you more information regarding his role and additional information about systems and standards for death investigation.

Hospital Discharge Data

At the April 2016 meeting, this committee discussed the impact of opioid use and abuse in North Dakota. Among the issues raised was the myriad of data sources that would need to be accessed to study this trend. One source of data that was deemed important to study this trend was health care related data. The North Dakota Department of Health has recently entered into a data use agreement with the Minnesota Hospital Association (MHA), which receives hospital discharge data from North Dakota facilities. Through this agreement, the MHA will provide hospital discharge data for 16 North Dakota facilities in an electronic format to the NDDoH. The NDDoH will be receiving data from the last five years (2010-2015) and plans to continue receiving data annually in the future.

Tracy Miller, State Epidemiologist, is here to answer any questions related to use of hospital discharge data.

This concludes my testimony and Tracy and I would be happy to answer any question that you may have.