**WESTERN PRAIRIE HUMAN SERVICES BOARD MEETING**

**February 7, 2025**

The meeting of the Joint Powers Board for Western Prairie Human Services was held February 7, 2025 at the Western Prairie Human Services Office in Elbow Lake.

**MEMBERS PRESENT OTHERS PRESENT MEMBERS ABSENT**

Doyle Sperr Stacy Hennen, Director Gordy Wagner

Paul Gremmels Kari Rude, Deputy Director/HR Director

Troy Johnson Chris Schmitz, Executive Assistant

Ken Johnson Tracy Bowman, Fiscal Manager

Paul Gerde Crystal Zaviska, Financial Assistance Supervisor

Paul Wildman Dwight Nelson, Traverse County Commissioner

Larry Lindor Kayla Schmidt, Traverse County Commissioner

Dwight Walvatne

Bill LaValley

**A. Opening:**

1. Chair Troy Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
2. The Pledge of Allegiance was said.
3. Election of Officers
	1. Chair: Troy Johnson called for nominations for the 02/25-02/26 period. Commissioner Bill La Valley nominated Commissioner Troy Johnson for Chair, seconded by Commissioner Gerde. Nominations were called for two more times with no further nominations, MCU.
	2. Vice Chair: Commissioner Troy Johnson called for nominations for Vice Chair. Commissioner Gerde nominated Commissioner Paul Gremmels as vice chair, seconded by Commissioner Lindor. Nominations were called for two more times, with no further nominations MCU.
	3. Executive Member: Commissioner Troy Johnson called for nominations. Commissioner Walvatne nominated Commissioner Paul Gerde for the executive committee, seconded by Commissioner Sperr. Nominations were called for two more times, with no further nominations, MCU.
4. New Employee: Our lead mental health social worker, Ashley Palmersheim, introduced our new children’s mental health worker who is in our Elbow Lake office, Morgan Heidgerken. The board introduced themselves and welcomed her
5. The agenda was reviewed. There are two changes to remove item 24 and 25 replace with a personnel request. Commissioner Gerde made a motion to approve the amended agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner Wildman, MCU
6. Approval of the January 3, 2025 meeting minutes. After reviewing the minutes, Commissioner Wildman

made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner LaValley, MCU.

1. A summary of the January 2025 bills was presented by the executive director. After discussion, Commissioner Gremmels made a motion to approve the bills, seconded by Commissioner Walvatne, MCU.
2. The fiscal manager reviewed January 2025 financial information. After questions, Commissioner LaValley made a motion to approve the financial reports, seconded by Commissioner Wildman, MCU.
3. Directors Update

The executive director talked about several matters. We have a draft of the Family Resource Center regarding this past fall community meetings, it will come to the board in March when it’s final. Our Financial Assistance Supervisor testified at the senate regarding fraud at a county level. The agency is concerned with the lack of space for our staff as we continue to grow.

**B. CONTRACTS/AGREEMENTS**

1. **Primewest Behavioral Health Contract**

The executive director discussed the Primewest rates for July 2025 to July 2026. PrimeWest pays for mental health targeted case management for those Medical Assistance members who are on PrimeWest and for whom we provide the service. The rates for children are $2192 per month and adults $701 per month. After review and discussion, Commissioner Lindor made a motion to approve the contract, seconded by Commissioner Walvatne, MCU

10. **Qualified Individual Contract**

The executive director presented a contract for a qualified individual. We need a qualified individual to do an assessment if we determine a residential placement may be needed. This is primarily used for children’s mental health. We don’t have very many of these, many years we will have zero. The contract before you is an hourly rate that we pay only if we engage in the service. The hourly rate is set by the State so isn’t really a negotiation. After review and discussion, Commissioner Wildman made a motion to approve the contract, seconded by Commissioner LaValley, MCU

**C. OLD BUSINESS**

13. **Out of Home Placement List**

The executive director reviewed the out of home placement list for the month of January. We have 21 children in placement at Western Prairie Human Services, which is the same that we had in December. We now have three young adults in 18-21 placement two are age 20 and have been here continuously and the other is 18 but in waivered care. Seven children are in the process of some type of permanency. Two children are placed with non-relative, and we are working on reunification with them. Three children are again permanency cases. Three are reunifications and are placed with the other parent. Of our 21 kids we are paying daily rates for 17.

Child protection caseloads vary because they are training so some are higher as they train, and some are lower as they are learning. Overall, we are at reasonable levels. We are fully staffed and finishing up the training on our most recent hires. Mental Health caseloads are the only ones that have a statutory caseload limit. The lead workers are training a new worker and will soon be training in a new position. The AMH workers also must handle all commitments when they come in, which is extremely time-consuming. Our other caseloads are in line with where they should be. Not low but in line.

 14. **Case Counts**

The executive director discussed our caseloads in Mental Health continue to be high, totaling 199 with 13 intakes between the two. Child Protection continues to be low, which is normal for this time of year. Our adult protection continues to trend up a little but also hover within a range that is manageable, and we keep seeing disabilities creep up slowly, increasing 7 cases throughout the year. Disability cases generally stay open for a long time, often for the life of the client.

The Financial Assistance Supervisor Income maintenance numbers are fluctuating in Health Care and SNAP. Health decreased to 59 and SNAP increased to 24. Child Care Assistant Program seems to still be difficult for people to follow through on as 5 applications were denied for missing documentation.

Next Generation grant for Child Support appears to only be divided by the counties who applied for it. Leaving preliminary numbers to be about $42,000 for the life of the grant or about 3%.

15. **Personnel/Hiring update**

The deputy director discussed that the agency has filled all open positions. Sara Rieland will be joining the agency on February 5, 2025, as an Eligibility Worker. Jodi Moss will be starting on February 18, 2025, as a Case Aide/Community Support Specialist.

