

CASS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MEETING

November 7, 2016

MINUTES

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

Present: Arland Rasmussen, Chad Peterson, Mary Scherling, Rick Steen, Brian Hagen, Glenn Ellingsberg, Ken Pawluk

Presenter: Chip Ammerman, Director; Sidney Schock, Economic Assistance Manager

I. **Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Hagen made a motion to approve the October 3, 2016 Board minutes. Mr. Steen seconded it. Motion carried.

II. **GA Burials**

Mr. Ammerman distributed a memorandum from Cass County State's Attorney Birch Burdick in response to the Board's question as to whether the county is required to pay for a non-cremation burial for an indigent decedent if the decedent or their family requests no cremation due to religious beliefs. Mr. Burdick stated Cass County's current policy complies with North Dakota law. Furthermore, North Dakota law does not require for the county to pay for in-ground burial. It is of Mr. Burdick's opinion, however, that the county gives consideration to those with strong religious beliefs when deciding to cremate or provide non-cremation burial. In order for a family to have their loved one have a county-funded non-cremation burial, they are required to have a letter from their religious leader stating it is of their beliefs to do so.

Currently, family members are allowed to contribute \$600.00 towards items not associated with the funeral home costs, such as flowers, vocalists or clergy, without decreasing the decedent's assistance eligibility. There was discussion about current fundraising practices individuals have adopted that would provide more of a service, luncheon, flowers, etc. for a decedent who received burial assistance. Currently, the county reviews any contributions made on the decedent's behalf when determining their eligibility for assistance and deducts that amount from what would be provided to the family. The revised proposal made to the Board would not use those contributions as a determining factor for a decedent's assistance eligibility. The proposal would allow family and friends to contribute an undetermined amount to be put towards anything the county is not responsible for, which is solely the proper disposition of the body.

There was discussion on whether a flat rate should be paid for GA burials and whether or not that should increase for non-cremation services. In the event that a family member cannot be located, the cremation of the body cannot take place without an authorized signature. Mr. Peterson will discuss this situation with Mr. Burdick to determine if a court order could be put in place to authorize the cremation or whether an county ordinance is needed..

The Board requested Mr. Ammerman update and resend a written policy on Cass County's Burial Assistance program for review. Mr. Ammerman stated he would do so, sending a draft

version to Chair Rasmussen and Mr. Peterson, as they were on the sub-committee, to proof and then distribute to the Board members. If approved by the Social Services Board, the updated policy will then need to be approved by Cass County Commission.

III. MA-Out of State Expenses

Sidney Schock, Economic Assistance Manager, updated the Board regarding the status of out-of-state lodging for clients who travel to the Minneapolis/St. Paul/Rochester area for medical services not available locally. Mr. Schock informed the Board the State re-contacted those lodging providers who stated they were not receiving payments in a timely manner and explained ND Medicaid had not received any bills to pay those lodging providers during that time. Those providers have once again agreed to work with the ND Medicaid program. A second lodger in St. Paul is in the process of enrolling to be a provider. The requirement to invoice the ND Medicaid program was waived in an effort to increase the reimbursement time for vendors.

IV. Cardiac Care Program

On October 10, 2016, Mr. Ammerman and Mr. Schock were informed of a change to the Cardiac Care Program provided to children with certain medical conditions that are on Medicaid. The program acts as a secondary insurance to cover costs related to treatment that the primary insurance does not cover. The county was informed this will now be an asset-based program requiring a parent to complete eligibility paperwork to have their child enrolled in this program. The Department of Health made this shift in the program and notified clients of this shift at the end of September 2016. However, notification of this changes was not provided to county directors or staff until October. There are currently 400 children in Cass County that could potentially be eligible for this program. Tiffany Footitt, Economic Assistance Case Aide, will need to decide who meets the new guidelines and provide them with the application. It's estimated approximately four hours of staff time is needed per case which could have a large impact on the existing caseload.

The Board members were concerned of the lack of notification to the County because clients were informed of the shift before the county. There was also discussion on how the Department of Health can implement this change since the County Social Service agencies are not a designee of the Dept. of Health. The Board members requested Mr. Ammerman determine who was involved in this decision, as well as provide a list of individuals on the committee for the Department of Health and Department of Human Services. They also asked for a summary as to what has been done thus far. Mr. Ammerman agreed to obtain that information for the Board.

V. Adult Protective Services

As an addition to the Agenda, Chair Rasmussen shared a letter addressed to Ms. Maggie Anderson, Executive Director to North Dakota Department of Human Services. The letter stated its Cass County's intent to discontinue Vulnerable Adult Protection Services (VAPS) should the State not fully fund the service past June 30, 2017. The Board members were asked if the county should proceed with sending this letter to which it was agreed that the letter should be sent.

VI. Operations Report

Mr. Ammerman explained the increase in numbers reported are pretty typical for this time of the year. Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which provides heating and

cooling assistance for those eligible, is currently at its peak with approximately 1,200 applications being received thus far. Child Protection Services has seen a dramatic increase in numbers as they are receiving more reports regarding major harm to young children, as well as reports relating to drug involvement where children are present.

Ms. Sharon Kleeman, Adult Services Manager, stated they are seeing an increase in individuals that are disabled elderly who isolate themselves in their homes. They are not always eligible for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) so Ms. Kleeman is working with other community resources for these individuals to engage with. Some of these resources include Lutheran Social Services, Valley Senior Services, Consortium, Meals on Wheels and United Way. Mr. Ellingsberg also suggested contacting the United States Postal Service. A postal worker may observe a build-up of mail and would be able to alert the appropriate agency of this with their concerns. Ms. Kleeman agreed to contact them as well. NDSU is also involved in this discussion and may use this as a research opportunity.

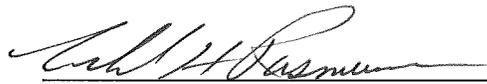
Mr. Pawluk questioned the progress with SPACES. Mr. Schock informed the Board there are two Economic Assistance staff that are providing input and helping design Phase II of SPACES as this was an element missing when the first phase was implemented. These designated staff will attend meetings in Bismarck for additional assistance in the development of the program to be rolled out in Fall 2017. Mr. Schock also identified a system the State is building that will provide data to be used by staff to obtain a client's program information without having to check all the different programs Eligibility Workers use.

Mr. Ammerman stated beginning in January 2017, program highlights will be provided during Board meetings which will consist of approximately 20-30 minutes of discussion on a specific program.

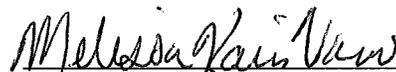
Ms. Scherling stated with the next legislative session starting soon, it would be beneficial for Board members to have a list of talking points they could address with legislators. Mr. Ammerman stated the County Director's Legislative meeting would be this week which would create a list to provide the Board members.

VII. Adjournment

Mr. Steen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:00 pm. Mr. Peterson seconded it. Motion carried.



Arland Rasmussen, Chair
Cass County Social Services Board



Melissa Kain Varno, Recorder