

*This opinion is nonprecedential except as provided by
Minn. R. Civ. App. P. 136.01, subd. 1(c).*

**STATE OF MINNESOTA
IN COURT OF APPEALS
A25-1719**

State of Minnesota,
Respondent,

vs.

Qalinle Ibrahim Dirie,
Appellant.

**Filed August 31, 2026
Affirmed
Bond, Judge**

Hennepin County District Court
File No. 27-CR-24-17247

Keith Ellison, Attorney General, St. Paul, Minnesota; and

Mary F. Moriarty, Hennepin County Attorney, Robert I. Yount, Assistant County Attorney,
Minneapolis, Minnesota (for respondent)

Cathryn Middlebrook, Chief Appellate Public Defender, Andrea Barts, Assistant Public
Defender, St. Paul, Minnesota (for appellant)

Considered and decided by Johnson, Presiding Judge; Bentley, Judge; and Bond,
Judge.

NONPRECEDENTIAL OPINION

BOND, Judge

In this direct appeal from the judgment of conviction for first-degree criminal sexual
conduct, appellant argues that the district court committed reversible error by admitting

evidence of changes in the victim’s behavior and mental health after the offense. Appellant asserts additional claims in a pro se supplemental brief. We affirm.

FACTS

On about June 5, 2024, twelve-year-old H.M. was sitting on the back porch of her Minneapolis home when a car drove into the alleyway. H.M. did not recognize the man in the driver’s seat but she approached at his request. The man pulled H.M. into the car and drove further away, where he penetrated her with his penis and fingers. After the sexual assault, H.M. ran home. H.M. did not immediately tell her family what happened because she was afraid they would not believe her.

Two days later, H.M. used a school computer to search topics such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and how to “explain that you’d been molested.” A few days after that, H.M. told a school counselor she had been raped. The school contacted H.M.’s mother, a police report was made, and H.M. underwent a forensic interview and physical examination.

On July 29, H.M.’s brother saw several missed calls on H.M.’s phone; prior to the offense, H.M. had been messaging with the caller until she learned that he was a man in his 30s and not a 14-year-old boy, as he had claimed. H.M.’s brother messaged the caller, later identified as appellant Qalinle Ibrahim Dirie, and invited him to their house. When Dirie arrived, H.M. recognized him as the person who sexually assaulted her.

Respondent State of Minnesota subsequently charged Dirie with first-degree criminal sexual conduct, in violation of Minn. Stat. § 609.342, subd. 1a(e) (2022). Over the course of a five-day trial, the jury heard testimony from 13 witnesses including H.M.,

H.M.’s mother, sister, and brother, a school counselor, forensic nurse, forensic interviewer, DNA scientist, and several police officers. Over Dirie’s objection, H.M.’s family testified they observed changes in her behavior and mental health after the offense, explaining that she appeared withdrawn, depressed, and displayed self-harming behaviors.

The jury found Dirie guilty, and the district court sentenced him to 144 months in prison.

Dirie appeals.

DECISION

I. The district court did not abuse its discretion in admitting evidence of H.M.’s behavioral and mental-health changes after the offense.

Dirie argues that the district court committed reversible error in admitting irrelevant and unfairly prejudicial evidence of post-offense changes in H.M.’s behavior and mental health. “Evidentiary rulings rest within the sound discretion of the district court, and we will not reverse an evidentiary ruling absent a clear abuse of discretion.” *State v. Ali*, 855 N.W.2d 235, 249 (Minn. 2014). A district court abuses its discretion when its decision is based on an “erroneous view of the law or is against logic and the facts in the record.” *State v. Guzman*, 892 N.W.2d 801, 810 (Minn. 2017).

Generally, relevant evidence is admissible. Minn. R. Evid. 402. Evidence is relevant if it has “any tendency to make the existence of any fact that is of consequence to the determination of the action more probable or less probable than it would be without the evidence.” Minn. R. Evid. 401; *see State v. Swinger*, 800 N.W.2d 833, 839 (Minn. App. 2011) (“A fact is relevant if, when taken alone or in connection of other facts, it warrants

a jury in drawing a logical inference assisting, even though remotely, the determination of the issue in question.” (quotation omitted)), *rev. denied* (Minn. Sept. 28, 2011). “Rule 401 reflects a minimal relevancy approach.” *State v. Hallmark*, 927 N.W.2d 281, 298 (Minn. 2019) (quotation omitted). Even relevant evidence, however, may be excluded, if “its probative value is substantially outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice, confusion of the issues, or misleading the jury, or by considerations of undue delay, waste of time, or needless presentation of cumulative evidence.” Minn. R. Evid. 403.

In this case, the state sought to introduce evidence from H.M.’s family that they observed changes in H.M.’s behavior and mental health after June 5, arguing that the evidence was relevant to H.M.’s credibility and whether the sexual assault had occurred. Dirie objected, arguing that evidence after the offense date was irrelevant and unfairly prejudicial. The district court allowed the state to elicit testimony from the family about their observations in the first few weeks after the offense but ruled that evidence showing “ongoing” or “current” effects of the offense on H.M. was not admissible. At trial, the jury heard testimony from H.M.’s family that they observed significant changes in H.M.’s behavior and demeanor in the weeks after June 5, including that she appeared depressed, became isolated, and engaged in self-harming behaviors.

Relevance

Dirie contends that evidence of H.M.’s post-offense behavior and demeanor was irrelevant because the evidence did not make it more probable that the offense occurred. We disagree. A victim’s testimony in a criminal-sexual-conduct case does not require corroboration. Minn. Stat. § 609.347, subd. 1 (2022); *see State v. Foreman*, 680 N.W.2d

536, 539 (Minn. 2004) (stating that, in general, “a conviction can rest on the uncorroborated testimony of a single credible witness” (quotation omitted)). But “the absence of corroboration in an individual case may well call for a holding that there is insufficient evidence upon which a jury could find the defendant guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.” *State v. Ani*, 257 N.W.2d 699, 700 (Minn. 1977) (quotation omitted). Thus, testimony about a victim’s demeanor and emotional condition after a sexual assault can be corroborative evidence that an assault occurred. *See State v. Johnson*, 679 N.W.2d 378, 387 (Minn. App. 2004), *rev. denied* (Minn. Aug. 17, 2004). Because Dirie denied the sexual assault and challenged H.M.’s credibility at trial, evidence that H.M. became depressed, isolated, and tried to hurt herself in the weeks after June 5 was relevant to her credibility and to the ultimate determination of whether the offense occurred. *See id.*

Dirie relies on *State v. Crims* for support. 540 N.W.2d 860 (Minn. App. 1995), *rev. denied* (Minn. Jan. 25, 1996). In *Crims*, this court affirmed the district court’s exclusion of evidence of a victim’s prostitution activities, which the defense sought to admit for purposes of showing consent to the charged sexual conduct. *Id.* at 866. In discussing the unfairly prejudicial nature of the evidence, we observed that “the effect of rape on a victim’s life provides the jury with no useful information about events underlying the rape charge.” *Id.* at 869. *Crims* is readily distinguishable. *Crims* concerned admissibility of a victim’s sexual conduct under Minnesota’s rape-shield law for purposes of showing consent. *Id.* at 866. Unlike *Crims*, this case does not involve admission of evidence under the rape-shield law.

Given the “minimal relevancy” requirements of Minn. R. Evid. 401, the district court did not abuse its discretion by determining that limited evidence of changes in H.M.’s behavior and mental health after the sexual assault was relevant. *See Hallmark*, 927 N.W.2d at 298; Minn. R. Evid. 401 (stating that relevant evidence must only have “any tendency” to make a fact more or less probable).

Unfair Prejudice

Dirie argues that evidence of H.M.’s behavioral and mental-health changes, even if relevant, should have been excluded under Minn. R. Evid. 403 because its probative value was substantially outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice. Specifically, Dirie contends that the evidence carried substantial danger that the jury would convict him out of sympathy for H.M. Dirie’s argument is unavailing.

“All evidence offered against defendants in criminal trials is prejudicial to some extent.” *State v. Spaeth*, 552 N.W.2d 187, 195 (Minn. 1996). Unfair prejudice does not mean “damage to the opponent’s case that results from the legitimate probative force of the evidence.” *State v. Mosley*, 853 N.W.2d 789, 797 (Minn. 2014) (quotation omitted). Rather, unfair prejudice “refers to the unfair advantage that results from the capacity of the evidence to persuade by illegitimate means.” *Hallmark*, 927 N.W.2d at 299 (quotation omitted). Here, the district court appropriately mitigated the risk of any unfair prejudice by limiting the evidence to the family’s observations of changes in H.M.’s behavior and mental health during the weeks immediately after the offense. Such evidence, while prejudicial, was not unfairly prejudicial because it did not persuade through illegitimate means. *See id.*

In sum, because the limited evidence of H.M.’s post-offense changes in behavior and mental health was relevant and its probative value was not substantially outweighed by unfair prejudice, the district court did not abuse its discretion.

II. Dirie’s pro se arguments do not warrant relief.

In a pro se supplemental brief, Dirie challenges the lack of DNA evidence. We understand Dirie’s argument to be a challenge to the sufficiency of the evidence.

A person is guilty of first-degree criminal sexual conduct if they engage in sexual penetration with a complainant under 14 years of age and the actor is more than 36 months older than the complainant. Minn. Stat § 609.342, subd. 1a(e). When, as here, the state relies on direct evidence to prove an offense, “we painstakingly review the record to determine whether that evidence, viewed in the light most favorable to the verdict, was sufficient to permit the jurors to reach the verdict that they did.” *State v. Segura*, 2 N.W.3d 142, 155 (Minn. 2024) (quotation omitted). As already explained, generally “a conviction can rest on the uncorroborated testimony of a single credible witness.” *Foreman*, 680 N.W.2d at 539 (quotation omitted). H.M. testified at trial that, when she was 12 years old, Dirie penetrated her with his penis and fingers. And, although not required, the state introduced additional corroborative evidence in the form of H.M.’s changes in demeanor after the offense and her statements to the forensic interviewer and the police. Viewed in the light most favorable to the guilty verdict, the evidence was sufficient to prove first-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Dirie also appears to argue that the jury was not allowed to see his phone records and that the district court and defense counsel “overlooked” other important evidence.

While “some accommodations may be made for pro se litigants, this court has repeatedly emphasized that pro se litigants are generally held to the same standards as attorneys and must comply with court rules.” *Fitzgerald v. Fitzgerald*, 629 N.W.2d 115, 119 (Minn. App. 2001). “Claims in a pro se supplemental brief that are unsupported by either arguments or citation to legal authority are forfeited.” *State v. Montano*, 956 N.W.2d 643, 650 (Minn. 2021) (quotation omitted). “Such arguments will not [be] considered unless prejudicial error is obvious on mere inspection.” *Id.* at 650-51. We have carefully reviewed Dirie’s remaining claims of error and conclude that they are forfeited because they are unsupported by legal arguments or citation to legal authority and because we discern no prejudicial error. *See id.*

Affirmed.