**D.** **New Business:**

16. **Personnel Committee Updates: union request**

The executive director discussed that the union has made a request to open discussions about a new topic that was not brought up by the union in negotiations. They would like to discuss the placement of staff on the wage scale based on years of service. The personnel committee discussed this in committee and recognized that this needs to go to the full board since negotiations are completed and we do not have any boundaries from the board from which to start negotiations. The personnel committee has a desire to pay our employees fairly and we know the board does as well since we initiated these conversations in the last negotiations. Our agency attorney indicated that if we entered these conversations, we would also want to address 13.6 which we feel would be better for employees and allow for more flexibility for all staff and indicated that the union stated payment by years of service and that has not been a standard we have used and is generally not an affordable option. He would recommend that we consider negotiating with them for equitable placement based on seniority. After discussion, Commissioner Lindor made a motion to approve the conversations within the boundaries presented, seconded by Commissioner Walvatne, MCU

17. **WPHS Official Depository**

The executive director indicated that we need to appoint official depositories for the next 12 months for Western Prairie Human Services. For 2025 the director proposed all banks located in Pope and Grant Counties. After review, Commissioner LaValley made a motion to approve the schedule as presented, seconded by Commissioner Gerde, MCU

18. **WPHS Meeting Dates**

The director presented a schedule of official Western Prairie Human Services Board Meetings that included date, time, and location and continued to be on the first Friday of every month with the same rotation of locations. The schedule went through February of 2025. There was a motion to move July 4 meeting to July 11th and a notation that they may want to move January 2, 2026 to January 9th 2026. After review, Commissioner Lindor made a motion to approve the schedule with July 2025 and January 2026 moved, seconded by Commissioner Wildman. Seven voted yes and Commissioners Troy Johnson and Commissioner Gerde voted no

19.**Per Diem Rates 2025**

The executive director noted that in 2024 the board per diem was set at $100 per meeting with mileage paid at the current IRS rate. The director requested that the board decide if they want to make a change in that or keep it the same for 2025. Commissioner Sperr made a motion to continue with the same per diem for Western Prairie board meetings and committee meetings, $100 per meeting and whatever the current IRS rate of mileage is at the time of the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Wildman MCU

20. **Medical Assistance**

The income maintenance manager discussed the Medical Assistance document that was put together by MN House Research Department to provide a high-level overview of the various basis of eligibility for medical assistance with the income and asset limits. If a person is not eligible for medical assistance under any basis, they are automatically reviewed for Minnesota Care. From there they are reviewed for Insurance Affordability and then qualified health plans. Once the determination notice goes out, the jurisdiction for Insurance affordability and qualified health plans is no longer the counties. Cases with medical assistance and Minnesota care remain the county’s jurisdiction to service while Minnesota care only cases are DHS’s jurisdiction. The income maintenance manager gave testimony at the Senate on Wednesday 1/22/25 with the Human Services committee on behalf of MACSSA regarding fraud in public assistance.

21. **Personnel Request Mental Health SW**

The executive director is requesting to add a Mental Health Case Manager as the caseloads for our children and adult mental health caseloads for several months because they are above statutory limits. Our request is to hire an additional MH case manager who does primarily Children Mental Health Targeted Case Management but also takes some Adult Mental Health Targeted Case Management cases. We have looked at locations and we believe that we need this position to float between the two offices but be stationed primarily in the Glenwood office. The executive director and fiscal manager went over the finances and we have the funding within our targeted case management funding at this time to fund the position at current caseload numbers. After review, Commissioner Wildman made a motion to approve the schedule as presented, seconded by Commissioner Gerde, MCU

22. **2026 Governor’s Budget re: Human Services**

The executive director discussed The Governs budget for 2026. The budget proposal has concerns for all counties within it. The Governor would like counties to pay 5% of residential, integrated community support, and customized living waiver expenses from the State to the County. The current split is 50% federal, 50% State. It would be 50% federal, 45% state, 5% County. A part of this will be at Horizon Public Health with the waivers. This budget also increases the cost shift from 22.95% to 50% for the Behavioral health fund to counties. It also Increases the cost shift from 10% or 25% to 40% for Minnesota State Sex Offender Program patients to counties. Making Competency Restoration a county cost, it is currently undefined. Moving all non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) to the State and one provider and moving all prescriptions to straight Medical Assistant and removing them from Prepaid Medical Assistant Programs. The board talked about the financial ramifications for counties and what action steps they could take.

23. **Elbow Lake Office Furniture**

The executive director the furniture in Elbow Lake. Western Prairie Human Services has acquired three additional offices on the main floor. We are requesting the purchase of office furniture for a depreciated cost of $5,567.21. After review, Commissioner Sperr made a motion to approve the schedule as presented, seconded by Commissioner LaValley, MCU

25. **Personnel Request**

The executive director is requesting to sponsor an employee who is a non us citizen who currently has a work visa. The current position being held is in our fiscal department. The employee has proven to be a valuable asset to the agency. The cost to the agency right now is $700 for a filing fee. If the board approves that cost, moving forward with the program is approximately $14,000. This cost is significantly less than we would have to spend to train a new employee. After review, Commissioner Lindor made a motion to approve the schedule as presented, seconded by Commissioner Gremmels, MCU

26. **DHS Letter**

The executive director discusses a letter received from the Department of Human Services Commissioner letting us know that our fiscal department reported 32 major quarterly reports on time and submitted them on time to the Department of Human Services. Our fiscal department continues to strive for excellence as our agency continues to strengthen.

**Report from Board Appointments:**

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Troy Johnson at 11:19 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

O. WPHS Technology Committee Gerde/Wagner/Walvatne/LaValley

N. WPHS Insurance Committee P Wildman

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Board Chair Board Secretary