



UND begins using concussion prevention helmets, [Page A4](#)

Grand Forks Herald

MONDAY, AUGUST 5, 2019

'Thank you for coming up with this idea'

ND man who pushed for first responder plates, park access honored

By Kim Fundingsland
Minot Daily News

MINOT — He was so impressed with their volunteerism that he wanted to make sure their dedication was recognized statewide.

Norval Semchenko of Max received an award of appreciation late Friday morning, Aug. 2, in a brief ceremony held at the Burlington Fire Department.

It was a fitting location for the event.

Semchenko was being recognized for his tireless work on behalf of volunteer first responders in North Dakota. He championed Initiated Measure No. 4 that was on the ballot for last November's general election.

RESPONDERS: [Page A2](#)

About a dozen Triceratops skulls found in North Dakota

By Eloise Ogden
Minot Daily News

BISMARCK — A California college student who found a 65-million-year-old Triceratops skull in the North Dakota Badlands made state and national news several days ago.

"Finding good skulls is difficult," said Clint Boyd, senior paleontologist with the North Dakota Geological Survey.

He said Triceratops are rather common in the Hell Creek formation and finding bones of the Triceratops in various places is not unusual.

The formation stretches over portions of North Dakota, Montana, South Dakota and Wyoming.

Boyd said about a dozen Triceratops skulls have been found in the state. These are the result of work by the N.D. Geological Survey, U.S. Forest Service and others.

The North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum in Bismarck has an exhibit on the Triceratops in its Adaptation Gallery: Geologic Time. Other places with Triceratops skulls displayed include the University of North Dakota and the Badlands Dinosaur Museum in Dickinson.

The Barnes County Historical Society Museum in Valley City has on display Gundy, an 18-foot replica of a fossilized Triceratops found in the Hell Creek

TRICERATOPS: [Page A2](#)



The South Unit of the North Dakota State Penitentiary in Bismarck.

Photos by Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald

Too big, too fast

North Dakota's other housing problem

By Sam Easter

North Dakota Newspaper Association
Bismarck

Pat Bohn has spent a long time working in corrections — long enough to climb from a rank-and-file parole and probation officer in the 1990s to a job heading North Dakota's entire parole and probation operation today. He's seen a lot of things change.

Chief among them is a philosophical shift in how North Dakota treats its criminals. Gone are the highly punitive, tough-on-crime ideas of the 1990s. Now, state leaders — from the Legislature to the front offices at the state penitentiary — have come to embrace ideas they argue help criminals become better neighbors and citizens.

Average parole time — that's the time spent finishing a sentence in the outside world — is going up in North Dakota, both as a result of legal changes and the parole board increasingly letting prisoners out earlier. State legislators, faced with growing prison populations, are decreasing criminal penalties and making it easier for offenders to find themselves on probation instead of in a cell.

Bohn's work is right where those ideas meet the rest of the world.

"You listen to people, right? And they think, 'You do the crime, you do the time,' type of analogy," he said. "That's where the disconnect is at. And I think that's where the tough work is ... ours is not about being harsh or lenient. Ours is about being reasoned toward finding a balance of accountability and behavior change. And that doesn't always mesh within our culture and what people want to see on the front page of the paper."

Bohn is doing the work that the state has tasked him with.



Grand Forks County State's Attorney Haley Wamstad, seen here in her office in May, said she sees a public safety risk because of a strained parole and probation and system.

But for some observers, what the state is doing amounts to shifting a problem, raising questions about the wisdom behind — or at least, the dollars committed to — the criminal justice reforms.

For some, the effect of all these policy and attitude changes is taking the problem of prison crowding and making it an issue of probation and parole overload — to the public's detriment.

"It's absolutely a public safety risk," Grand Forks County State's Attorney Haley Wamstad said. "When these folks are returning from incarceration, that's probably when they're at the highest risk of reoffending and posing a risk to the public. When a judge places somebody on supervised probation, or places somebody in the North Dakota penitentiary, the judge does not do so lightly. These are folks who need supervision. They need monitoring in order to keep our streets safe and these people from reoffending."

Exactly what a parole and probation officer's experience

is like, though, is hard to say. In researching this series, the Grand Forks Herald and North Dakota Newspaper Association reached out to dozens of sources, including state's attorneys, law enforcement, legislators and the highest-ranking members of the state's prison system. A reporter and photographer toured two prisons. A reporter read hundreds of pages of state documents.

At no point was a reporter granted the chance to speak with a rank-and-file parole and probation officer. A prison system spokesperson would not clarify the reason why despite repeated questioning.

Behind these changes are also questions about the resources states like North Dakota have to house prisoners. According to a state corrections spokesperson, the cost of incarceration is about \$43,000 per inmate per year. The equivalent cost of a parolee is about \$1,700.

This has grown more relevant as the cost of running North Dakota's correctional system has skyrocketed. In inflation-



EDITOR'S NOTE

This series, sponsored by the North Dakota Newspaper Association and the Grand Forks Herald, aims to answer questions at the difficult intersection between budget crunches, criminal justice and the well-being of North Dakota's communities. As rising prison populations stress the state's corrections system, how will state leaders address what some say is a risk to public safety?

► **Saturday:** How corrections officials manage North Dakota's criminals

► **Sunday:** The political sea changes that built North Dakota's prisons

► **Today:** North Dakota's other housing problem

► **Tuesday:** Is North Dakota's criminal safety net too thin?

► **Wednesday:** How will North Dakota balance budgets and criminal justice?

adjusted dollars, the department expended about \$120 million in the 1999-2001 biennium, according to state documents. But by the 2015-2017 biennium, it was spending \$232 million — nearly double, after spending even more in the previous biennium. The department has added the equivalent of more than 260 full-time positions during the same period.

That's because, by almost any measure, the job the state Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has to do has grown precipitously in recent years. Its total number of adult inmates grew from fewer than 1,000 at the end of 1999 to an annual average of 1,761 in late 2016. The same explosive growth was happening in the parole and probation populations, too.

But this kind of steady growth has come as North Dakota's financial resources have ebbed and flowed. The state's tax and fee revenues peaked in the 2013-2015 biennium; general fund revenues still haven't recovered.

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PRISONS

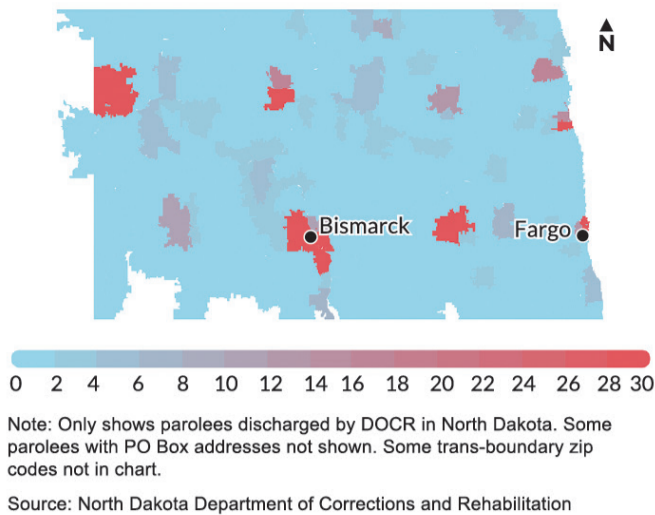
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The tension between the prison system's explosive growth and the state's resources is one of the most important dynamics behind recent reforms.

The state has acknowledged struggling to keep up with the demands of its criminal population. The DOCR's 2013-2015 biennial report, describing parole and probation, notes that "the number of offenders under supervision has surged and caused many challenges for the division."

Where parolees went in 2018

The map shows the number of parolees discharged to each zip code in 2018. The map's darkest color indicates 30 or more parolees.



Source: North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

released as of this report.

State employment data helps shed light on how the corrections department has managed these changes. In April 2013, the department's Parole and Probation Division employed 63 parole and probation officers, one of which worked part-time.

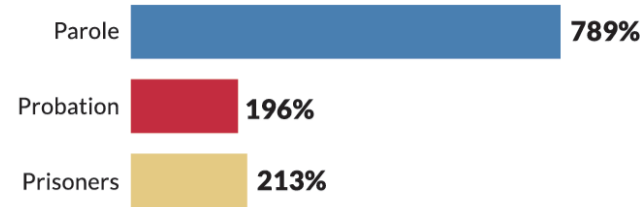
employment composition in such detail.

Bohn hesitates to say exactly what the average caseload is now. He said numbers can range as low as 25 cases for division staff in drug courts — which can involve time-consuming cases — and reach up to 100 or more for others.

Bohn said North Dakota's parole and probation officers often have persevered through

Parolees: The fastest-growing group

This chart shows the percentage growth in each key North Dakota DOCR population from December 1994 to May 2019.



Sources: North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, U.S. Department of Justice

those high caseloads, though. When he joined the corrections department in 1995, caseloads could reach as high as 120 or 130, he said.

"Matter of fact, I think I still have some of my caseload sheets sitting in one of my drawers; pull that out every now and then," he said with a laugh. "But in terms of morale, (the job) can be stressful for people, because the staff that we have are really invested in wanting to help people change their lives ... I think our caseloads need to be down across the state — in that 25 to 40 range is where I'd like to see them go."

But it's unclear if the state is doing enough. Some of the progressive policies passed in recent years are poised to put more pressure on the

parole and probation system. The state's 2017 reforms include "presumptive probation," which makes probation the default sentence for low-level crimes. Though this has the effect of decreasing pressure on prison availability, it's designed to redirect that pressure on parole and probation resources.

Bertsch disagrees with the assessment that new policies lean too heavy on Bohn's officers, though, arguing that probationers and parolees, as a group, aren't growing any faster than the inmate population.

But that prisoner population is limited in part by the prison system's capacity — which state leaders are loath to expand. And according to a DOCR spokesperson, the department has a capacity for 1,624 men and 224 women — and,

as of July 10, the system included 1,555 men and 226 women.

But Linster and other state leaders point out that state reforms go beyond just shifting how North Dakota manages criminals — or where it stores them. Free Through Recovery, a behavioral health program founded for the formerly incarcerated, was launched by the state in 2017. One of its goals is to rehabilitate them more effectively, too, which helps cut down on crime overall — with the hope that leads to fewer offenders entering the criminal justice system.

In the meantime, though, the parole and probation workload remains heavy.

"I'm asking the court to put (many offenders) on probation, which then puts more people in the probationary system," Mountrail County State's Attorney Wade Enget said. "And I don't know that they've had that many more probationary officers in their system to supervise people that have been placed on probation (or parole)."

Those kinds of policies take a toll.

"All I do is I ask the probation officers, 'How's your caseload?'" Enget said. "And they just look at me and they say, 'it's extreme.'"



Ask Amy

Amy Dickinson SYNDICATED COLUMNIST 8/5/19

Dear Amy: All five of my now-adult children were adopted. The youngest two are bio-sisters and came to us when they were four and five. These sisters have always struggled, and we were in and out of counseling as they grew up.

but aware and sensitive families face a reckoning when they realize -- surprise -- there is no such thing as an ideal family. According to information published by the National Institutes of Health, "Addictions are moderately to highly heritable. Family, adoption, and twin studies reveal that an individual's risk tends to be proportional to the degree of genetic relationship to an addicted relative."

futile and frustrating efforts to save his adult children from their addictions but on saving himself. It might be time for you to surrender to your own powerlessness over your daughters' addiction, and make a choice to focus on your own health and recovery.

-- Home Owner Dear Home Owner: If I gave you permission to say something to these neighbors, what would it be? "Hello, nice people. Please, clean up your property, so I can sell mine and get you some new neighbors?"

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek. Includes word puzzles like RIFTL, SUDEO, FRET OF, NSAATZ and a cartoon illustration.

HOROSCOPE - Jacqueline Bigar Horoscope. Includes birth chart for a baby born today and a birthday message for Monday, Aug. 5, 2019.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE - THE Daily Commuter Puzzle by Jacqueline E. Mathews. Includes across clues like 'Clipper or galleon' and a crossword grid.

- SUDOKU PUZZLE - Sudoku puzzle grid with solution and difficulty rating.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) Opportunities pop up from nearly everywhere. AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) You seem to make the best of any situation.

Saturday's Puzzle Solved. Includes solved crossword grid and answers for clues like 'Hamster or hound' and 'Up; provides support for'.