

CASS COUNTY HUMAN SERVICE ZONE BOARD MEETING
February 7, 2022

MINUTES

With quorum present, Director Bollinger called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

Present: Duane Breitling, Carey Fry, Brian Hagen, Julie Haugen, Michelle Kommer, Dan Madler (via Teams), Rick Steen (via Teams)

Absent:

Presenter: Gail Bollinger, Human Service Zone Director; Kim Jacobson, Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone Director

I. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Breitling made a motion to approve the January 18, 2022, Board minutes. Mr. Hagen seconded it. Motion carried.

II. Role of a Human Service Zone Board Member - Video and Discussion

A video narrated by Director of Zone Operations Kristen Hasbargen regarding the roles and duties of a human service zone board member viewed. It can be found here: [North Dakota Human Service Delivery System - YouTube](#)

Board members inquired of zone performance metrics. Ms. Jacobson explained that the reporting process is still in development by DHS. It is expected to appear like a report card, providing a rating on zone performance.

Ms. Jacobson clarified board's role regarding requests for Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions. The human service zone board will be consulted prior to requesting FTEs beyond the appropriated level.

III. Featured Program: Adult Protection Services (APS)

Susan Harris, Chelsey Niklas, and Lyndsey Olson from the Adult Protective Service (APS) Unit, also commonly referred to as Vulnerable Adult Protective Services (VAPS), were present. Jeremy Parrow is the fourth staff member of the unit but was unable to attend. This unit serves the Region V including Steele, Traill, Cass, Ransom, Sargent, and Richland Counties.

APS began in North Dakota in 1989. Beginning in 2013, mandated reporting laws were enacted and created a large influx of vulnerable adult reports. The APS Unit investigates allegations of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and self-neglect of vulnerable adults. By statute this is defined as any adult over the age of 18 years of age who has a substantial physical or cognitive impairment or someone unable to defend against an alleged perpetrator.

A statewide central intake receives all reports regarding vulnerable adult concerns. Upon receipt of a report, the report is reviewed to determine if it meets VAP criteria. If so, the report is forwarded to the regional APS unit where the vulnerable adult resides. APS's goal is to assess the situation and connect the individual with community resources that will be able to assist them going forward

The Region V APS team receives an average of 1-10 reports each day. Average APS worker caseloads range between 30 to 60 cases. APS provides assessment and referral services.

They are also engaged in a variety of community team meetings. In addition, they host and coordinate an annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event.

Mental health is the most reported concern. Individuals with challenging and violent behavior make it difficult to find nursing home placement. COVID has added to the complexity. Financial exploitation presents as another area of concern. The difference between a Guardianship and Conservatorship was explained.

Self-neglect is the most difficult issue the unit faces. These can include poor living conditions, hygiene issues, hoarding, etc. If competent, an individual has the constitutional right to live how they wish and refuse the assistance. In these cases, APS focuses on harm reduction, reduce fire hazards, and assists with medical providers in an effort to help reduce overall risk.

Southeast Human Service Center (SEHSC) serves as a liaison for assistance with the VAPS program which include assessments for other services or involuntary commitments.

Ms. Bollinger thanked the APS workers for all they do to serve the people in our region.

IV. Personnel Update

Heather Collins is the new Executive Staff Officer. She began with CCHSZ on January 3, 2022. She serves as a Human Resource liaison between Cass County and ND DHS. Heather previously served as the HR Director for the Anne Carlsen Organization and has a medical background.

Ms. Collins provided the following staffing updates:

- There were (5) retirements in the month of January;
- Offers are being made on (3) open Economic Assistance positions;
- In Family Services, (3) new employees today; and,
- There are (6) Family Service positions open and in various hiring stages.

The Board inquired about the quality and quantity of applicants the agency has received. Ms. Collins reports seeing over ten applications on the last position that closed. Quality applicants have been noted. This has allowed the agency to hire multiple positions from one roster of candidates.

The human service zone positions are posted on the ND.GOV website. An online application is required for all applicants. NDDHS HR performs the initial screening of applicants and develops a scored roster based on the round one screening and minimum qualifications. The interview and selection processes are at the discretion of the human service zone.

The Board sought an update on the ongoing workplace investigations. The Family Service internal investigation has been completed and resulted in three retirements. The Economic Assistance internal investigation is in the fact-finding phase.

V. Directors Report

Ms. Bollinger provided an update on her first few weeks of activity with the zone. She has spent time with Ms. Jacobson and Lynn Flieth, Zone Director for RSR Human Service Zone, who have been serving as mentors and assisting with the onboarding process. Kristen Hasbargen, Director of Zone Operations for ND DHS will also be meeting with her for onboarding purposes.

Ms. Bollinger has also met with County IT to develop a more streamline approach to current technology issues. She has also engaged with statewide partners, including training sessions with two other new Zone Directors, and attending statewide Zone Director's meetings.

Moving forward, Ms. Bollinger would like to meet with a variety of employees in small groups or one-on-one to discuss how the agency can move forward as a team, how to provide a positive, productive environment, and gain a better understanding of staff's perspective. Ms. Bollinger will be reviewing and updating the current Zone Plan that must be submitted to the State by March 1, 2022. The Board will not need to approve this as it is only being updated. Ms. Bollinger also reports her plans to review and update procedures for the performance review forms and service awards.

A facilities update was provided. All on-site Economic Assistance Division is located on the second floor of the Annex. The Family Services Division is located on third floor. The Administrative Team has moved to the northwest corner of the fourth floor. Plans are underway to relocate all state staff to the fourth floor. The fourth floor will also feature hoteling space for telecommuting staff. The County and Zone are currently working with a architect to review floor plans and to plan for needed modifications for an effective modern workplace.

Current analysis is underway to develop a new format for operational reports. The board requested for future statistical reports from Economic Assistance programs to focus on unduplicated case counts. This can be accommodated.

The Board inquired if clients could meet with workers onsite or if all office-based contact is all virtual. Currently, there is little request for in-person meetings. However, a client can request an in-person meeting. This is one of several reasons hoteling space is being planned and will provide additional flexibilities and service needs.

Adjournment

Mr. Breitling made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:59 p.m. Ms. Kommer seconded. Motion carried.



Gail Bollinger, Zone Director
Cass County Human Services Zone Board



Blair Hodge, Recorder