

**CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING
December 3, 2018**

MINUTES

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

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

Absent: Chad Peterson

Presenter: Chip Ammerman, Director; Linda Dorff, Family Services Manager; Sharon Kleeman, Adult Services Manager

I. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Rasmussen made a motion to approve the November 5, 2018 Board minutes. Mr. Steen seconded it. Motion carried.

This was Commissioner Rasmussen's last meeting. He will be replaced by Mr. Duane Breitling to represent District 4 on the Cass County Commission for a four-year term beginning January 1, 2019. Introductions of Social Service staff were made and Mr. Breitling stated his written introduction will be sent at a later date.

II. 2019 Contract Renewals

Mr. Ammerman stated the contracts for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) come due at the end of the year. These include contracts with Community Living Services, Fargo Cass Public Health, Sanford Health, Spectrum, and Tami's Angels. Birch Burdick is currently reviewing the contracts, but Mr. Ammerman stated the only thing that will change is the date to reflect the services are for 2019. He stated the contracts have not changed in the last 10 years. Sharon Kleeman, Adult Services Manager, clarified these are for clients who may not qualify for other HCBS programs, but are still in need of assistance. The providers can assist with housecleaning, organizing, daily tasks, etc. Because these are County funded services, Mr. Ammerman is asking for approval from the Board members.

Mr. Rasmussen made a motion to approve the contracts for Home and Community Based Services for 2019. Mr. Steen seconded it. Motion carried.

III. CPS Pilot Project Update

Mr. Ammerman gave a brief overview of the CPS Pilot Project. He provided statistics for the pilot project, which has been in effective for two months. The amount of reports have increased approximately 21% in the last year, with the primary reports originating from the mandated reporters of law enforcement and school personnel. There are three main goals of the Pilot Project: conduct face to face with the child within three days of assignment; close 50% of cases in 25 days; and full kit by the CPS worker prior to the determination. As reported, all have seen increases in the second month of the project. Mr. Ammerman explained the State predicts the numbers could go up at least 10% of what is reported. He also explained there are some cases regarding Substance Exposed Newborns (SEN) that are required to stay open between 60-90 days due to continued monitoring. Including this information does skew the numbers slightly. Mr. Ellingsberg asked if it would be possible to separate those for the overall numbers to give a more accurate account. Mr. Ammerman agreed this could be done for December's report.

Mr. Ammerman informed the Board that Child Protective Services receives between 280-300 reports per month. The average caseload per staff currently is approximately 16 cases. The unit is understaffed by two positions, with a third being authorized for 2019. If the unit was fully staffed, they would be within the acceptable State caseload of approximately 12 cases per worker. Despite being understaffed, Mr. Ammerman and Ms. Dorff both express employee morale and motivation is high. From their reviews, the State reports no decrease in quality. Chair Bennett, Mr. Ammerman and Ms. Dorff continue to report little to no phone calls with complaints about the process. Mr. Ammerman stated he believes that in the eight weeks since the Pilot Project began, there has only been approximately two calls versus almost two to three per week prior to the Pilot Project.

Mr. Rasmussen asked what the next steps would be to improve the current process. Mr. Ammerman explained there is always room to improve on the CPS process. They will also start looking at shifting case managers from doing Foster Care case management to more In-Home case management as the goal is to take steps to reduce the number of children placed in foster care, resulting in the need for less Foster Care Case Managers and more in the realm of In-home/Short term case management.

IV. Discussion on Mental Health in Community

A handout was distributed regarding a documentary that aired on PBS called "God Knows Where I Am". It follows the life of Linda Bishop through her journal entries found in an abandoned farm house. Linda was diagnosed with severe Bipolar Disorder with Psychosis and had completed multiple stays in the New Hampshire State Hospital until her discharge and subsequent death. It discusses society's misunderstanding of mental health issues and how people battling these illnesses do not always get the proper help and follow-up care that they need.

Ms. Kleeman explained the cycle people with mental illness go through. They will become stabilized on their medications when hospitalized. Because they feel so well, they eventually stop taking their medications. Eventually, the medications are no longer in their system and they are unable to make safe and sound decisions for themselves due to the mental illness taking over again. Ms. Kleeman also stated that many are not under guardianship and because they are adults, they can make their own decision, so there is nothing saying they must take the medications or seek follow-up care.

Ms. Kleeman strongly urged everyone to watch the documentary as it gives insight to the types of people staff at this agency encounter on a daily basis. Mr. Ammerman also mentioned the possibility of bringing in the school wellness coordinator to explain the amount of energy and resources devoted to assisting children with mental illnesses within the schools in an attempt to combat future issues.

V. Operations Report

Mr. Ammerman stated Economic Assistance has been somewhat stable. Mr. Schock explained this is due to the economy being up and more jobs available because of seasonal positions. There are still some programs that have seen increases, but they have not been growing by 2-3% a month like they have in the past.

Mr. Ellingsberg asked if the issues regarding provider payments has been resolved. It was explained that last year, there were some providers that had not received payments for over six to eight months for services provided. Mr. Schock stated that is a question for provider relations

and he does not have access to this information. Mr. Ammerman did state they have not heard as many complaints as last year regarding payments.

Mr. Schock updated Board members regarding SPACES Release 2 (R2), which is expected to roll out in April 2019. SPACES is a program Economic Assistance uses for processing applications for assistance. There have been some Cass County Economic Assistance staff involved in the testing of R2 in Bismarck. To this point, reviews of the system are good and appears to be more user-friendly than the previous release. There will be a 10 week in-home testing phase that will occur at Cass County. At this time, there have been no improvements on the first release of SPACES.

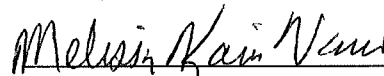
Mr. Ellingsberg made a motion to approve the Operations Report. Mr. Rasmussen seconded it. Motion carried.

VI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 2:48 p.m.



Chad Peterson, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board



Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder