

**CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING  
October 3, 2016**

**MINUTES**

With quorum present, Chair Rasmussen called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

**Present:** Arland Rasmussen, Ken Pawluk, Chad Peterson, Mary Scherling, Rick Steen

**Absent:** Glenn Ellingsberg, Brian Hagen, Chad Peterson

**Presenter:** Chip Ammerman, Director

**I. Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Scherling made a motion to approve the September 6, 2016 Board minutes. Mr. Steen seconded it. Motion carried.

**II. GA Burials**

During the September Board Meeting, a sub-committee was developed to review the GA Burial Policy. Commissioner Peterson and Rasmussen met with Mr. Ammerman, Mr. Schock, internal staff, and Funeral Home Directors from Boulger, West, and Hanson-Runsvold in late September to review the policy. Ms. Tiffany Footitt is the agency staff person assigned to determine eligibility for GA Burials. The application process includes the review of assets for the adult children, spouse, and parents of the deceased. She shared that cremation is the typical service provided, unless there is a religious reason to complete a non-cremation burial. Of the approximately 80 burials completed in 2015, 10 to 15 of them were non-cremation services.

The discussion of the sub-committee was centered on the reimbursement rate to the funeral homes which has not increased at the standard rate of cost of living. The Board reviewed a Burial Payment Proposal revised by the sub-committee. There was discussion on the language used in the document such as a "traditional burial" which the Board recommended revising to "non-cremation services." In addition, the Board discussed what the state policy and laws say regarding religious rights and whether a non-cremation burial option is required. Mr. Pawluk requested Mr. Ammerman to seek legal advice from Mr. Burdick, States Attorney, to determine what the law states regarding GA Burials and religious beliefs. If possible, due to the increase in cost of a non-cremation burial, it's suggested that the policy be revised to remove the option of a non-cremation service.

GA Burials will be discussed at the November meeting after review by Mr. Burdick.

**III. MA Out of State Expenses**

Mr. Ammerman shared it is common for North Dakota Medicaid recipients to travel to Minnesota cities such as Minneapolis/St. Paul or Rochester for medical reasons, if services are not available locally. There are approximately 40-50 clients that need assistance with coordinating medical services each month. Approximately 10 of those are traveling out of the state and need overnight lodging to be arranged. Recently, there has become a concern regarding the lack of lodging options available in the Minneapolis area that are approved to direct bill to ND Medicaid. Due to the reimbursement process, lodging providers are not willing

to apply to be a ND Medicaid provider. Mr. Ammerman requested the Board's approval for Cass County Social Services to become a ND Medicaid provider. This would allow staff to reserve and pay for lodging for clients needing medical treatment and, in turn, invoice the state for those expenses. This should be a budget neutral process, with the revenue being provided by the State of North Dakota; however, it's unknown what the reimbursement time period will be.

Mr. Pawluk made a motion to approve Cass County Social Services to apply to be a North Dakota Medicaid Provider which will provide the opportunity for lodging to be paid for by the agency with reimbursement being provided by the State of ND. Mr. Steen seconded the motion.

Motion carried. Mr. Ammerman stated he would be requesting a budget adjustment by the Commission to increase the expense line items to cover these costs with the understanding this should be a budget neutral process. Mr. Ammerman will talk with the Department of Health and Human Services to encourage a timely reimbursement process.

Commissioner Peterson joined the meeting at 2:15 pm.

#### **IV. Board Handbook**

The Board members received a draft Board Member Handbook which has recently been updated. Mr. Ammerman stated this was previously used as a way to orient new Board Members, but has not been used in quite some time. There was discussion on changes that had been made to the document and Mr. Peterson requested that the Board members receive the previous version with edits if possible. The Board Handbook will be placed on a future agenda for further discussion and a decision on how this document will be used.

#### **V. Operations Report**

Mr. Ammerman updated the board on the personnel changes in recent months. In addition, Mr. Ammerman stated there has been an increase in HCBS clients due to an increase in the population. The goal of the program is to allow the aged population to remain in their homes safely. The Adult Protection Services unit has also had an increase in referrals for assessments due to safety risks or exploitation concerns. There was discussion about the assessment and the multidisciplinary approach that is used to assist with client needs. Mr. Peterson thanked Mr. Ammerman and Social Services staff for their response to a recent situation that the Commissioners were made aware of.

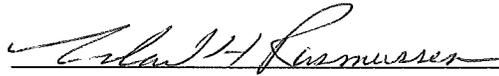
There was discussion on the Fargo City Commission's request for additional information concerning the Refugee Resettlement Process. Mr. Peterson shared a request for local government to determine the costs of the program so discussions can take place at the legislative level. Mr. Rasmussen shared an appreciation for being able to attend the Lutheran Social Service's quarterly meetings which he found informative. Mr. Ammerman reminded the Board members that approximately \$140,000,000 has been brought into the community by the economic assistance programs since July; these are state and federal funds.

Mr. Ammerman shared there has also been an increase in Family Services cases due to an increase in drug usage and human trafficking cases. There continues to be problems with the SPACES program, but Cass County staff have been involved in the development of Phase II which is set to roll out in the fall of 2017.

There was a brief discussion on the recent budget cuts and how this may affect the court system. Mr. Ammerman will forward information to the Board members as it becomes available.

**VI. Adjournment**

Mr. Pawluk made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Steen seconded it. Motion carried.



Arland Rasmussen, Chair  
Cass County Social Services Board



Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder