

Appropriations Committee
Budget Hearing – Department of Health and Human Services
March 17, 2015

Sheri Dawson, RN, Acting Director
Division of Behavioral Health
Department of Health and Human Services

Good afternoon, Senator Mello and members of the Appropriations Committee. For the record, I am Sheri Dawson (S-H-E-R-I D-A-W-S-O-N), and I am the Acting Director of the DHHS Division of Behavioral Health.

I am joined today by the Division Directors: Jodi Fenner, Acting Director of Developmental Disabilities and Tony Green, Acting Director of Children and Family Services.

We would like to thank you and your staff for your work and for reflecting many of the Governor's budget recommendations. We will not address those requests unless you have additional comments for us.

The recommendations proposed by Governor Ricketts are intended to reflect the commitment to taking care of our most vulnerable citizens.

Reappropriation:

The most notable variance between the appropriation bill introduced on behalf of the governor and the appropriation committee's recommendation is the reappropriation of unencumbered funds. The need for these funds varies within DHHS programs. In our testimony these needs will be addressed in individual programs.

Division of Developmental Disabilities

There are no significant variances between the Governor's recommendations and the Committee preliminary recommendation for the Division of Developmental Disabilities; however, Jodi Fenner is here and is able to address any questions you may have.

Behavioral Health

Permanent funding for NSO

The governor's recommendation includes additional general funds of \$300,000 in FY 2016 and \$500,000 in FY 2017 for the Norfolk Sex Offender Treatment facility. The patient population has increased in FY 2014 by five patients and FY 2015 is expected to increase by an additional six. In order to continue admissions and maintain appropriate staffing levels to be in compliance with licensing and professional standards, we are requesting the increased funding as recommended by the Governor. We anticipate the

need for the additional staff to be ongoing and would prefer to not use one-time reappropriation balances as recommended by the Committee to finance an ongoing staffing requirement.

Medical expenses

In the Behavioral Health Operations program (Program 365) and at the Norfolk Sex Offender Treatment Program (Program 870), medical expenses, along with pharmacy expenses, are the largest expense after salaries and benefits. All of the mental health patients at Lincoln Regional Center are on at least one and often several psychotropic medications. Many of the patients at Norfolk Sex Offender Treatment Program and the Lincoln Regional Center have significant medical complications. When a patient at the Norfolk Sex Offender Treatment Program or the Lincoln Regional Center needs medical attention, we use medical providers and general hospitals in Lincoln and Norfolk for medical diagnosis and treatment. The significant cost of one or two major medical episodes can quickly consume the medical services budget. Therefore, we request that reappropriation be made available to Programs 365 and 870 to cover unexpected medical expense.

Thank you for your consideration of these items. I'm happy to answer any questions you have.