

BURLEIGH COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICE BOARD

April 30, 2015

The Burleigh County Social Service Board convened at 3:30 p.m. on April 30, 2015, in the Tom Baker Room at the City/County Building.

Present: Paul Ronningen, Jerry Woodcox, Gladys Cairns, and Betty Day.

Also present: Kim Osadchuk, Sandy Smith, and Tayonne Mannin

Absent: Kathy Mayer, Erica Cermak, and Doug Schonert

March 26, 2015 MINUTES: A copy of the Board meeting minutes from Thursday, March 26, 2015 was previously emailed to the membership. Vice Chair Ronningen asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes.

Motion by Gladys Cairns, second by Betty Day and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the March 26, 2015 meeting as emailed.

FINANCIAL REPORT OF SOCIAL WELFARE FUND AS OF MARCH 30, 2015:

Balance on hand beginning of month	\$ 5,627,791.74
Receipts during month	314,701.07
Expenditures during month	473,039.20
Balance on hand end of month	\$ 5,469,452.61

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS

Director's Report: Kim Osadchuk referred to her written report as was distributed.

Staff Update:

- Mylinda Schultz, Eligibility Worker I, has been promoted to an Eligibility Worker II or Lead worker of Pod D. Mylinda started this position on April 27, 2015.
- Stephanie Swenson, Eligibility Worker I, has resigned from her position to move back closer to her family. Stephanie's last day at Burleigh County is May 8, 2015.
- Joey Huber, Eligibility Worker I, has resigned from her position and her last is May 6, 2015.
- Susan Stockert has been hired as an Eligibility Worker I and started her position April 13, 2015. Susan is working in Pod D.
- Dawn Hoff, Human Service Aide II or visitation aide, has resigned from her position and her last day was April 24, 2015.
- Desi Dailey, has been hired as a Human Service Aide I or transportation aide and will start on Monday, May 18, 2015.
- Denna Lucas has been hired as an Eligibility Worker I and will be starting May 4, 2015. Denna has previous eligibility worker experience from Arizona. Denna will be in Pod D.
- Jami Beaty has been hired as an Administrative Assistant I. Jami will start with Burleigh County Social Services on May 4, 2015.

- Katherine Smith has been hired as our Family Service Specialist II and started this position on April 27, 2015.
- Susan Clancy has been hired as an Eligibility Worker I and started this position on April 27, 2015. Susan used to work at Stutsman County.
- Monica Gilbert, Office Assistant III, has resigned from her position and her last day was April 10, 2015.

Medicaid Expansion/Affordable Care Act Update:

The eligibility workers are anticipating a roll out of the new Medicaid Expansion computer program before the end of 2015. The 2015 Legislature fast tracked the bill 2177 to fund the software program to help ease the counties increase in caseloads and also with their frustration of multiple systems that do not carry over from one system to another. The plan from the Department of Human Services is to implement Medicaid Expansion program first and then in the next phase add in all the rest of the eligibility programs.

The eligibility supervisors, leads, and myself have been brainstorming some additional ways we can train new staff. The programs, policies, and systems for eligibility can be very complex and overwhelming for new staff. The state does not have a training system in the computer programs to help teach new employees how to navigate the system efficiently. New employees have to work cases to essentially learn the different systems and this can be quite time consuming. It may take a new worker well over a year to be comfortable with the programs and policies. This can also be very draining and time consuming for leads and supervisors to sit with each individual employee to train, still be responsible for their own caseload and be available for the rest of their staff. Some of the things we have implemented have been working but we need to continue looking at more creative approaches.

Burleigh County Social Services Eligibility Workers received an award from Lutheran Social Services for Service Provider of the year. Burleigh County received this award for providing outstanding customer service, good community orientation and information provided to individuals, and also for the collaboration with Lutheran Social Services. Brett Kuntz and Melissa Standing Crow accepted this award on behalf of Burleigh County Social Services as it was given at a conference in Fargo.

The Department of Human Services has delayed the roll out of MMIS, Medicaid Management Information Systems, yet again. It was to roll out June 1, 2015 but now we do not have an implementation date. The MMIS system is a claims processing and information retrieval system and a management report for planning and control.

Child Welfare Issues:

Burleigh County has had several ongoing issues with our court system. Recently we have had several emergency placements that have occurred and when the Burleigh County Social Service worker attends the Shelter Care Hearing, the referee dismisses the order as other family may have been located or the parent is now able to care for their child. When the emergency order is dismissed at Shelter Care, the necessary ASFA, Adoption and Safe Families Act, language is not included. The necessary language that needs to be included in the Shelter Care order for state/federal funds to pay for foster care placement are "Reasonable Efforts" were made at the time of immediate removal and "Contrary to the Welfare of the Child." When the language is not reflected in the Shelter Care order, then

Burleigh County is responsible for picking up all of the costs for the children in their emergency foster care placement. Some of these hearings have been rescheduled many times and when we have youth in group home settings, the costs add up tremendously. For example one placement is over \$200 a day for a youth and if the court hearing is delayed and postponed for two weeks, that could cost Burleigh County well over \$2800. Burleigh County Social Services does not have money in our budget for these instances as it has not been an issue. Recently, an audit for IV-E eligibility cases were reviewed and it was determined that the Temporary Custody Orders authorized by juvenile court officers cannot make the "Reasonable Efforts" and "Contrary to the Welfare of the Child" findings in their orders to receive state/federal foster care funds per ASFA. Our attorney has been attempting to work with the court system on getting this changed but has been unsuccessful. In one case, we have been requesting the transcripts since the language was stated in the court hearing, just not documented on the Shelter Care Order.

Another issue that this has created for Burleigh County is the Burleigh County Social Service eligibility worker cannot open up Medicaid services for the child/children in care with no court order from a Judicial Referee and the necessary language by the Judicial Referee. This has become an issue for us when these children need medical attention and there is no insurance coverage available for the foster parents or case workers to take the child/children in to be seen for medical attention or medicines. Burleigh County ends up paying for the medical services/medicines for the children.

Gladys Cairns made a recommendation motion that Kim draft a letter to the Supreme Court of North Dakota to address the issue of the referee's leaving out the needed verbiage for foster care payments and Medicaid assistance coverage without coming out of the Burleigh County Social Service budget. Betty Day provided a 2nd and the motion passed unanimously.

SB 2206:

This is the County Social Service funding bill that the state will be responsible for picking up the grant portion of social services. Some of the program costs that the state will be financially responsible are foster care, EBT, subsidized adoption, service payments to the elderly and disabled, family preservation, computer processing costs, and medical assistance for therapeutic foster care. This bill will give approximately \$23 million state wide in property tax relief. The counties will have a freeze on our social service budget at our 2015 level and only will have exemptions if there is an increase in case load but would have to receive Department of Human Service approval. Social Service employee salaries will be eligible for the same cost of living adjustments as state employees for the years 2016 and 2017. There will be an adjustment for health insurance and retirement to all Social Service employees. There will also be a task force developed to study the feasibility and transition plan during the interim. As more of specifics get released, I will relay that information to you as well.

County Funded Services:

With the passage of bill 2206, the county may want to consider putting a freeze on any new county funded services in Home and Community Based Services since this is not going to be covered by bill 2206. We currently have approximately 50 clients that are receiving county funded services and this number continues to decline. This is an optional service for all of the counties and some counties provide this service and others do not. Depending on the study that will be implemented and the recommendation for the next biennium, if the State of North Dakota decides to take over all of social services, this service could get cut abruptly.

Approval of Director's Report: Jerry Woodcox provided a first motion and Gladys Cairns provided a second motion. The motion carried unanimously.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS:

The handbook was discussed and Betty Day provided a motion to accept the changes and Gladys Cairns provided a second to the motion.

Lori Clark's Report To The Board On Eligibility: Systems –

We are still working ACA MA in the mini app and Magi in the Cloud. The state has begun the process of developing the new Eligibility System. ACA MA and CHIPS will be completed first. It is hoped this part will be operational by November 2015. The rest of the programs will be added after and they hope to have them operational by Spring 2017.

New MMIS system was set to be operational in June with training in May. This has been pushed back, but I am uncertain for how long. When operational, EWs will have to use the new MMIS to enter TPL (third party liability), and PCP (primary care providers), and issue Medicaid cards. We currently use MMIS strictly for inquiry. These functions are currently processed in systems we already use. When operational, we will have yet another system to enter data into.

Medicaid has mandated another search system for all applications and reviews in which there is an asset test. This system is North Dakota Records Information Network. NDRIN is an organization of North Dakota counties created to send real estate records to one central location. The process can be time consuming as you can only search by name, reducing the search by the counties requested. The search is not too lengthy if the name is not common...but a common name like Robert Johnson could result in hundreds of pages to look through. The site will only allow limited users at any one time using the State access. We have hundreds of Medicaid cases that this mandates pertains to in Burleigh County.

National Directory of New Hire was mandated by the Agricultural Act of 2014. It is a database of employment data administered by the Office of Child Support Enforcement. Previously, our query through North Dakota Verify, would pick up any employment hits through North Dakota's New Hire database. NDNH picks up those hits from employers outside of the state one month prior to the date of any new SNAP application or review. This is a manual process that the EW must track. Alerts are received for any case that receives a NDNH hit. The EW must then send a letter to the employer, along with a release, requesting employment data. The employer has 30 days to provide this information. If provided, the EW compares to information received at the time of application or review, works overpayments if necessary, clears the alerts and narrates. If not received in 30 days, the EW then sends a notice to the case giving the case 10 days to provide the information. Again, if received they review the information provided and process accordingly. If not received, the case is set to close allowing 10 day advanced notice. This information must be provided if the case reapplies at a later date for SNAP. The EW has 45 days from the date the alert is first received for the case to clear the alert. Request for information received by the hit can only be sent for SNAP benefits, however, once the information is received all programs must be reviewed to see if correct benefits were authorized for those programs.

Last fall, the State received clarification from CMS that the State must cover individuals under age 21, caretakers and pregnant women under the ACA Medically Needy provision. These are individuals who are not eligible for ACA MA because of excess income. We must manually determine their client share and provide them with this information on the denial or closing notice they receive for excess income. The client share is determined by subtracting the Med Needy income limit for their household size from their countable income. The Med Needy income limit is based on a percentage of the Federal Poverty Level. Each group has their own percentage – 93% for caretakers, 92% for individuals up to 21, and 90% for pregnant women. We don't automatically put people on with this client share. They must prove their need as client share is generally a range of \$800 - \$1500. All of these cases must be run through the Regional Reps and have State approval before being authorized. Allie Stein, the supervisor for Pod A, reviews and works with the state on these cases. We are averaging approximately 1 per week that is approved by the State, but each worker could have many that they determine the approximate client share for each week.

Numbers and Trends –

Our caseload numbers have remained relatively stable since October 2014 for all programs. The transfer of family cases from traditional Medicaid in VISION to ACA Medicaid in the mini app has been completed. We are in our first months of completing reviews for ACA Medicaid. February and March were relatively quiet for intake, but April has been busy again.

People can apply for health care coverage through the Federal Marketplace. The feds are currently determining eligibility for coverage for those individuals, which could include ACA MA. These cases are then transferred to the appropriate county through the State. In March, we had 38 such cases transferred to Burleigh County and the numbers are decreasing the further away we get from open enrollment. Just because the feds determine eligibility, does not mean these cases are complete. The counties must determine eligibility for any THMP requested or request the information for any TPL reported. There is a lengthy process involved and manual tracking for the county if the client indicates they are "disabled." The county is also responsible to process changes and reviews for the case, plus react to any changes reported on this application for any programs the client may already be receiving benefits through. There is no application provided – just a worker portal to view the information electronically transferred to the state from the feds. Right now, Allie tracks all this information and transfers cases to the appropriate EW.

We have had several very time consuming, complicated long-term care applications in the past 6 months. These are cases in which there are a number of assets and tracking those assets can take days of work. We have a case right now in which the requested verifications are in boxes versus files. All trusts must be reviewed by the Legal Advisory Unit, usually takes months before the reviews are completed and returned to the county. I know many applicants' families are not aware of the amount of detailed review a LTC case can be subject to before approval.

I talked about this last time and the demands by clients continue to be unrealistic at times. A lot of pressure is put on the EWs by clients who expect immediate returned phone calls and processing of cases. My staff tries hard to process all cases timely and accurately, but we stress that we work things in the order received. I believe it is unfair to put someone's needs above another's simply because they have become the squeaky wheel.

Hiring and training of staff is ongoing. We are working towards standardizing some aspects of training. We have found however, that a lot of training time must be one on one as it is difficult to train on multiple computer systems without that individual time. We incorporate any training tools available through the state, such online courses and training manuals. We use more experienced workers as mentors to new workers as that extra person the new worker can go to for help. My challenge is to find a way to make training less stressful for my Leads and Supervisors. I'm open to any suggestions.

We are providing ongoing training to all staff on problem areas that we have identified. We usually provide one training per month. These are open to any staff interested and the training materials are located on a computer drive that they have access to. The Leads and Supervisors have increased the number of casefile reviews that have been completed, since my last report. We try to review every application and review completed by new workers as they approach the end of their probation period. We want to expand who completes the reviews to all EWs as we see them as excellent training tools.

Positive Notes:

Burleigh County was awarded the Service Provider of the Year by Lutheran Social Services New Americans program in March during the Building Bridges Conference in Fargo. The Leads and Supervisors in Pods B and C – Brett Kuntz, Lori Suda, Jenn Lippert and Melissa Standing Crow – have provided outstanding customer service to refugees when they arrived in North Dakota.

We are currently updating the General Assistance Manual for Burleigh County. This manual has not been updated since the early 1990s. Right now we are concentrating on the piece dealing with burial assistance. Hopes are to have this to the Board for their approval in the near future.

Burleigh County hosted the CREW Meeting earlier this month. CREW (Central Regional Eligibility Workers) members come from Burleigh, Morton, Sioux, Mclean, Oliver, Sheridan, Mercer, McIntosh, Emmons and the State offices. I believe this is an excellent way for workers to get to know workers from other counties and the state. Kim welcomed everyone to the meeting and we had speakers from Social Security, Lutheran Social Services and the Highway Patrol. Burleigh County will be sending two EWs to the National NEW Conference in San Antonio, Texas, in August.

I continue to see a growth in team work in the unit. The Pods are now working together to help each other out when one Pod is short staffed. Experienced workers are looking for ways to help those new workers learn all they need to know. Many have served as mentors or provide some of that one on one time that is needed. The Pod concept is a good workable plan to approach eligibility in a larger county, such as Burleigh County. In the past year, I have seen this concept mature and believe this was one of the best decisions implemented.

Kim complimented Lori on sending out an e-mail weekly called "Staff Notes". In her e-mail she breaks down the staff notes by POD so workers do not have to read through information that does not pertain to their work. She also mentioned that after the e-mail goes out, the leads and supervisors meet within the POD and discuss the information Lori gave them.

Paul Ronningen gave a report on employee concerns.

Paul met with 12 employees or former employees (all wished to remain anonymous). Paul thought that training was the biggest issue with employee concerns. Jerry Woodcox stated employees should be following the proper procedures that is identified in the manual and also identified in the Burleigh County Human Resource Manual. Jerry Woodcox stated the HR Director has given this message several times to employees. Jerry Woodcox does not think the Board should do anything given the group wants to remain anonymous. Betty Day seconded that employees need to follow the employee procedure in place and not to respond to anonymous complaints. Jerry also informed Paul that he should be careful meeting with a group of employees and representing the Board and violating open meeting laws. Jerry referred to the email that was received the day before and how the Board had violated open record laws. Documentation needs to be completed when responding to members of the Board.

The board decided not to go any further with this item since employees wished to remain anonymous.

Gladys Cairns recognized Sandy Smith for her years of service and graciously thanked her on behalf of the board.

Email from Paul Ronningen to Social Service Board on April 29, 2015:

Burleigh County Social Board Members:

Tomorrow I will talk about employees concerns that were brought to my attention on March 16, 2015 (the fourth item under new business) I was invited to a meeting with the North Dakota United and approximately a dozen employees of Burleigh County Social Services (past or present?) who wanted to voice their concerns. I went to listen. Also, I want to let you know that no one in the group has signed a complaint and, in fact, the **group wanted to remain anonymous**. Finally, I have shared this information with Kim and Tammy Tarres, HR

I am attaching the written summary of the meeting, provided by the Union, upon my request. As you will see in the report, there were items that could be addressed thorough training and conversation. Kim and the supervisors have addressed some of these items with the employees:

- Where can I find the employee manual?
- When I have concerns, I am not sure who to take them to for discussion?
- Issue of exempt employees being required to clock in and out?
- etc...

As you review this information, I would like to know from you, what should our follow-up be, to these concerns?

I would like you to consider having me return to a meeting with the Union and reiterate the messaging from management, thus far. Also, I would like to let the employees know that if they have a personal grievance, they would need to follow the steps of Grievance Policy and

Procedures. As outlined in the policy and procedures, employees must first approach their immediate supervisors with their concerns, if the supervisor is part of this concern they are to approach the Director, if the supervisor and the Director are part of the concern, Tammy Terras, HR (222-6536) should be approached with those concerns.

I look forward to your thoughts and input tomorrow.

Thank you!

Paul Ronningen
400-1827 (cell)

Attachment:

Burleigh Co. Social Services Concerns:

1.) Issue of exempt employees being required to clock in and out.

- Exempt employees are unable to adjust their schedules and are required to fulfill a very rigid schedule with little flexibility.
- Flexibility in scheduling is necessary to provide high quality service to clients. With the loss of the ability to have some flexibility within their day-to-day schedules, workers have expressed that they feel that their professionalism has been put into question and that there is no trust for them from the Director.
- A supervisor is required to be in the building or give approval should an employee need to work after COB. This creates an un-needed burden on employees should the situation arise that a home visit or other work needs to be done post 5pm.

2.) Fear of retaliation

- Employees have expressed a concern than any questioning of processes will lead to retaliation in the form of unwarranted discipline or targeting. This creates a culture of fear where employees are afraid to honestly express their minds.
- We have also heard that policies and supervisory attitudes have set people up to fail and that there is a desire to find things to get people in trouble or fired.
- Employees have been threatened not to contact the Social Service Board and told that the Board does not want to hear their input.

3.) Policy Manual

- Policy manual is unable to be accessed online, and employees have not been provided with a physical copy.
 - o Employees are unsure which avenue is available to address concerns.

4.) Miscellaneous

- Supervisors are also fearful and unwilling to confront the Director regarding employee concerns for fear of retaliation.
- High turnover is the result of low morale from uncompromising supervision, specifically from current Director.
- Feeling that clients are not receiving the service necessary due to current policies because service is not a priority compared to saving money and time.
- Employee Safety: Concern raised regarding asbestos being removed from the building. Employees were never informed nor were any precautions taken to protect employees.

Desired Outcome(s)

- Create employee survey to find data on current employee morale and concerns
- Provide clear avenue for addressing work place concerns without retaliation towards employees
- Re-evaluate current policies regarding exempt employees clocking in and out.

Gladys Cairns response the Social Service Board on April 29, 2015:

Paul, just to let you know, my belief is that North Dakota United should have been asked to direct the employees to the Grievance Process when you as a solo BCSS Board member was contacted. Second is it our position to respond to anonymous concerns?

There is always some reason for a policy to be followed.
Gladys Cairns

REVIEW OF BILLS: Bills numbered 69166 through 69425, for April were reviewed by Betty Day and signed by Paul Ronningen.

Motion by Gladys Cairns, second by Betty Day and unanimously carried to approve the April bills as presented.

MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED TO THE BOARD: Agenda; March 26, 2015 Board Meeting Minutes; Director's Report for April 2015; Supervisors' Meeting Minutes for April 2015; Engrossed Senate Bill No. 2206; Social Welfare Fund Report with spreadsheets for March, 2015; Travel Expense Report.

NEXT BOARD MEETING: Thursday, May 28, 2015 at 3:30 p.m. in the Tom Baker Room at the City/County Building.

Paul Ronningen, Vice Chair

Betty Day, Secretary