

WESTERN PRAIRIE HUMAN SERVICES BOARD MEETING
September 6, 2024

The meeting of the Joint Powers Board for Western Prairie Human Services was held September 6, 2024 at the Western Prairie Human Services Office in Elbow Lake office.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Larry Lindor
Paul Gremmels
Ken Johnson
Troy Johnson
Doyle Sperr
Paul Gerde
Bill LaValley
Paul Wildman
Gordy Wagner

OTHERS PRESENT

Stacy Hennen, Executive Director
Kari Rude, Deputy Director/HR Director
Chris Schmitz, Executive Assistant
Crystal Zaviska, Financial Assistance Manager
Kayla Schmidt, Traverse County Commissioner

MEMBERS ABSENT

Dwight Walvatne

A. Opening:

1. Chair Troy Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
2. The Pledge of Allegiance was said.
3. Introduction of New Employees
 - a. NA
4. The agenda was reviewed. Commissioner Gerde made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner Wildman, MCU
5. Approval of the August, 2024 meeting minutes. Commissioner Lindor made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner LaValley, MCU.
6. A summary of the August 2024 bills was presented by the director. After discussion, Commissioner Lindor made a motion to approve the bills, seconded by Commissioner Gerde MCU.
 - a. The director reviewed July 2024 financial information. After questions, Commissioner LaValley made a motion to approve the financial reports, seconded by Commissioner Sperr, MCU.
7. Director Updates

The director discussed a few updates that the agency engaged in. Insights Training that was provided to all staff. Collaborative Safety was a two-day training for staff and community partners. We are currently working on locations for our Family Resource Center community engagement meetings throughout our communities. Western Prairie Human Services did win our county of financial responsibility appeal that we had for a child protection case that involved four kids in placement. The county that lost will not be appealing again.

B. CONTRACTS/AGREEMENTS

8. School Transportation Agreements

The director stated statute requires schools to enter into a contract with their local social services agency to address transportation for foster kids. Some of their funding is based on them getting a transportation agreement with us. In general, it says that we will work it out and agree on transportation. If the student still lives within the district or has an IEP the school will provide transportation. If the child is placed in foster care in a different district the two entities will work together to arrange transportation. This has been our standard operating procedure After review and discussion, Commissioner Lindor made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Wildman. MCU

9. License Request

The director discussed a request from Little Lambs Family Daycare to allow an additional toddler in care on a continuous basis. Our licensing supervisor could not recommend this variance because it is not in compliance with our policy, which only allows a variance to be in place for 30 days in a year and this request was continuous with no end noted. After review and discussion, Commissioner Gerde made a motion to approve the variance for 30 days, in accordance with our policy only seconded by Commissioner Wildman. MCU

10. License Variance

The director discussed a request from Productive Alternatives Crisis Stabilization Unit that was recommended from the licensing supervisor. The entity is requesting a variance to the licensing rules that requires a physician's statement in order for staff to assist with medications. Due to the nature of crisis program admissions, there is typically a lack of time and/or opportunity to get such a statement prior to admission or during their stay. They do have to meet all other licensing requirements for administering medications though. After review and discussion, Commissioner Lindor made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner LaValley. MCU

C. OLD BUSINESS

11. Out of Home Placement List

The director discussed the out of home placements for the month of July. We have 19 children in placement which is one less than we had in June. We have two kids in 18-21 placement, both are age 20 now. We have one kid in waived care who is 16. This child entered the system via the child protection system. Four of the children are having custody transferred to a relative, which was completed and one child was adopted this month. Two children are working towards reunification. Two children are just starting permanency. The remainder are working on reunification with one on a trial home visit and two placed with non-custodial parents, all things we do not pay a daily rate for. We still have custody and we pay for things like childcare and other things but not a daily rate. The higher cost for this month is partly because it is a month that has 1 more day in it and the children who are newer in placement are more expensive than the ones who left. The cost difference isn't that high. The director also discussed are Social Workers caseload which are borderline average, likely because it is summer and we are slower in the summer in Child Protection. We are down one position and still training two positions. Our children's and adult mental health caseloads continue to run a little high.

12. Case Counts

The director discussed the current case counts. We continue to see lower numbers, as is normal for the summers. We are already seeing a busier August so I think it will trend upwards as it normally does. Our disabilities intakes and case management are up 5 and 4 respectively, which is a lot for one month. Most of our other numbers are about the same with small variations, child welfare intakes and case management is down. June and July are our lowest months of the year for that program. We are finishing up the training for two workers in that area and are about to take on two new staff in that area, one with direct training and experience and one who will need direct training and experience. Our teams are otherwise doing well. The Financial Assistance Manager discussed the overall numbers, there is a slight variation. We are monitoring the number of applications, additional programs and reapplications. Those remain high and the reapplications are twice the amount of work. Our Child Support numbers decreased again after more closures have officially closed. Closures sit for 60 days after supervisor approval before they come off of the reports.

13. Personnel/Hiring Update

The deputy director discussed the agency has hired one position in our Child Protection unit. There is currently an Eligibility/Lead Eligibility worker in Glenwood open and a social workers position that we just filled. The agency has welcomed ten new employees in 2024 and there have been four internal moves. There are currently two FMLA leaves and three intermittent FMLA leaves.

D. New Business:

14. Parades

The director discussed that PrimeWest sponsored WPHS with \$3,000 and the LAC sponsored with \$200 donation to raise awareness to food insecurities and in return the food items were labeled with WPHS, PrimeWest and LAC QR codes. A public announcement flyer posted on social media, our website and in the local papers rallying around positive awareness of the services all 3 agencies can offer.

15. Letter of Support

The director discussed a letter of support to the Clay County Housing and Redevelopment Authority for a youth homelessness grant. Clay County always applies for it on behalf of our 9 counties, which is operated by the West Central Minnesota Continuum of Care After review and discussion, Commissioner Gremmels made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Wildman. MCU

16. Human Service Performance Management Report (HSPM)

The director discussed the Human Service Performance Management Report (HSPM) is a statutory report that comes out 4 times a year and measures various program areas in human services. This report has three child welfare measures and one eligibility measure. The statute states that if we do not meet them and fail to meet consistent program improvement plans the state can remove the service from the county, give it to another county, and make you pay for that other county to do it. The State has yet to do that because they believe their measures are not complete yet, but that is a product of the current administration's interpretation not statute. The HSPR team is under DHS and is moving to DCYF so they are suspending all child welfare measures and ending all program improvement plans this year while they make the necessary changes legislatively. MACSSA would like to work to make some more permanent changes to some of the measures and processes since we feel some of them have significant concerns.

17. Job Descriptions

The deputy director discussed the newly updated job descriptions for all employees, as the current job descriptions are outdated. After review and discussion, Commissioner Wildman made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Lindor. MCU

18. 2023 Annual Report

The director discussed and reviewed the 2023 Annual Report. This is our second complete year of business and we want to make sure that we are promoting transparency and being open with the board and the public. We are still working on the content of the report and trying to make it shorter than last year and more digestible but also still cover all the good things we do.

19. Tele-Commuting Policy Update

The deputy director discussed updates to our Tele-Commuting Policy. Western Prairie Human Service would like to update the language to go along with what we practice. The agency attorney has reviewed and approved the changes. After review and discussion, Commissioner Gremmels made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Wagner. MCU

20. Letter to Minnesota Informational Transfer System (MNIT)

The director discussed a letter of support regarding connectivity and speed issue within the Grant county. Grant County and Morris Electronics recommended a letter to the State as Grant County has been trying to get the State to increase their bandwidth and circuit, which was supposed to be done several years ago. After review and discussion, Commissioner Wildman made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner LaValley. MCU

21. SafeAssure Contract

The deputy director discussed SafeAssure contract is a safety and OSHA compliance consulting company that the agency used in 2024. The programs are guaranteed to meet the requirements set forth by MNOSHA/OSHA. This contract would provide on-site and on-line training, consultation, and simulated OSHA audits of both sites. After review and discussion, Commissioner Lindor made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Wagner. MCU

Report from Board Appointments:

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Troy Johnson at 11:25 a.m.

A. Lakeland Mental Health Center.....	K. Johnson/Gerde
B. Horizon Community Health Board.....	Sperr/Walvatne/Lindor/Wagner
C. Prime West Health CBP.....	Wagner/K Johnson/T. Johnson/Lindor
D. West Central Communities Action, Inc.	K Johnson/Lindor
E. Agency on Aging.....	Lindor/LaValley
F. Child Protection Pre-Placement.....	T. Johnson/Gremmels
G. Rainbow Rider	LaValley/Walvatne/Gerde/
H. R4S Governing and Executive Board.....	K. Johnson/Wildman
I. Child and Youth Council.....	Sperr/Wagner
J. WPHS Personnel Committee.....	Lindor/Wildman/Sperr/T. Johnson
K. WPHS Executive Committee.....	T. Johnson/Walvatne/Gremmels
L. WPHS Finance Committee.....	Gerde/Lindor/LaValley/K. Johnson
M. WPHS Safety Committee.....	Sperr/Wildman

Board Chair

Board Secretary