

Public Meeting
National Prison Rape Elimination Commission
at the University of Notre Dame, March 31, 2005

Administrator Zanning, you also have a welcome experience in many types of institutions in a number of state institutions. Can you give us your perspective as to what you think about this issue?

Zanning: Yes I will, thank you. I think the hallmark of PRIA in many ways, is to focus on the issue of sexual abuse of prisoners. Within the women's prison system, I think there has been a heightened awareness, particularly related to staff sexual misconduct involving women. However, I think that heightened awareness has been lacking in systems that house male prisoners. Likewise, I think the focus of prisoner-on-prisoner sexual abuse can be the response to allegations of that, can certainly be improved throughout not only our state but throughout the nation. One of the things, and I echo Commissioner Donahue, is that it is important that we train staff, that they understand not only what our expectations are as administrators, because we do have a zero tolerance policy, but we have to continue through leadership efforts and training efforts to ensure that we're working together as a team. I had probably one of the most wonderful experiences in December of last year, because I personally, along with my assistant, trained every warden, deputy warden, assistant deputy warden, executive policy team member in the Michigan Department of Corrections relative to the requirements of PRIA. And then past that, relative to the components that we have identified for the PRIA initiative in Michigan. We were very fortunate in applying for and receiving a million dollar grant to implement the initiative, not only within the prison system but the safeguarding communities component as we know, 97% or more of any individual incarcerated will return to the community. So that beginning to take a systematic

look at how we can improve our systems, how we can support and treat victims, and then what we can do to support victims once they return to the community. The training that our administrative staff received, I continue to get phone calls. How grateful they were that they received information and that we were able, I think, hit a core with people because the majority of people who are administrators in correctional agencies want to do the right thing and are professionals. And knowing that now, there is a national effort where we're going to be identifying good practices, that we may in turn bring into our system, that we're going to learn and share information, and that we're going to address this problem head on, I think has been very, very helpful to people as they professionally look forward. One of the other components of PRIA that we appreciate, we do have systems in place, and as you know, there was a mandatory survey of sexual violence in prison for the year 2004 and again, as the coordinator of the development of the department's response to that, it was enlightening for us to begin to look at what we do have in place in terms of systems. Yes, we could pull the numbers together. Yes, we know that within the Michigan system in 2004 there were 17 prisoners of which there were sustained cases of sexual abuse involving prisoner-prisoner. And we also note that within our system there were 3 cases of staff sexual misconduct involving prisoners. One of the opportunities that we have had through PRIA is to begin to partner with community agencies. So, beginning next month we are going to do post-incident critiques on those 17 prisoner-prisoner sustained allegations. And we not only will be using the PRIA project staff, but we will be bringing in our community partners. Retired Detective Lt. from the State Police who is also working with us now. He was head of the sex crimes unit. The Michigan Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault is partnering with us and will be at the table with us as we begin to review and assess what are commonalities, and the whole crime mapping scene, what we can learn from these instances that were sustained. So we're excited about that possibility because we recognize that there's

been a lot of research done. We know that there are certain attributes that victims bring. We know that there are certain attributes that perpetrators bring to this type of crime. But yet for us to be able to individualize and develop the warning signs and the helpful signs to identify victims. That's going to be very, very important. I would also say that another part of our initiative is not only staff training, specialized training for our medical staff, our mental health staff, but also specialized training for prisoners. Back in 1999 we began training women prisoners as they entered our systems about what their rights were and produced a brochure that they receive telling them what their rights are, describing what is unacceptable, what's against policy, what against state law and how they can get help. This was probably one of the most pro-active things that our department has ever done and I think it has been very helpful not only for the staff who supervised women prisoners but also for the prisoners themselves who have to live inside. We are now going to be taking what we've learned from our experiences from the issues that women prisoners have faced and were going to be taking the best practices of that in moving that into the male system. As most correctional systems of the 50,000 prisoners incarcerated in Michigan, 2,000 of those are women. So the 48,000 male prisoners in our system are definitely going to be a major focus as we move forward.

Thank you, and we again welcome your candor. It seems like you have a lot of innovative things that you're doing and we hope to be able to partner with you as we move forward with this effort, so thank you for your presence.