

CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING
May 6, 2019

MINUTES

With quorum present, Commissioner Peterson called the meeting to order at 2:13 p.m.

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

Absent: Brian Hagen

Presenter: Chip Ammerman, Director; Tracey Curley, Foster Care Licensor

I. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Steen made a motion to approve the April 1, 2019 Board minutes. Ms. Scherling seconded it. Motion carried.

II. Foster parent Recognition

May is National Foster Care Month. Tracey Curley, Foster Care Licensor for Cass County, was present and provided a brief history on the role of Foster parents within Cass County. There are approximately 97 licensed foster homes in Cass County. A group of foster parents introduced themselves and explained how long they have been doing foster care and why they continue providing foster care. A couple of the parents stated they have been able to adopt some of the children they have fostered over the years. One foster parent has been offering care for over 35 years and plans to continue until she is no longer able. Most stated the reason they do foster care is to ensure all children have safe, loving homes when there is a need.

Ms. Curley stated Cass County has started offering support meetings for foster parents. There has also been facilitated meetings where Cass County staff and foster parents collaborate to redefine the relationship between the county, foster parents, and parents or guardians of children in the agency's custody. Future plans include additional education for foster parents prepare them to handle common behavioral issues being seen among children. When asked about the decline of foster care placements, Mr. Ammerman explained the agency is utilizing more kinship placements and early intervention, which is reducing the amount of foster home placements. However, there is still a need for licensed foster homes. He explained that in the future, there might be changes to the role of a foster parent, possibly providing mentorship to biological parents and children, in order to prevent placement. Ms. Curley stated she and Jennifer Thoreson, the other Foster Care Licensor, continue their recruitment efforts of foster parents in the community as there is still a need. Mr. Peterson stated he would assist by contacting someone at the Forum who may be able to do a story on foster parents and suggested Ms. Curley contact local radio stations for a possible segment on recruitment.

The Board members thanked the foster parents for their continued efforts in helping children and families in the community.

III. Budget Process

Mr. Ammerman explained with the State funding Social Services, the budget period will change to align with the State's, which is January to December. Additional clarification of the budget process will be discussed, once the legislature wraps up next week and the State meets to address the changes. County Auditor, Mike Montplaisir, stated estimated tax statements will be sent to residents soon that will include an approximate budget from Social Services. The remaining 2019 budget will be based on 2018 numbers with a 2.5% increase. It is expected the 2020 Budget will be based on the 2019 numbers with a 2% multiplier. If there are individual changes, those must be identified by the agency and provided to the State for further consideration.

Mr. Ammerman explained once zones are established, the State will have the ability to reallocate funds to zones in more need from those with excess. However, zones are not expected to be fully developed until 2021. Mr. Montplaisir asked if there would be employee attrition if a zone was in excess of staff. Mr. Ammerman explained that there will be a reduction from 46 directors down to 19; however, many of the director positions included program services, which will allow them to be reassigned in another positions. Some counties have been reducing positions over the last couple of years by not rehiring some positions after they are vacated.

Mr. Ammerman felt the proposed budget would be adequate to add additional staff in order to reduce caseloads within certain divisions, such as Child Protective Services (CPS) and Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). He explained HCBS most likely will see an increase in caseloads due to a current lawsuit advocating for more in-home services with an increase in active care plans, so the addition of staff would be needed.

In May, Mr. Ammerman stated Social Service Budget meetings will begin with the Chair Peterson, current Portfolio Chair, Sarah Heinle and/or Mr. Montplaisir, and Robert Wilson. If there are other Board Members that are interested, they are asked to let Mr. Ammerman know so he can inform them of dates and times.

IV. Agency Culture Overview

Over the last 10 years, the agency has created and used different techniques to build on their Mission, Vision and Values. These include additional resources and processes for management approaches, utilizing TriMetrix to aide in benchmarking and filling vacant positions, the Onboarding process to assist new staff in acclimating to their new work environment, and implementing more active supervision and coaching with employees. Mr. Ammerman explained the agency continues to create a culture that is strength-based and client focused by defining expectations and using early intervention strategies.

The Employee Committee continues to send out a survey to employees every two years seeking feedback specific to the culture within the agency. In 2018, they also began sending online exit surveys to staff that have left on their own accord. To date, they have received approximately 25 responses, which are reviewed quarterly. This is not related to the exit interviews Human Resources distributes.

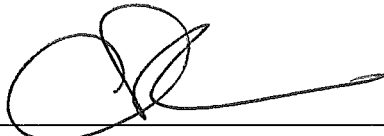
V. Operations Report

There was discussion regarding the number of children in different types of placement, such as foster care and residential, as the report showed many of the numbers are down compared previously. Mr. Ammerman explained placements are more strategized than before. When placements occur, CPS workers attempt kinship placement, as much as possible, in order to retain family connections and reduce any trauma that may occur to a child. He stated the children in DHS custody are ones where parental rights were terminated and they are waiting to be adopted; however, there is a one year delay in this process. The State is reviewing this concern.

Mr. Steen asked that an update be presented on SPACES at the July Board meeting.

VI. Adjournment

Mr. Ellingsberg made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:08 p.m. Ms. Scherling seconded it. Meeting adjourned.



Chad Peterson, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board



Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder