

CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING
September 4, 2018

MINUTES

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

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

Presenter: Sidney Shock, Economic Assistance Manager; Robert Wilson, County Administrator

I. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Steen made a motion to approve the August 6, 2018 Board minutes. Mr. Rasmussen seconded it. Motion carried.

II. General Assistance Burial Policy Revision

Mr. Schock distributed a revised General Assistance Burial Policy that included language revisions. The language changes are in regards to LIHEAP guidelines removing the asset limit to the program. Mr. Schock stated that, based on state law, the program needs to rely on family members to assist in the burial payment; however, they will not be legally attempting to recover funds from estranged family members. It was also stated that, although cremation is preferred, there is a requirement that family members sign the paperwork for this procedure, so there may be times when an in-ground burial is provided. Ms. Scherling asked whether "Go Fund Me" accounts are explored to which Mr. Schock answered this is included in the research process. Ms. Scherling made a motion to approve the General Assistance Burial Policy with the included revisions. Mr. Peterson seconded it. On a roll call vote, the motion passed with all members voting yes. Mr. Steen requested the review of the asset limits be completed for the next time this policy is brought for revision, stating they appear to be quite low given the rate of inflation.

III. Operations Report

Mr. Schock stated the Public Assistance program numbers appear to be leveling out over recent months. He attributes this to recent changes made in the overhaul of the Farm Bill and employment rates. Mr. Schock stated Cass County provides 35-40% of the cases for Child Care Assistance in the State of North Dakota. Requirements for this program will be changing this fall, which would provide a transitional period allowing cases to be open longer. There was discussion on the Kinship Care cases in Foster Care and the Social Services redesign project which may be piloting changes to this program in the coming months. Mr. Steen requested a review on the federal funding numbers in the operations report to ensure their accuracy. Mr. Steen made a motion to approve the Operations Report. Mr. Rasmussen seconded it. Motion carried.

Mr. Bennett opened the meeting for any follow-up questions. Mr. Rasmussen asked for an update on the child care center who recently had a situation where three toddlers were able to get out of the premises. Mr. Schock stated the license was revoked on the center and the court declined the child care center's appeal of the revoked license as the matter had not yet proceeded through the administrative appeal process. He stated day care licensing staff make a recommendation to SEHSC who makes the final decision on the license status as a representative of the State of North Dakota.

Mr. Rasmussen and Mr. Ellingsberg inquired about a recent email message sent to County Commissioners and a news broadcast in which a mother reported asking for case management services from Social Services which were not provided. Mr. Wilson shared he received an email message from a concerned citizen stating she had requested case management services for a case where the father of her children was charged, and is serving time, for child abuse. Mr. Wilson forwarded this message on to County Commissioners as requested and contacted Mr. Ammerman for discussion on the situation. Mr. Wilson, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Ammerman, and staff met to review the case. Mr. Wilson stated he believes Social Service's staff followed policy regarding the case where the child had been hospitalized and law enforcement had been involved. At the time of the incident, the mother had declined services stating she could protect her child from the father who had been incarcerated. Mr. Wilson stated he believed a case worker would be assigned to this case. He will continue to follow-up with Social Service's staff regarding the situation, including the review of policy and practice. Ms. Scherling stated she believes a case worker should be assigned in all cases, regardless of the situation. Mr. Bennett stated he believed a case manager would be assigned. Ms. Scherling asked that a review of policy and training be completed to try and prevent something similar from happening in the future. Mr. Bennett stated a follow-up meeting with those involved will be scheduled.

Mr. Rasmussen asked that an update be provided at the next Social Service's Board meeting on the case management request and the revoked license of the child care center. In addition, Mr. Hagen asked that the board be updated on how Social Service's handles undocumented minors.

IV. Adjournment

Mr. Rasmussen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:45 p.m. Mr. Ellingsberg seconded it. Motion carried.



Vern Bennett, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board



Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder