

CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING

June 3, 2019

MINUTES

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

Present: Chad Peterson, Glenn Ellingsberg, Vern Bennett, Duane Breitling, Rick Steen, Mary Scherling, Brian Hagen

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

I. **Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Steen made a motion to approve the May 6, 2019 Board minutes. Ms. Scherling seconded it. Motion carried.

II. **Elder Abuse Awareness**

Sharon Kleeman, Adult Services Manager, stated the 9th Annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Summit will be held on Wednesday, June 12. This is a day-long summit that brings in a variety of speakers who present to service providers and community members regarding Elder Abuse and prevention. Mr. Bennet stated he attended last year's session and found all the speakers to be very informational.

Mr. Ammerman explained Adult Services started as a pilot project in 1989 to assess the safety, protection, and health of adults that may be categorized as vulnerable. Cass County Adult Protective Services (APS) provides services for the Southeast Region of North Dakota. There are eight APS units with a total of 16 APS workers in the State of North Dakota. Four years ago, Cass County APS became one of four units to be contracted through the State. The other four units are overseen by North Dakota Department of Human Services. There are currently three full-time APS and one .5 position in Cass County. Present today were Chelsey Niklas, Lyndsey Olsen, and Carla Odegaard. All three have been with the county since 2015. Jeremy Parrow occupies the .5 position and was unable to be at today's meeting.

Ms. Kleeman stated for every one case of elder abuse reported, there are 23 that are unreported. As of August 2013, North Dakota law requires certain professionals, known as mandated reporters, to report abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults; however, anyone is able to make a report. Reports can be made via an online form, fax, email, or by calling a toll-free number. Because APS is not a 24/7 on-call service, if a vulnerable adult is in immediate danger, the reporter is directed to call law enforcement right away and then file a report. All contact information in the report is confidential and will not be disclosed. The reports are reviewed by Centralized Intake in Bismarck. If the report meets criteria, it is sent on to the region where the adult resides. This is done typically within 24 hours of the report being made. When APS staff go out to assess the situation, they not only assess the concerns being reported but also ensure the client has the basic needs such as food, water, and transportation to and from appointments.

Each of the three APS workers present provided examples of cases they have worked on that involved abuse, exploitation/neglect, and self-neglect. When processing their cases, APS uses a multi-disciplinary team to develop a plan for the client. This team may consist of court officials, State Attorneys, advocates from Rape and Abuse Crisis Center, police department, and other community partners. Cases are typically closed within five to six months, but there is no mandate as to when they have to be closed. If the client has the capacity to make their own decisions, the worker cannot force any changes or services. If the worker feels the client is vulnerable due to a mental or physical impairment, they are able to seek a Power of Attorney or

representative payee to assist the client. Their last option would be to petition for guardianship, but this option does take away all of the clients' rights. Ms. Kleeman was asked what percentage of professional guardians exploit their clients. She responded that very rarely is it seen with professional guardians, but is more common for a family member to do this. Those interested in becoming guardians in the State of North Dakota must meet specific criteria and attend training in order to qualify per North Dakota Administrative Rule 59.

Mr. Ammerman concluded by stating the agency is very lucky to have such skilled APS workers. Not only are they supportive of the clients they help, but also of each other.

III. Operations Report

There are currently quite a few open positions in the agency, mainly because staff resign due to personal decisions. Mr. Ammerman explained since Sidney Schock took the Economic Assistance Manager position in March 2015, Mr. Schock has hired for 75 different vacancies. Approximately 60% of staff in Economic Assistance have less than three years' experience.

Child Protective Services (CPS) currently has a Social Worker III open due to resignation. Mr. Ammerman explained he is working with Human Resources regarding this former staff, due to concerns of their behavior while employed at Cass County. A third party review will take place to investigate the claims of a hostile work environment, but this has not yet been scheduled. Mr. Ammerman will keep Board members apprised of the situation.

Ms. Scherling questioned the possibility of allowing staff a more flexible schedule or possibly job sharing positions. Mr. Ammerman explained this has always been a part of the culture in the agency. At the supervisor's discretion, staff are able to be flexible with their work and personal time. He stated job sharing has been used in the past as well, but has proven to be not as effective in some programs as it makes it more difficult to meet the demands.

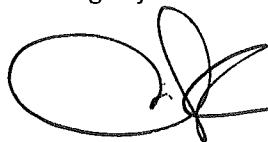
Caseloads continue to be high. April is normally a quieter month for CPS and it has been the highest all year with approximately 155-160 cases. CPS currently has enough staff to sustain a caseload of 110 per month. Staff have endured this increase for the last 12-14 months. This is causing burnout and some secondary trauma to the staff. Mr. Ammerman stated the agency would need to hire 25 additional positions in the agency in order to get caseloads to the state standard.

The statistical report is stable for most departments, but caseloads are way above what they should be. APS did request an additional .5 position to be added to the state contract, but the request was denied.


Chair Peterson stated the preliminary budget discussion will begin Thursday, June 6, 2019 at 3:00 p.m. Also, there will be a redesign meeting Tuesday, June 11, 2019 in Bismarck. Chair Peterson and Michael Montplaisir, County Auditor, will be in attendance. If anyone else is interested, please let Mr. Ammerman know.

IV. Adjournment

Mr. Ellingsberg made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:04 p.m. Mr. Bennett seconded it. Meeting adjourned.



Chad Peterson, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board


Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder