

# CASS HUMAN SERVICE ZONE BOARD MEETING

April 8, 2024

## MINUTES

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

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

**Absent:** Carey Fry;

**Presenter:** Gail Bollinger, Zone Director; Samantha Duitsman, HR and Operations Administrator; Chelsey Niklas and Susan Harris, Adult Protective Services; Carissa Cowley, Family Services Department Manager; Shaina Huovinen, Economic Assistance Program Manager

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

Mr. Madler made a motion to approve the March 4, 2024 Meeting minutes. Mr. Hagen seconded. Motion carried.

### II. **Program Spotlight – Chelsey Niklas and Susan Harris, Adult Protective Services**

Present were Chelsey Niklas and Susan Harris, two of the four team members that make up the Adult Protective Services (APS) Unit for Cass Human Service Zone. Jeremy Parrow and Lyndsey Olson were unable to attend. The APS Unit covers all counties in Region V of North Dakota and investigates concerns of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of individuals who are 18 years of age or older. Anyone with concerns regarding an adult can file a report with the Central Intake Unit in Bismarck. The person's capacity is assessed by a professional and if deemed incapacitated, the APS Unit will work with the client to establish the care and support they need in efforts to mitigate the risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation from recurring. Scams and financial exploitation are the most common issues they encounter, with a family member often being the subject in the latter of the two.

The biggest challenges the APS Unit encounters in their work are lack of funding and increasing complexity of cases. The funding is often regarding services for which the client is expected to pay a portion of it. Many do not meet the threshold for financial assistance yet do not have the additional funds to pay for therapy or treatment out of pocket. While they cannot force treatment or services in most situations, there are times when there is imminent danger identified and APS is able to push for services through a civil commitment or by obtaining guardianship.

Ms. Niklas and Ms. Harris clarified APS team members do not take on the role of guardians. They explained the State requires them to first seek out a family member that could take on the responsibility. If none are identified or available, then they contact other local agencies and independent guardians that offer the service, of which there is a shortage of guardians and very often, waiting lists. Guardians are responsible for overseeing all decisions made on the client's behalf, including medication approvals, living arrangements, and assets.

They talked about the many successful cases they have had as well. Despite the circumstances, Mr. Parrow was recently acknowledged in a client's obituary, thanking him

for the services and assistance he provided the client. They have also had clients that were in very dire circumstances and near death, and once they intervened and enrolled them into needed services they are now thriving. The unit also offers presentations to community partners, educating them on what to do if there are concerns and how they should report those concerns.

### III. Director's Review Timeline

The 2024 Annual Performance Evaluations for Cass Human Service Zone team members will be due by the end of May. Chair Bollinger updated the Advisory Board that she will complete her self-evaluation by the end of April. She will provide it to Ms. Duitsman, who will coordinate input from Vice Chair Brian Hagen and the ND Health and Human Services Director of Zone Operations, Kristen Hasbargen. In May, the finalized review will be delivered to Chair Bollinger by Vice Chair Hagen with a presentation to the Advisory Board in June.

### IV. Operations Report

Chair Bollinger reported having met with the new commissioner of ND Health and Human Services, Mr. Wayne Salter. He has great experience and knowledge in eligibility services and one immediate focus is on SNAP timeliness and attending to the application backlog.

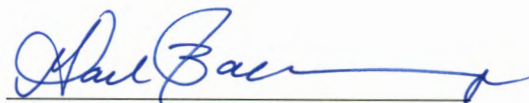
Chair Bollinger also shared the Zone Director's Strategic Plan that was discussed at the ND Zone Director's Association meeting in March. This is the first time a plan like this has been developed. She will be participating in a workgroup to address deepening the Association's impact.

Ms. Duitsman briefly reviewed recruiting metrics. While it is still early in the year, the Zone is at only a two percent turnover rate, with 10 team members being onboarded since the beginning of 2024. As of April 1, the CPS Unit was fully staffed with 15 CPS Assessment Workers. Chair Bollinger reports there are still some onboarding so not all are being assigned cases, but this is the first time in her time here that the unit has been fully staffed.

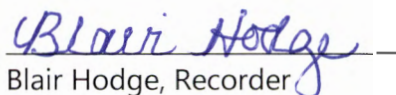
Mr. Steen sought further clarification on some of the statistics reported as part of the Economic Assistance dashboard. Ms. Huovinen was unsure of the numbers offhand so Ms. Duitsman offered to review and update the Advisory Board on any corrections she might find.

### V. Adjournment

Mr. Kapitan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:59 p.m. Mr. Hagen seconded. Motion carried.



Gail Bollinger, Zone Director  
Cass Human Service Zone



Blair Hodge, Recorder