

Cass County Human Service Zone Director Considerations:

Structure:

The Management Team at CCHSZ is in a period of significant transition. This team includes:

- Zone Director – vacant
- Administrative Support Manager – will be vacant as of October 8, 2021
- Account Budget Specialist – potential resignation (actively applying for other position)
- CFS Division Lead – Linda Dorff
- EA Division Lead – Sidney Schock

Institutional Knowledge:

There is a lack of institutional knowledge that is approaching a crisis level impacting many levels of operational functioning. Layers of misconceptions, fallacies, and rumor exist that is impacting day to day operations. This includes an array of subjects including budgeting, compensation, operational policy, day to day supervision and management, team member training and messaging, relationships with DHS, relationships with the County, roles, and responsibilities, etc. This is further complicated by significant team member turnover rate. As detailed in the ***CCHSZ Turnover Report***, CCHSZ has experienced a 24.18% turnover rate of all positions agency-wide during the last twelve-month period.

Examples of lack of institutional knowledge:

- Budget recalculation
- Budget utilization and how it impacts services
- Locally administered HCBS programs – purpose, scope, communications
- 2022 salary increases and performance evaluations
- Relationship and attitudes towards DHS and county partners
- “Repercussions”
- Culture

- Lack of presence

Zone Philosophy

The CCHSZ team has not been provided, or perhaps accepted, a fundamental understanding of what are human service zones, interrelations of the human service delivery system, the purpose, vision, and mission. It appears the mindset is 3-5+ years behind the rest of the state with understanding and transitioning. It appears that Cass County initially believed that they would be immune from any the changes resulting from redesign and/or human service zone changes. Rather, it has been repeatedly commented that Cass believed the rest of the state was going to change to be more like them. There are silos within siloed silos within CCHSZ itself. As an institution they do not view themselves as part of a statewide team. Rather, the organization is suffering from an identity crisis. The organization is misaligned and what brings them together is the opportunity to commiserate about their uniqueness. This has negatively impacted culture, moral, and cohesiveness. In the end, impacting turnover, productivity, and service.

New Board

A new human service zone board will be place starting January 1, 2022. There will be three returning board members and four new community representatives in addition to the Zone Director. This is an area of strength as the new board will bring diversity, community knowledge, voice, and additional skillset/knowledge to the board.

There is internal conflict within the existing board. There is resistance to whether the Zone Director is a voting member of the Board. Efforts are being made to address this area. However, it may creep into the new year and impact the tone and transition to a new board structure along with a desire to preserve legacy.

Local Government and State Government Knowledge

Recent leadership has not had a strong background in neither local government nor state government. This is combined with a historic lack of understanding of comprehensive human service zone values and purpose. In result, relationships within the community, within the county, and within the state have greatly suffered. It is key for leadership to be

knowledgeable of local government and state government systems, operations, and processes to be an effective team player, problem-solver, and advocate.

The lack of positive relationship is pervasive even with critical partners. An example of such conflict is the divide and lack of trust between Child Welfare and the States Attorney office.

Descriptors provided by key partners to define CCHSZ include:

- Chaotic
- Non-team players
- Unaware of difference between law and policy including fundamental civil and human rights
- Polarized

Internal Operations:

As illustrated in the ***CCHSZ Turnover Report***, an alarming turnover rate has been trending. This has been a significant pattern but remains unaddressed. The attached report shows team member turnover, division, and position.

As turnover is costly from a financial, cultural, and service perspective it is critical that the root of this issue be studied and mitigated. This will take time and knowledge to explore. There is common belief that the turnover rate is solely linked to lack of competitive salary. This is likely part of the issue. Further study is critical along with strategic efforts to address any areas needed to stabilize the workforce.

CCHSZ has 16 mid-level managers. These managers have a strong influence on culture, workflow, and operations. Managers have been onboarded due to program knowledge vs. managerial skillset. To make a positive impact on CCHSZ, managers need to be better trained and supported in HR, management, and communication skills. Team members and managers need to be held accountable for their actions. They also need to be empowered with skills needed for this size and type of organization to be successful. See attached ***organizational charts*** that illustrate the layers of mid-level management and the impact on the day-to-day operations of the agency.

