

CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING

October 2, 2017

MINUTES

With quorum present, Chair Bennett called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

Present: Vern Bennett, Arland Rasmussen, Chad Peterson, Rick Steen, Brian Hagen, Glenn Ellingsberg

Absent: Mary Scherling

Presenter: Chip Ammerman, Director; Connie Cleveland, Senior Attorney; Pam Ormand, Senior Attorney; Birch Burdick, States Attorney

I. **Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Steen made a motion to approve the September 5, 2017 Board minutes. Mr. Hagen seconded it. Motion carried.

II. **Legal Relationship with Social Services**

Mr. Ammerman providing a brief historical summary of the relationship between Social Services and Legal representation for children in legal custody of North Dakota Department of Human Services. Burleigh County is currently in discussion with the State regarding who is responsible to represent children that are in State custody, due to parental rights being terminated because the States Attorneys representation in Juvenile Court is not part of the mandated case management Social Services provides to children in NDDHS custody. Senate Bill 2206, which provides State funding for County Social Services, allows NDDHS to withhold funding if duties are not performed, which could fiscally affect counties in the near future.

It is the State's position that since they are funding Social Services, it is the County Social Services' responsibility to complete any tasks they deem appropriate as a designee of NDDHS. Also, because the Social Service's budget includes funding for the Assistant States Attorney representing the county in Juvenile Court for Child Welfare matters and the State of North Dakota is funding this, these services should be provided for children in State custody as well. Cass County feels that case management, while required by the State, does not include legal representation as the States Attorney's office is not an extension to the Designee responsibilities of NDDHS.

Connie Cleveland, Senior Attorney and Legal representative for Social Services stated she and Pam Ormand, Senior Attorney, solely represent children in county custody only. The Attorney General represents approximately 90 Cass County children in court proceedings where parental rights have been terminated and the children are considered custody of the State of North Dakota. Birch Burdick stated two major concerns in representing these children would be the resources to represent, as well as possible conflicts of interest. It was estimated that a typical case takes approximately three to five hours of prepping, including at least one appearance in court. There is also a concern for conflict of interest which could potentially not allow Ms. Cleveland or Ms. Ormand to represent the child. This has occurred in the past and created ethical issues for County Employees.

Mr. Ammerman informed the Board this discussion was informational at this time; however, a decision will be needed in the future regarding how funding is provided for representation of children in County and NDDHS custody. Cass and Burleigh County representatives will be meeting in late October to discuss this issue further and possibly come to a resolution. Other counties that this could potentially affect, besides Burleigh and Cass, include Grand Forks and Ward.

Mr. Ellingsberg made a motion to table the discussion on the Legal Relationship with Social Services until additional information is gathered from the meeting between Burleigh County and the North Dakota Department of Human Services. Mr. Rasmussen seconded it. Motion carried.

III. Operations Report

Mr. Steen stated he was surprised to see that 42,515 individuals in Cass County receive some sort of financial assistance, which amounts to over 24% of the population. Mr. Ammerman confirmed the numbers and stated those numbers are households, not individual clients and are not duplicated. He stated in the span of two weeks, Economic Assistance received 500 new applications for assistance. At the November Board meeting, a presentation will be provided on the process and efficiencies reached by the implementation of Q-Flow and other systems used in Economic Assistance.

Mr. Ammerman was asked for an update on SPACES. He stated there continues to be problems but staff are learning how to work around issues. The State has been responsive to these issues and are quick to take action when needed. Phase II of SPACES, which was scheduled to start this month, has been delayed until May 2018.

Mr. Ellingsberg asked Mr. Ammerman if he had heard anything further regarding the appeal of the Foster Care Overpayment from September's Board meeting. Mr. Ammerman stated he just sent out a second email after not having received a response or confirmation of his first.

Mr. Ammerman stated interviews continue to take place in order to fill positions due to promotions, staff leaving and staff resignations.

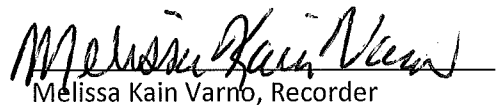
Mr. Ellingsberg made a motion to approve the Operations Report. Mr. Rasmussen seconded it. Motion carried.

IV. Adjournment

Mr. Steen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:55 pm. Mr. Rasmussen seconded it. Motion carried.



Vern Bennett, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board



Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder