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MEDIA RELEASE

Today in Jackson County Circuit Court, the Honorable Mark L. Goodman adopted a plan for the release of Lars Helgeson prepared by Lutheran Social Services acting on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services.

On December 21, 2022, Judge Goodman ordered conditional release for Helgeson, who had been committed for life to the custody of the Department of Health and Human Services in 2017.

In 2013, Helgeson was charged with first degree intentional homicide, among other charges. He admitted to killing his father by shooting him four times, burning his father's body, and burying it in an ATV track on the family property. Former Jackson County District Attorney Gerald Fox stipulated that Helgeson was not guilty by reason of mental disease or defect.

In 2022, Dr. Craig Schoenecker was appointed to evaluate Helgeson to determine whether he was appropriate for conditional release from Mendota Mental Health Institute. Schoenecker determined that Helgeson did not pose a significant risk of bodily harm to himself or others if conditionally released in the community.

Current Jackson County District Attorney Emily Hynek strenuously objected to Schoenecker's finding that Helgeson should be released from Mendota Mental Health Institute. A hearing was held over the course of two days before Judge Goodman during which Hynek questioned Dr. Schoenecker at length regarding the foundation for his opinion regarding Helgeson, and offered additional testimony regarding the nature and circumstances of his crimes to support her opposition to his release. Nonetheless, Judge Goodman found that a careful balancing of society's interests against the defendant's interest in autonomy weighed in favor of autonomy for the defendant.

As required by statute, a confidential release plan designed to meet Helgeson's needs and mitigate risk to the community was prepared and submitted to the court. A hearing was held to review the plan on May 23, 2023. Judge Goodman observed that the plan called for Helgeson's placement in Juneau County, Wisconsin. District Attorney Hynek asked the court to amend the proposed plan to include a provision prohibiting contact

with statutory victims and their families without their consent; the court agreed and otherwise adopted the plan as prepared.

Due to the confidential nature of the report prepared in this matter, and out of respect for the privacy of the decedent's family and friends, the District Attorney will have no further statement on the case at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Hynek
Jackson County District Attorney