

SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD MINUTES

October 27, 2020

The Grant County Department of Social Services Board meeting was held via Zoom due to COVID. The Grant County Department of Social Services was called to order by Chairperson John Beinborn at 9:00 AM. Roll Call was taken with Dale Hood, Greg Fry, Don Splinter, Robert Scallon, Lester Jantzen, Dwight Nelson and John Beinborn present. Also present was Fred Naatz, Director, Robert Keeney, County Board Chairman, Shane Drinkwater IT, Garry Pluemer Maintenance Supervisor, Clark Thelemann, Social Work Supervisor, Krystle Lorenz, Social Work Supervisor, LeaAnne Smith, Office and Financial Coordinator, Amanda Degenhardt, Finance Director, Terri Irish, Service Support Specialist, Andrea Benish, Service Support Specialist, Molly Donar, Social Worker, Christina Potempa, Social Worker, Alex Bahl, Social Worker, Kelly Schlarmann, Social Worker. The meeting was found to be in compliance with the open meeting laws. Fred suggested moving the staffing updates, workloads and issues with DSPS after the minutes are approved. Lester made a motion to approve the change, Don Splinter seconded the motion. Question on the Sept minutes regarding the \$50,000 grant and if "it does or does not". Fred will make the correction to the Sept minutes to "does not". Don Splinter made a motion to the correction and approval of minutes Dale Hood seconded the motion. Don Splinter made a motion to approve the changes to the agenda. Dwight Nelson seconded, the motion carried.

ADMINISTRATION – GENERAL:

Staffing updates: Fred explained that back in June or July the board approved to fill the vacant Service Support Specialist position, but with the COVID it was decided to wait a couple months because it would be too hard to train a new worker. The demand and workload for this position has grown immensely and we wanted to look at refilling the position. Andrea and Terri explained to the DSS board what the role of the Service Support Specialist is and how this position has taken on more responsibilities. The Service Support Specialist is to partner with social workers on the out of home placement cases. These cases we often facilitate and supervise interactions. It is also our job to observe and educate the parents visiting their children with the goal of them learning the skills they need to have to have their children returned to them. We also partner with social workers on cases where the family's is in need of parent education. We also become a source of calm and positivity to family's that may not have that in their lives. While the social workers main focus is on statute and court orders. We bring to the team a focus on family interaction, family bonding, emotional well-being and family connection while using Trauma Informed focus and emphasizing with families. We advocate for the needs of families and work to eliminate barriers to their success. Although court orders are important they are typically not what motivate change. In addition to child abuse and neglect our Service Support Specialist team also focuses on prevention, we are responsible to offering and providing voluntary services to families who wish to have help. This means we connect them to outside services, provide parenting support, support them in communicating and partnering with schools. The Service Support Specialists also have intake duties, which means when receive phone calls reporting abuse and neglect that needs to be documented in a

report and sent to their supervisor. We facilitate the backpack drive, the Safe and Stable program, Independent Living program, Big Buddy program. The Service Support Specialists are part of the Trauma Informed Care training. The Service Support Specialist has been asked to develop an inmate parenting training for the jail. They are part of a team creating Community Service program for youth. Terri explained the Service Support Specialist team is four people now and the fifth position would be beneficial as there are times we are over whelmed and cannot provide the quality of service we need to. This additional team member in the past has allowed us to maintain our level of excellent care. In addition this position focuses on community development. This is building bridges in our community whether it is with mentors, Thrift Shop, Volunteer Driver's. This position does all the community outreach for the funds we need for the backpack drive and go out and ask for donations. This position is really vital to our team our agency and family's. Fred clarified it is not an additional position as we have had it for years and want to refill. This position has been budgeted for 2020 and 2021. It was asked if there was any additional funding received during the year with COVID. The agency did receive some and worked with Shane and Bob as the recommendation for the Income maintenance workers was to move to laptops rather than towers. We are able to look at that and the justification was the reactor to COVID was the workers could work from home easier. We got five laptops for the Income Maintenance staff out of the COVID money, which would have been paid out of the budget. John asked Amanda if we designate it or mark any of the COVID differences through the year financially. Amanda stated some of the Departments have a designated a new expense account within the Treasurer Department, but some Departments through the year have expensed some items within their Department and we need to as we get the money in to make sure we have the revenue in the Departments as the same expense, to answer the question it depends on the Department. Fred will look with Amanda to justify whether the COVID money was depleted. John asked Terri and Andrea how they feel we missed out on helping people by not having the Service Support Specialist position. Terri stated before COVID hit her caseload was high then and with three particular families she believes 25 out of 40 hours were spent on those families alone for multiple weeks in terms of face to face visits, getting Zoom set up and figuring out where are we going to place these kids as foster homes close to here were not meeting these kids needs as these were level 6 kids. Not having the fifth person on the Service Support Specialist team does not allow for us to have that flexibility to pick up the slack in other areas. Greg Fry commended the workers for their dedication and is appreciated. Clark updated on the \$50,000 grant that was talked about last meeting. The agency did get the grant and a large part of this grant would be helping this position to free up the other staff to help with this program as well. Greg made a motion to replace the Service Support Specialist position. Dale Hood seconded, the motion carried.

Fred went over the Department of Safety Protection Services. These are the people who License social workers and set up all the requirements to become a certified social worker. A while ago the Department put in the requirement that a social worker become certified within 3 years of being hired. The Directors in the Southern Region met with the secretary of DSPS to go over the frustrations with their system and things have not gotten better but worse. Our staff is doing what they need to do to get information into the system, but it is quite a process. We asked Molly to come in because she is experiencing this and we have a policy within the 3 years they need to be certified, but my staff are

doing what they need to be doing to become certified and it is the fault of DSPS it does not make sense to punish our staff.

Molly stated she is coming up on her 3 year mark and she started applying for her social work certificate in November of 2019. Started classes in her undergrad to give herself a year, which should have been enough time to get her certificate. Since trying to get the process going Molly has attempted to contact DSPS several times with no calls or emails back. Molly submitted her first application in November of 2019 and DSPS lost it and they had no record of it. Molly resubmitted it in February of 2020 and they have confirmation of all of her paperwork, but she has been waiting since February for her transcripts to be processed. Every time Molly checks into it she is told they are still processing. Molly has called DSPS four times in the last couple of months and has sat on the phone with no answer. At one point Molly was on hold for over 30 minutes trying to get in contact with someone to tell her how she can get her transcripts processed since they state they have them. She has left numerous voicemails and no call backs. John asked if anyone had any steps that could be taken to make a contact with someone. Greg suggested going to one of the state representatives such as Travis Tranel and let him know what you are going through. Garry stated he deals with DSPS on a weekly basis and he cannot get into it as he is calling state inspectors. Since DSPS changed their system it has gotten worse and you cannot talk to anyone. John asked Bob Keeney if he had any ideas on the right way to go about this. Bob stated these are the options we have the challenge is the state is shut down and this is the challenge we have had with the 52 building. Clark stated he and some other supervisors composed a letter about the issues with DSPS about a year and a half ago and it was forwarded through Department of Children and Family and Department of Health Services. He does not know if it made it as far as the legislature. He does know formal complaints have been made with very minimal results. Clark stated his concern is the agency has phenomenal workers who are in jeopardy of not getting this requirement at their 3 year mark. Greg asked Molly if she was asking for an extension on the three year certification. Greg stated if it needed a motion he would make that motion and thinks it should be time bound somewhat, extend it by 2 months and then work from there and if it needs to be extended again we can. John suggested making it a monthly agenda item until we get some follow up on it and designate someone such as Fred, Clark or Molly. Greg made a motion to grant the timeline on Molly's certification. Lester Jantzen seconded, the motion carried. Fred will work with Bob Keeney on putting a letter together for Travis Tranel.

FINANCIAL REPORTS/ SUMMARY OF VOUCHERS

Fred updated, the 2020 General Ledger DSS Management Report Detail. Out of Home Care Placements looking on page 7 is high. First one contracted services budgeted \$60,000 and we are at \$128,000. We could not find placement for two kids. We worked with Advocates who has created for us and these kids an intensive supervision services. The kid's court order changed and they were placed at home and we provide 24 hour a day respite, which ends up being a little over \$50,000 a month. We are looking at two kids at \$30,000, which equals for a whole year \$360,000. Both of these kids at this point cannot go home. One of the kids has been out of the home for five years and will turn 18 in January and has gone

through tons of therapy and intervention and still needs help. Krystle went over the struggle with the kids and the process the Department takes. The three kids are ages 8, 7, 6 the Department does a CANS assessment, which lets us know where we should put their placement at and these kids are ranking at the highest level of care, which is 6, a detention facility. We cannot put these kids in a detention facility due to their ages. We are looking at Treatment Foster Home's for these children. When we sent out feelers across the state of Wisconsin we did not have anyone who was interested in taking these kids. We had to make personnel phone calls to private agencies asking them to give these children a try and we are going to try something different this time. These children have experienced a lot of trauma since the day they were born and they have state hopped. When they came to Wisconsin we picked up the trauma these kids have from other states and what they have done from year to year. Two of these children that our very young and have been kicked out of multiple treatment foster homes who have had a lot of experience working with children who have complexed needs and they were not able to maintain these children. We have found a placement for all three children and we are paying them the max amount because they are working with children who have higher needs then what they should be caring for. The Department can do a rate setting for the provider and bump up the rate when dealing with more complex children and we had to do that for these children.

One of the placements where the kid is 18 will end when she is 18. This placement she is no longer at was the more expensive placement. She is at shelter now.

Looking at the summary of voucher half of the payments are out of home placements.

John asked how the company vehicles were working out. Fred stated the Nissan Rogue is working out, but had to put some money into it. It is working out very well with staff transporting children. Fred explained the hot spot and that it is used for the fuel program when they go and do outreach. Fred will talk to Shane about the cell phone policy as we don't have smartphones we have flip phones. We have staff who are using there flip phones to text with their families. If we had smartphones IT could install a program to shut it down and with flip phones we cannot do that. We have to figure out how to improve the security with the flip phones. We have a policy if the phone is lost what to do with it. Don made a motion for approval of the vouchers. Dale seconded, the motion carried.

The Training report will be in the board packet next meeting.

ADMINISTRATION - GENERAL

Garry updated on the building. The entry way tile is done, but there is a difference in color. Brad and Garry will look into that and see what can be done. Windows will be replaced at the end of the week.

Fred updated on 2021 budget, Fred worked with Amanda and found some things that final changes were made on. The section with Family Group Conferencing there was \$17,000 and we do not do this program anymore and took that out. When Fred relooked at the budget, we left \$17,000 in the fuel and

spent \$38,000 that would possibly be change as we would have to incorporate more money there, but there is funding for it as we are getting \$65,000 next year for the fuel program.

Future impact of Family First Legislation on services and future budgets, the federal government passed a huge amount of legislation regarding child welfare called the Family First Plan. They are trying to switch the funding of things that they can pay for more from the preventive side of things to allow families to stay together rather than spending a lot of money on out of home placements, which has always been our goal. Some of the changes is the federal government and the state is going to have to implement is limiting placements. For example, residential placements they will not be able to stay in for more than a year. This will have an impact when looking at the budget for out of home placements in a couple years.

We have had a few more staff coming into the office. With Governors new order of places being able to only have 25% capacity, with us having 40 staff we might be somewhat over the capacity. We are going to continue having staff work from home with the COVID numbers being high right now. The Support staff is coming in more because of the heating season starting and have appointments and is more efficient to get these done in the office. Social workers have been able to meet with families outside, but with the cold weather coming we have been looking around to see where they can conduct some of these visits. Lisa called the Youth and Ag building to see if they could use one of their rooms that has a sink and refrigerator, but this did not work out. We will most likely have to use the Lobby Conference room or our family viewing room.

Narcan training for the Social Workers have been completed. Some of the social workers gave Narcan to some of the families who had a history of over dosing, Unified clarified with us we cannot do that anymore. We can refer those families to Unified and they would be able to do it. Fred said the cost of Narcan is \$200, but will clarify with Jeff Lockhart.

Orion family services we are contracting with since the Service Support Specialist are over the amount of families they can work with. Orion is coming down for two families and if they meet the criteria we will use the Targeted Safety Support funding we have to pay for it. We also got notice the application for 2021 for the Targeted Safety Support funding is due middle of November. This time we are going to ask for the maximum.

You Justice Innovation grant we did receive and was able to use some of to pay for some of the Service Support Specialist time.

Next Meeting will be November 4th, 9:00 AM

CITIZEN COMMENTS: None

Adjournment: Bob made a motion to adjourn Dwight seconded, motion carried.