

# CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING

September 6, 2022

## MINUTES

With quorum present, Chair Bollinger called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

**Present:** Commissioner Duane Breitling; Commissioner Rick Steen; Carey Fry; Julie Haugen; Dan Madler; Gail Bollinger; Michelle Kommer;

**Absent:** Brian Hagen;

**Presenter:** Gail Bollinger, Zone Director; Heather Collins, HR & Operations Administrator; Matthew Gebhardt, Child Welfare Consultant & Technical Support for Family Services

### I. **Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Breitling made a motion to approve the August 1, 2022 and August 22, 2022 Board minutes. Ms. Haugen seconded it. Motion carried.

### II. **Zone Addendum Update – FMLA Designee**

Chair Bollinger requested to update the Zone Addendum Policy related to the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) designee. The current designee is the Cass County Government Human Resource Director. Chair Bollinger requests the wording change to Cass County Human Service Zone Human Resource Administration. It was questioned if this was reviewed by counsel as it is believed that an actual position or specific person should be designated. Chair Bollinger expressed her appreciation for the feedback. It was suggested to appoint the Cass County Human Service Zone Human Resource and Operations Administrator as the FMLA Designee.

Mr. Madler made a motion to update the Cass County Human Service Zone Addendum Policy to appoint the Cass County Human Service Zone Human Resource and Operations Administrator as the Family Medical Leave Act Designee. Commissioner Steen seconded it. Motion carried.

### III. **Family Services Update**

Ciera Sherman was present at today's meeting. She is the newest Family Service Case Management Supervisor.

Chair Bollinger explained in the last month, the Family Service unit has been offered a variety of training opportunities by Matthew Gebhardt. They are looking at competency, organization, and leadership within the unit. The Safety Framework Practice Model (SFPM) has been the main focus as well as improved communication and organizational structure.

There have been two more resignations from the Child Protection Services (CPS) Unit. Currently there are a total of nine staff out of the allotted 15 in the CPS Unit. There are five staff of that nine that have six months' experience or less. Staffing continues to be a concern. Last week, Chair Bollinger met with Kristen Hasbargen and Jessica Thomasson of ND Department of Health and Human Services (ND DHHS). Chair Bollinger requested to temporarily overstaff the unit by 25 percent to accommodate the turnover in staff. She

reports Ms. Hasbargen and Ms. Thomasson were understanding of the situation and open to the suggestion. A full-time equivalency (FTE) request was submitted today for temporary case aide positions to provide some assistance as soon as possible. At the next Zone Director's meeting, Chair Bollinger will also ask for assistance from other zones and state partners. Mr. Gebhardt added staff are working extremely hard right now and learning quite a bit at the same time. He, too, states the shortage of experience is worrisome, especially since October and March are historically months with high volume of reports in CPS. They continue to work diligently to prioritize the most vulnerable and child safety. Chair Bollinger explained the team is moving forward but lack of experience impacts everyone on the team. She has brought it to the attention of the state partners who are supportive and understanding but are unable to provide a solution at this time due to the amount of training that is required for the position.

It was inquired if the resignations were due to burnout, other opportunities, or both. Chair Bollinger stated both. There continues to be concerns regarding current staff and possible burnout, but she feels bringing Mr. Gebhardt on has been a very positive experience, providing assistance to not only the workers but to supervisors as well. The Board questioned where staff were going after leaving the Zone. It was reported staff have gone to State position, school systems, and hospitals. There have also been retirements that have occurred. Chair Bollinger's intent of meeting with Ms. Hasbargen and Ms. Thomasson was to make the state aware of the position the Zone is in and the help that is needed. While there is no known plan to request more FTEs at the next legislative session, the ability to bring on case aides will be beneficial as there is schedule flexibility and the higher qualifications are not a necessity as educational qualifications had been a barrier in the past when filling FTEs. It was inquired if the Zone offers an internship program, which could help with future recruitment. Chair Bollinger stated that option is currently in discussion, but there has to be enough staff to supervise in order to be able to take interns on. It was questioned if the CPS Unit has ever been at the full 15 staff. Chair Bollinger reported that it has not since she has been with the Zone.

#### **IV. Personnel Update**

There were four resignations, three new hires, and two internal promotions in the month of August. There will be five staff starting in September with the possibility of a few more as well. There are 22 positions in various phases. Turnover is currently at 4.13%. A quarterly report will be provided in the November meeting.

Board members questioned at what point is the staffing shortage considered critical or emergent. Chair Bollinger reported the Zone is currently in that stage now, which is the reason she met with Ms. Hasbargen and Ms. Thomasson with her staffing proposal and will be reaching out to other Zones and state partners for assistance.

#### **V. Director's Report**

Chair Bollinger provided a written report to the Board members that were present. She reported the Administration team hosted an ice cream social on August 10 to show their appreciation to staff. She also reports attending a program social for the new executive director of the Jeremiah Program, which is a partner of the Zone.

The Zone financials through the end of August were included in Chair Bollinger's report. The Zone is currently at 58 percent of their budget, which is approximately \$1 million under due to turnover.

The Vulnerable Adult Protection Services (VAPS) has seen an increase in reports recently, which is believed to be linked to the Public Service Announcement that was recently done.

Economic Assistance continues to prepare for the redesign set for 2023. In August, the team started creating internal work groups and processes in preparation for the implementation. They have also been collaborating with Region IV for additional training and mentorship.

Mr. Wilson commented on the wage/benefit study and if there will be a product to present in January if the contracted partner was just brought on. Chair Bollinger explained the contract had been awarded a while back but not announced. She felt confident they would have information to present to the legislature in January 2023.

The next Cass County Human Service Zone Board Meeting will be Monday, November 7, 2023.

**VI. Adjournment**

Ms. Kommer made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:30 p.m. Commissioner Steen seconded. Motion carried.



Gail Bollinger, Zone Director  
Cass County Human Service Zone



Blair Hodge, Recorder