

# CASS HUMAN SERVICE ZONE BOARD MEETING

March 4, 2024

## MINUTES

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

**Present:** Commissioner Jim Kapitan, Julie Haugen; Carey Fry; Dan Madler; Senator Kyle Davison (via Teams); Jen Sahr; Rick Steen; Brian Hagen; Gail Bollinger

**Absent:**

**Presenter:** Gail Bollinger, Zone Director; Samantha Duitsman, HR and Operations Administrator; Shaina Huovinen, Economic Assistance Program Manager; Jill Lane, Economic Assistance Supervisor

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

Mr. Madler made a motion to approve the February 5, 2024 Meeting minutes. Ms. Haugen seconded. Motion carried.

### II. **Program Spotlight – Shaina Huovinen, Economic Assistance Program Manager**

Shaina Huovinen explained the redesign that occurred in February 2023 where Economic Assistance went from a case management system to process management. At the beginning of the redesign, the State was separated into four regions and Zones assisted each other with application processing in their region. However, this recently changed so Zones process any application as they come in regardless of the client's Zone of residence. This was to better level out cases across the State. Processing of the applications is divided into four different lanes. Ms. Huovinen informed the Advisory Board these lanes will be dropping down to three soon. Each lane has a designated group that either processes or maintains the cases.

Ms. Huovinen explained applications can be submitted by walking in and dropping off a paper application or applying online through the Self-Service Portal (SSP). If clients have questions about the process or the benefits they receive, they are directed to call the Customer Support Center where eligibility workers will answer questions and assist as needed. Clients who require assistance in completing a paper application can still walk in and meet with designated Support Specialists who can help. There is an identified office in the lobby area where a client and Support Specialist can walk through the paperwork together privately.

Jill Lane informed the Advisory Board members that Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is attempting to modernize the process by eliminating the need for monthly reporting and increasing benefit amounts. Low-Income Heating and Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) will be going through this process as well.

Advisory Board members who have used the system to assist clients reported struggling with the SSP as well as not being able to speak to a designated eligibility worker for their clients. Ms. Huovinen explained the client can submit an Authorization for Release of Information between Economic Assistance and the agencies that assist clients in the community so other community case managers can contact the department on the client's behalf. The State is aware of the struggles with the SSP and continues to problem-solve the issues.

Ms. Huovinen briefly spoke of the federal Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) review that Cass Human Service Zone hosted last week. Federal representatives reviewed the program and interviewed team members about the process. This review may also aid in correcting some of the issues mentioned.

**III. Cass Human Service Zone Advisory Board Handbook**

Advisory Board members were provided a binder with the Cass Human Service Zone Advisory Board Handbook. Chair Bollinger commended Samantha Duitsman for compiling the handbook. Chair Bollinger mentioned to State partners of this development and has had some reach out asking for a copy so they can start developing their own.

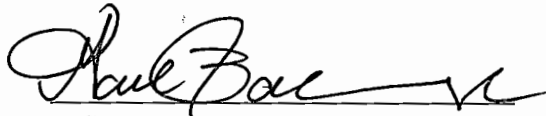
**IV. Operational Report**

Chair Bollinger expressed her appreciation of Bob Henderson, Director of Information Technology, and his team's assistance in the document migration process to prepare for the adoption redesign in Family Services. She also informed the Advisory Board that agreements have been made with nearby Zones to assist in the offering homemaker services to Cass residents so they are able to remain in their home as long as they can.

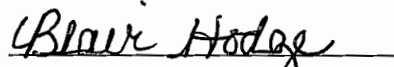
It was clarified that April's meeting would be held Monday, April 8, 2024, not April 9 as stated on today's agenda. The Outlook calendar invite sent out to the Advisory Board members reflected the correct date and time.

**V. Adjournment**

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



Gail Bollinger, Zone Director  
Cass Human Service Zone



Blair Hodge, Recorder