

CASS HUMAN SERVICE ZONE BOARD MEETING

August 5, 2024

MINUTES

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

Present: Commissioner Jim Kapitan; Senator Kyle Davison; Dan Madler; Rick Steen; Gail Bollinger
Absent: Julie Haugen; Carey Fry; Brian Hagen; Jen Sahr (via Teams);
Presenter: Gail Bollinger, Zone Director; Shaina Huovinen, Economic Assistance (EA) Program Manager; Rachele Likness, EA Supervisor; Rachel Howard, EA Supervisor

I. **Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Davison made a motion to approve the June 3, 2024 meeting minutes. Mr. Steen seconded. Motion carried.

II. **Program Spotlight: Economic Assistance, Shaina Huovinen, Rachele Likness, Rachel Howard**

Shaina Huovinen described the dynamics of the Economic Assistance Department and the role of the Supervisors and Lead Eligibility Workers. She introduced Rachele Likness, who supervises the Zone's Lead Eligibility Workers. Ms. Huovinen and Ms. Likness explained that during the redesign, each Eligibility Worker was assigned two supervisors: a people supervisor and a program supervisor. Eligibility Workers were assigned a program supervisor from an outside Zone due to some Zones not having a supervisor that oversaw eligibility programs. A major barrier with this practice was inefficient communication. Due to this, Cass Human Service Zone has begun shifting away from this practice and have been assigning both people and program supervisors from Cass Human Service Zone to the Zone's Team Members.

Lead Eligibility Workers are tasked with training new Team Members. Cass Human Service Zone employs four of the nine Region 4 Lead Workers. There is a total of 18-20 Lead Workers state-wide. When new Eligibility Workers begin, they are assigned one of the Lead Workers that act as their primary lead mentor (PLM). The PLM will see the Team Member's onboarding process all the way through and assists in acclimating them to the Economic Assistance team and culture as well as oversee and direct the training schedule while working with the entire team of Lead Workers to execute the training of program policy and procedure. If a new worker is employed in a Zone that does not have any Lead Workers, one of the Leads from another Zone within the Region will be assigned because the training plan is the same region-wide. The plan was based on previous onboarding practices used by Cass Human Service Zone.

Rachel Howard explained the new Childcare Workforce Benefit that is available to employees of licensed childcare programs. If the employee works at least 25 hours per week, they can access the benefit by applying for Childcare Assistance regardless of their income. Eligible employees can receive payments through the State's program for their childcare costs up to the full-time state maximum rate. Any required co-pay would also be waived. Ms. Howard reported the department has seen an increase in childcare assistance applications since the implementation of this in June.

III. **Operational Report**

Chair Bollinger reported at the last Zone Director's meeting in July, dashboards were introduced to report on Economic Assistance and Family Service standards that have been set by the State. The State continues to refine the accuracy in which the information is being pulled into the dashboards.

When asked about the near 17 percent increase to the 2025 Budget, Chair Bollinger explained payroll makes up the majority of the Zone's budget and with the Zone being more fully staffed, much of the increase is due to payroll. She also explained the Zone has increased the amount of operational direct costs the Zone is paying. She explained Cass County is reimbursed for indirect costs at 25 percent and with the shift to paying more direct costs to the State, the indirect cost to the Cass County has dropped from \$1.1 million to \$500,000 annually. Indirect costs include office space, technology and equipment, and State Attorney fees.

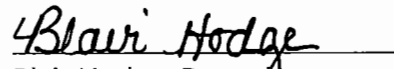
The Zone continues to recruit for the Family Services afternoon shift. The goal of this team will be to serve the community better by working outside of normal business hours. Four Team Members have been hired so far. This has been a challenging shift to recruit, but efforts have been made to boost the post and be more competitive in recruiting techniques. The current turnover rate is at four percent with just over 75 percent of offers made within the last year being accepted.

IV. **Adjournment**

Mr. Steen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:58 p.m. Mr. Davison seconded. Motion carried.



Gail Bollinger, Zone Director
Cass Human Service Zone



Blair Hodge, Recorder