Summary Recommendations:

Zone Director

One individual cannot be responsible for the change, visioning, development, and community/systems work critical to effective leadership of this agency. The amount of work needed is simply too comprehensive. There are currently 141 team members employed by the zone. Lynn Flieth and Kim Jacobson have served as interim directors. Each have each dedicated 32+ hours per week each to meet the basic needs demanded and needed by the organization. This need will not change. This observation is significant given the experience and knowledge possessed by the Interim Co-Directors.

The skillset needed to effectively lead an agency of this size must be broad and diverse. An understanding or ability to learn/understand the complexities of the child welfare system, child's best interest, along with roles/responsibilities of serving as a legal custodian is critical. However, in the past this has been the primary focus of the Director. Yet significant struggles continue. The other areas (economic assistance programs, fiscal management, adult services, administration) have gone largely neglected of time, supervision, oversight, leadership, and communications. These other areas are also critical to operations and service. They also require strong leadership, development, and support from the Human Service Zone Director.

The position requirements of the Zone Director include:

- Oversight and planning for the delivery of human services and programs in collaboration with the board, and local, regional, and state stakeholders.
- To execute an executive plan to assess and identify community needs, gaps in service, and program needs.
- Develop, implement, and interpret policies and procedure
- Provide fiscal and program reports and information
- Supervise staff
- Fiscal accountability

- Program oversight
- Advocacy – representative or liaison to the community, committees, commissions, associations, legislators, agencies, and media
- Serve as the chair and voting member of the human service zone board
- Monitor legislation, prepare, and present testimony,
- Work with DHS to ensure efficient, effective, and quality human services
- Develop a culture that supports positive working environment for employees and a positive environment for clients

Finally, a firm understanding, and philosophy of public service is critical to successful leadership in a hybrid local/state human service delivery system.

Strategic Recommendation:

- Two Organizational Leaders – such as:
 - Director/Assistant Director
 - Director/COO
 - Co-Directors – potential of a new leader along with agreement for an experienced Co-Zone Director to co-lead/mentor the agency for a period that would be reevaluated at periodic milestones.
 - The Zone Director should not directly supervise the entire team of Vulnerable Adult Protective Services (VAPS). While this is a regional contract for service, there needs to be proper chain of command and support the work of this unit. Minimally, a lead worker if not a supervisor for the unit.

Administrative Service Manager:

The current job description is broad and focused on standard clerical/reporting tasks, IT support, and high-level HR/training duties. The current job description indicates 17 direct administrative assistant reports. Simply stated, the current job description is too broad and fails to meet the needs of agency.

This JDQ will be updated to reflect the implementation of (2) Administrative Assistant Leads (one in EA and other in CFS support) who will be direct reports. This change has

already occurred and will be reflected accordingly. The JDQ will also be updated to focus on Executive Staff Officer duties including HR management, management team skill development, administrative lead supervision and related duties.

Strategic Recommendation:

This position to be advertised to focus on high-level Executive Staff Officer duties.

- The standard clerical or reporting tasks will be temporarily reassigned to existing administrative support team members and permanently redirected once the incumbent is onboarded.
- This may require a more competitive salary or potential reclassification to fully execute this change.
 - In consultation with Marla McIntyre compensation trends for a mid-level Executive Staff Officer in this hiring community runs \$70-\$75K/annually. Current pay for this budgeted position is \$65,972.64.
 - Of note, Marla's new position starts with a \$15K pay (\$80K) increase plus similar benefits.
- The incorporation of an Executive Staff Officer is critical to help support the development of mid-level management to lead more effectively, to help change culture, to address turnover trends, and to support the work/vision of the Zone Director/Board.

Proposed New Structure of the CCHSZ Management Team:

- Zone Director/Leader
- Zone Director/Leader
- Executive Staff Officer
- Fiscal Officer
- Economic Assistance Division Lead
- Children and Family Service Division Lead
- Legal representation (interest pending for return to Management Team meetings)

Closing:

There are many talented, committed, and willing team members within the CCHSZ family. Through ongoing feedback, many team members acknowledge the state of organizational crisis and are very concerned. Team members have expressed willingness to be part of the solution. They need the right type of leadership, communications, and support. The purpose of this report is to provide honest assessment of information gathered along with recommendations to assist the human service zone to stabilize, grow, and flourish. Such change is critical for the health of the organization and to ensure the agency provides quality, efficient, and effective human services to North Dakotans into the future.