

CASS HUMAN SERVICE ZONE BOARD MEETING

April 3, 2023

MINUTES

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

Present: Commissioner Tony Grindberg; Rick Steen (via Teams); Julie Haugen (via Teams); Dan Madler (via Teams); Gail Bollinger

Absent: Carey Fry; Brian Hagen; Michelle Kommer;

Presenter: Gail Bollinger, Zone Director; Heather Collins, HR and Operations Administrator;

I. **Approval of Minutes**

II. Commissioner Grindberg made a motion to approve the March 2, 2023, Special Meeting minutes. Mr. Steen seconded. Motion carried.

After reviewing the March 6, 2023, Board meeting minutes, Mr. Steen had a correction to reflect his attendance via Teams.

Commissioner Grindberg made a motion to approve the March 6, 2023, Board minutes with the correction that Mr. Steen appeared via Teams. Mr. Steen seconded. Motion carried.

III. **Guest Speaker – Jessica Thomasson, Executive Director Human Service Division, ND DHHS, 'Addressing the Impact of the Benefits Cliff'**

Ms. Thomasson was present to discuss issues clients encounter when they have employment but also receive benefits through the State of North Dakota. She will share her PowerPoint from today's meeting with Chair Bollinger, who will forward on to the Zone Board members.

Ms. Thomasson reported there are 154,000 individuals served through the 19 Human Service Zones in North Dakota. Many are affected by a benefits cliff when there is a change in their income. Often, the change will decrease the benefits they receive. Often the change is not enough to cover the difference that is created between the increase and the loss in State benefits. This can lead to disincentivizing the need to obtain or maintain employment. Ms. Thomasson explained people also experience hardship gaps, defined as earned income being greater than the poverty level, but still less than the cost of living. Discussions at the State level are happening on ways to decrease these issues such as slowly phasing individuals from benefits, extending certification periods, provide online budgeting tools, and raising eligibility limits. In many situations, when an individual experiences a benefits cliff, their Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) is the first benefit they lose. Child Care Assistance is the biggest cliff, as this tends to use 15-40% of a families' income and is the hardest to make up.

Commissioner Grindberg asked what metrics were in place to measure this progress. Ms. Thomasson explained currently metrics are limited. . She explained the metrics that would be beneficial would be very intensive to gather.

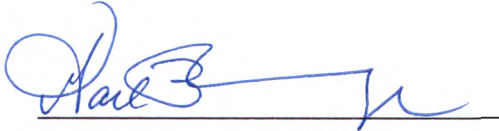
Chair Bollinger expressed her appreciation for Ms. Thomasson's presentation today and the talking points she has provided to the Board.

IV. Director's Report

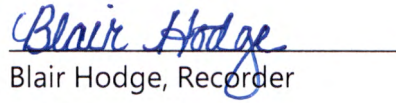
Due to time, the Director's Report was not presented but was provided to all in attendance for review.

V. Adjournment

Commissioner Grindberg made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:57 p.m. Ms. Haugen seconded. Motion carried.



Gail Bollinger, Zone Director
Cass County Human Service Zone



Blair Hodge, Recorder