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State lauds opening of Intensive Residential Treatment program for juveniles

Pierre, S.D. – Corrections Secretary Tim Reisch stated Friday that his agency has every intention of sending numerous youth committed to his department’s care to the newly opened program on the grounds of the former State Training School in Plankinton.

“Previous news reports have indicated a hesitancy on my part to send youth to the new program. That is simply not the case,” stated Reisch. “While it is true that our contract does not guarantee the State of South Dakota a specific number of beds on a continual basis, its wording will allow us to place many adjudicated youth there, and that is precisely what we intend to do.”

Clinicare, a Wisconsin based company, has received licensure to operate an Intensive Residential Treatment Center for juveniles in Plankinton. The Aurora Plains Academy received their first youth January 11th. The program will eventually offer services to 66 youth with aggressive and behavioral challenges and others with mental health disorders. Clinicare and Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of Sioux Falls were selected as Intensive Residential Treatment Providers following a Request for Proposals (RFP) from providers. The LSS program is awaiting licensure and is expected to begin accepting youth this spring to serve up to 18 youth diagnosed with severe and chronic mental health disorders.

"We are very excited about the opening of the Aurora Plains Academy and we look forward to placing South Dakota kids with these specialized needs into programs based in our state," said Reisch. "The Clinicare proposal was selected by the state to be a preferred provider. Under this arrangement, DOC youth who were previously leaving the state to access special needs services will now be referred first to Aurora Plains Academy when their needs are consistent with the programs offered there."

The 2005 Legislature approved the establishment of an intensive residential treatment category. A workgroup consisting of members from the Department of Corrections (DOC), Department of Social Services (DSS) and in-state treatment providers then developed administrative rules for the higher level of care, including higher staffing ratios to ensure youth receive the best available care to prepare them for a healthy future.