

CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING
November 5, 2018

MINUTES

With quorum present, Chair Bennett called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

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

Presenter: Chip Ammerman, Director; Linda Dorff, Family Services Manager; Sidney Schock, Economic Assistance Manager

I. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Rasmussen made a motion to approve the October 1, 2018 Board minutes. Mr. Ellingsberg seconded it. Motion carried.

II. CPS Pilot Project Updates

Additional handouts were distributed to the Board members providing statistics for the first seven weeks of the Pilot Project implemented in the Child Protective Services (CPS) Unit. This project will continue through mid-January. The State will be providing additional statistics of which Mr. Ammerman will share with Board members at December's meeting. Mr. Ammerman explained the goals of the pilot project are to maintain quality, engage with the family closer to the time of the incident, and reduce the number of children being placed into foster care. He explained that in the first seven weeks, 43% of cases have been closed as compared to only 8% being closed within 62 days prior to the project starting. The goal is to have 50% of all cases closed within 25 days of assignment. The State has reviewed these cases and found the quality to be similar, if not improved, compared to cases prior to the Pilot Project implementation. The biggest issue was the backlog of cases. In the seven weeks, 178 backlogged cases have been closed with only 28 now remaining open.

Ms. Dorff explained at first, staff were hesitant, but there has been more excitement now that the process is in motion. There is closer contact between the supervisor and worker. Each staff is assigned no more than four cases on their assignment day, which is followed by two protected days. This allows CPS staff to go out on interviews and prepare cases for closure. The unit is using a Task Analysis Board (TAB) for accountability. Staff place sticky notes for the step they are at for each case. During the unit's morning huddle, staff talk about what they accomplished the day before and what they plan to complete that day. Ms. Dorff explained staff are able to see where others are in their assessments, which has increased more offers to assist and provide words of encouragement to their co-workers. Supervisors and management continue to work with Kristen Cox and her team in Utah to develop a way to level out the cases, so staff are assigned a similar amount of cases per month.

Chair Bennett stated he has experienced less complaints from clients since the implementation. Mr. Ammerman and Ms. Dorff confirmed they too have not received any complaints thus far. It was also mentioned that the number of placements has significantly dropped with only eight children being placed in the last seven weeks.

III. Work Number Update

Mr. Schock provided an update on the use of The Work Number (TWN), a real-time data exchange that Economic Assistance has been using to verify income and employment for clients. Overall, it has been extremely beneficial for staff since its implementation in July, decreasing the number of days it takes to reach a decision on an application. There are currently 37 staff using TWN who states it saves time and has been a positive addition to their tasks. Some use TWN on a very consistent basis, while others only use if they have not received wage verification from clients. Staff are able to access the information within

minutes when they are conducting interviews with clients, thus eliminating the need to keep going back to the application multiple times.

Mr. Peterson asked if there have been any discussion about bringing back the fraud prevention unit to investigate potential assistance fraud. Mr. Schock agreed it would be nice to have again. Mr. Ammerman stated the agency is required to report any possible fraud and do so on a quarterly basis; however, staff are not equipped or have the proper training to do so, which may prevent some cases to not be properly reported. Mr. Schock explained there is a very high standard that has to be met when trying to prove disqualification from a service. In the past, a fraud unit was funded by the county, but all money that was saved went to a federal level versus the county level. This caused funding issues and the elimination of the investigation unit.

Mr. Ammerman stated he will be asking the Commissioners at their meeting today to approve continued use of TWN through the end of December in hopes that the cost will be covered in 2019 by the Redesign project. There are currently four to five other counties in North Dakota that are also using TWN.

IV. Operations Report

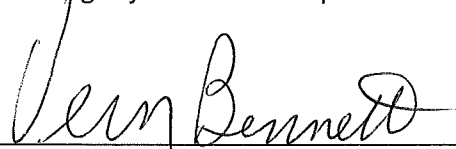
Marge Gildner and Shenandoah Chehalo visited the Family Services Division last week to provide a workshop to staff and other individuals associated with the agency. Both are "guides" that have been assisting Mr. Ammerman and Ms. Dorff to create the Unsystem for Child Welfare for our community through Alia. Family Service's aspiration is "Family connections will always be preserved and strengthened". The guides attended not only meetings with staff in the agency, but also foster parents and other service providers the agency works with.

Mr. Ammerman provided Board members with an additional handout outlining the four possible scenarios for the re-organization of the Department of Human Services. He said of the four, the third scenario is the most plausible at this time, which creates governance of Social Services at a zone level. The zone director may be a full time State or County employee or a combination of both. The zones would be defined by legislature and could possibly shrink Cass County's service area, but would not expand it. Mr. Ammerman explained the Social Service Board members would be a part of the zonal board; however, he is unsure what that would look like at this time. The main goal is to be client-based and provide services where it is convenient for clients to access. One concern of getting away from the borders is the responsibility of funding services. Mr. Ammerman explained there are some programs the agency is mandated to provide that are federally funded. There are others that are not required that can be decided by Board members, such as the Short Term Case Management. This program was approved by the board for funding and over the years has been added into the budget as it proved beneficial in preventing placement of children. The four organizational scenarios will be proposed at the next legislative session.

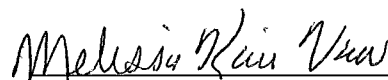
Mr. Ellingsberg made a motion to approve the Operations Report. Mr. Rasmussen seconded it. Motion carried.

V. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 2:59 p.m.



Vern Bennett, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board



Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder