

Testimony
Interim Human Services Committee
Representative Rohr, Chairman
March 12, 2020

Chairman Rohr and members of the Interim Human Services Committee, I am Rosalie Etherington, Superintendent of the North Dakota State Hospital (NDSH) and Chief Clinics Officer for the Regional Human Service Centers for the Department of Human Services (Department). Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony regarding the telehealth services provided by the Department.

Telehealth, a generic term for the remote delivery of healthcare by a range of options, improves the patient experience by reducing the need to travel when remote monitoring and teleconferencing is equally effective and cheaper. The regional human service centers provide more than 700 telebehavioral health services per month. The 670 individuals served each month receive evaluations, medications, and psychotherapy. The North Dakota State Hospital is also experimenting with teleforensic assessments.

Beginning this month, we are rolling out the behavioral health emergency services expansion. By August, we will have emergency telehealth capacity in critical access hospitals and for our mobile crisis response teams. Our improved equipment also provides technology for a virtual waiting room giving us freedom to extend open access at all locations during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, and better sharing of staff, freeing up clinician time for other client services.

This concludes my testimony. Thank you.