

CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING
June 4, 2018

MINUTES

With quorum present, Chair Bennett called the meeting to order at 2:08 p.m.

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

Absent: Brian Hagen

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

I. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Steen made a motion to approve the May 7, 2018 Board minutes. Mr. Rasmussen seconded it. Motion carried.

II. Senate Bill 2206 Redesign Update

Mr. Ammerman advised the Board there are five different programs across the State that are currently being reviewed for the redesign. They include: Child Care Licensing; Foster Care Licensing and Recruitment; Sub-Adopt; Aged and Disabled Economic Assistance; and Intake. In many of these programs, counties have very minimal caseloads. There discussion continues about removing boundaries and possibly adjusting the regions or districts. An example of one program that was redesigned would be Adult Protective Service (APS) Intake, which is based in Bismarck. Anyone wanting to report an APS concern can call, email, or fax the report to Bismarck. If warranted, the report is forwarded to the county in which the person resides within a day of APS Intake receiving it. This allows staff to be specialized in the intake process, providing consistent work and reducing errors.

Mr. Ellingsberg questioned the fate of the Social Services' Board with the potential redesign and wondered if it will be disbanded with the State taking over funding of Social Services. Mr. Ammerman stated the Social Services' Board serves as an advisory board to the agency and community. He did not foresee the discontinuation of it.

III. 2019 Budget Update

Mr. Ammerman distributed a draft overview of the 2019 budget proposal. It is projected with the increase in revenues and projected expenses to include a COLA and benefit increase, there would be a deficit in the budget even with not adding additional staff. The Social Welfare Fund balance is projected to be \$186,788 at the end of 2018. There was discussion on potential reductions such as removing sponsorships including YouthWorks, Emergency Foster Care Retainer, etc. Mr. Steen recommended the presentation be revised to include all costs associated with Social Services to allow discussion with the legislature on the actual costs associated with Social Services. The deficit should be indicated with a request for General Fund assistance. The Commission would then be responsible to approve or deny support based on the specific line item but the true costs would be included in the request. Mr. Ammerman stated he would work with accounting staff to make the suggested changes and sent to the Board prior to the next meeting for review.

Mr. Ammerman drafted a letter to Mr. Chris Jones, Executive Director of North Dakota Department of Human Services. In the letter, Mr. Ammerman outlines the current state of this agency's budget, the recommendation of potential cuts, and the integration of the The Work Number (TWN) for Economic Assistance to obtain real-time employment and wage information. He is seeking a response from Mr. Jones prior to July 10, 2018 to allow time to submit the 2019 Budget Proposal to the Commissioners. Mr. Ammerman was seeking direction and input from the Board regarding the letter. It was asked if Mr. Jones was aware of this letter. Mr. Ammerman stated he spoke with Mr. Jones previously about the concerns at which time Mr. Jones advised Mr. Ammerman to send him a letter about their discussion.

Mr. Rasmussen made a motion to allow Mr. Ammerman to send the letter to Mr. Chris Jones as drafted. Ms. Scherling seconded it. Motion carried.

IV. Social Service's Emergency Response Practice

Chair Bennett questioned what Social Services is doing to prepare for the possibility of mass casualties due to violence within the schools, community, etc. Historically, when something like that happens, many communities turn towards Social Services, questioning why they did not do more or step in when needed. Mr. Ammerman explained there is currently no active policy in place; however, Family Services is making progress in the school systems by integrating more tools, such as the Trauma and/or Suicide Screening Tool, which proactively assess potential issues. He stated the agency has never had to deal with a homicidal child, but when there are reports of behaviorally aggressive children, those cases are assigned to Child Protection staff to assess.

Ms. Linda Dorff, Family Services Manager, explained Fargo Public Schools may not be as advanced as West Fargo and Moorhead districts. Social Services is on the calling tree for any tragedy that may occur at these schools. A Safety Director position has been created within the Fargo Public Schools and is a first of its kind in the State of North Dakota. The Safety Director will assist in developing individualized plans for each property in case of an emergency. Mr. Peterson suggested getting Cass County Sheriff's Office Captain Jesse Jahner involved. Ms. Dorff stated she has already contacted Captain Jahner about assisting in the process. She explained Captain Jahner has done Active Shooter training for teachers; however, the teachers must attend on their own time. Mr. Ellingsberg advised Ms. Dorff to engage the principals at the school and not focus so much on the district level. Ms. Dorff thanked Mr. Ellingsberg for the suggestion and is taking that under advisement. Mr. Ammerman explained that in most cases, untreated mental health is the cause for acts of violence. Cass County is more advanced in their process, including the use of Alternative Responses in some situations that the State does not currently recognize.

Ms. Dorff will continue to work with her resources and programs to assist in the development of Emergency Response Practices.

V. World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Proclamation

Ms. Sharon Kleeman, Adult Services Manager, informed the Board members of the 8th Annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Summit occurring on Thursday, June 14, 2018. This will be held at the Hjemkost Center in Moorhead and is free to those wanting to attend. Last year, one of the Commissioners from Clay County read the proclamation for both Clay and Cass counties.

Ms. Kleeman requested a Board member attend and read Cass County's proclamation. Chair Bennett volunteered to be in attendance and read the proclamation.

VI. Operations Report

Mr. Ammerman reports that while the use of foster parents is stabilizing, there continues to be an increase in Family Services' Case Management and Kinship Care. This is directly related to the Child Protective Services' (CPS) numbers continually increasing. He stated 50-60% of all CPS cases are drug related, which are more difficult cases to complete due to families not willing to engage or being cooperative with staff. While an increase in cases is not ideal, the increase in Kinship Care could be seen by some as a positive. It shows the agency is trying to keep children within their family unit, as long as the extended family is found to be safe and secure for the child. This helps build relationships and trust between the family and agency staff.

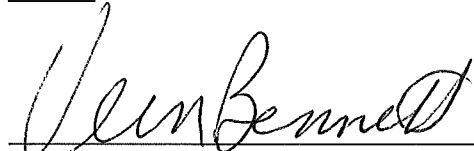
Mr. Peterson made a suggestion of having a social worker partnered with police departments so the social workers are able to step in and engage when officers are not able. Mr. Peterson was not sure how this could be accomplished, but explained there are many cities across the nation that utilize this and it has proven to be successful.

At the last Board meeting, it was discussed the use of State ITD services versus Cass County IT. Mr. Ammerman stated each county in the State does their IT services differently based on staffing. Most counties even utilize North Dakota Association of Counties as a resource. For Cass County, it would be challenging to piecemeal services.

Mr. Peterson made a motion to approve the Operations Report. Mr. Steen seconded it. Motion carried.

VII. Adjournment

Mr. Ellingsberg made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:08 p.m. Mr. Peterson seconded it. Motion carried.



Vern Bennett, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board



Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder