

BENTON COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
April 5, 2016

The Benton County Human Services Board met in regular session on April 5, 2016 in the Benton County Board Room in Foley, MN with Board members Ed Popp, Spencer Buerkle, Warren Peschl, Jim McMahon and Jake Bauerly present. Call to order by Chair Peschl was at 9:43 AM.

Popp/Buerkle unanimous to approve the agenda as written.

McMahon/Popp unanimous to approve the Consent Agenda: 1) approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of March 15, 2016 as written; and 2) approve Purchase of Service Agreement between Benton County and the *CommUNITY Adult Mental Health Initiative Board* for Fiscal Agent/Legal Services, and authorize the Chair to sign.

Sandi Shoberg, Human Services Supervisor, explained that staff members of the Children's Mental Health unit will report on two of the more difficult cases they have encountered involving children with severe emotional disorders. Nikki Knowles reported on a case involving a nine year old child with a high level of physical aggression needing placement under a child protection concern. She spoke of the struggle with bed availability for this child and finding services that meet this child's needs. Sara Sherwood reported on a case involving a 17-year old male with significant mental health issues and the multiple placement failures as a result of his aggressive behaviors; currently, this young man is living in a locked detention center.

Bob Cornelius, Human Services Director, provided a report on the Human Services Department for 2015. Report highlights, in part: 1) children served in Children's Mental Health (168% increase from 2011 to 2015; added only .5 FTE staff in past five years; challenges include children with much more aggressive behavior, extreme lack of treatment facilities, and long waiting lists for services; 82 referrals for children's mental health case management were received in 2015); 2) Child Protection Intakes (per the Governor's Task Force recommendation, traditional assessments will play a much more prominent role going forward (as opposed to family assessments); recommendation also includes a requirement that county attorneys be consulted prior to case closure if a family refuses services and safety issues are identified; broadening the definition of "substantial child endangerment"); 3) Child Protection—County Impact (Legislature allocated funding for 2+ child protection social workers in Benton County—Benton County now has 10 of 11 new workers; unspent State CP funding to be carried forward in 2016-- \$127,000; the next step the task force will look to address is the 24/7 availability of a Social Worker and a Supervisor to provide an immediate assessment of each child protection report—Cornelius expects costs could reach \$200,000); 4) Child Support (Benton County is above the State average on every performance measure); 5) Licensing (Benton County has 145 licensed child care homes; these numbers have decreased over past years; the Legislature is considering a child care assistance program with a goal of increasing the number of children in these homes; these homes are "overrun by piles of paperwork, layered bureaucracy, higher operating costs and ever changing legislation"; current policy of at least one inspection of a licensed child-care facility every two years will soon be superseded by a new federal rule requiring annual inspections—counties are expected to share in the cost to "find the money" to hire the number of inspectors necessary to conduct the annual visits); 6) Adult Mental Health Services (over 50% increase in persons served from 2011 to 2015 with no added staff during that time period; more and more Rule 20 (competency to stand trial) evaluations for individuals facing criminal charges are being ordered—these costs can range from \$1,000 to \$30,000 per month—in 2015, one

client cost Benton County \$120,000 in unplanned charges; other trends include extreme lack of affordable housing for these individuals and extreme shortage of treatment beds); 7) Civil Commitments (over 60% increase from 2011 to 2015); 8) Vulnerable Children and Adult Act (changes made in this program are producing more revenue); 9) MnChoices Assessments (revenues have increased from approximately \$395,000 in 2013 to \$637,000 in 2015; the combining of three big information systems onto one platform is creating many problems); 10) Income Maintenance (66% increase in caseload size from 2013 to 2015—through the effective use of technology, the Financial unit has been able to capture large gains in worker efficiency, resulting in not hiring ten staff (saving \$548,910 per year); 11) Public Health (tasked with six areas of responsibility: prevent the spread of disease, protect against environmental health hazards, assure an adequate public health infrastructure, promote healthy communities and health behaviors, prepare for and respond to emergencies, assure the quality and accessibility of health services); 12) Fiscal Unit (fund balance remains healthy from year to year; out-of-home placement funds decreased by \$150,000 from 2014 to 2015, however the current trend line is generally increasing); 13) Human Services Staff Additions (Revenue versus Tax Levy 2013-2015—seven of the ten positions added are fully funded). Cornelius reported the following child protection “talking points”: a) from 2014 to 2015, county spending statewide was \$20 million over and above the additional \$20 million received from the state (expenses included added staffing, out of home placement and additional CHIPS activity, including court ordered service costs and staff time in court); b) counties are not yet fully staffed to meet the new standards; and c) the scarcity of foster homes is making it difficult to meet the placement needs of children.

Cornelius referenced a letter to the MN Department of Human Services which was prepared by the Sherburne County Administrator at the direction of the Sherburne County Board of Commissioners; the letter outlined identified concerns/issues of the Sherburne County Board, as well as possible solutions, regarding the status of MNSure. A sentence in the letter read “Sherburne County HHS has worked cooperatively with MNSure for over two years and, frankly, is frustrated with the lack of progress that has been made to date.” Cornelius also referenced a recent article in the Star Tribune “MNSure’s clumsy technology burden falls on county employees”. Cornelius reported on a number of responsibilities that have fallen to counties that the state was tasked to do. He explained that people around the state are too often forced to make a choice—do they put their health at risk and wait days, weeks or months to find out if they have coverage, or do they take the gamble, get the treatment they need, and risk putting themselves in major debt? Cornelius stated the need to have “serious discussions” about how the counties are going to deal with the growing demand/growing workload (without adequate State funding) and the continued difficulties county staff and their clients are experiencing with the MNSure computer/call systems.

Chair Peschl adjourned the meeting at 10:32 AM.

Warren Peschl, Chair
Benton County Human Services Board

ATTEST:

Montgomery Headley
Benton County Administrator

