

BENTON COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 16, 2016

The Benton County Human Services Board met in regular session on August 16, 2016 in the Benton County Board Room in Foley, MN with Board members Jake Bauerly, Ed Popp, Spencer Buerkle, Warren Peschl and Jim McMahon present. Call to order by Chair Peschl was at 9:26 AM.

Buerkle/McMahon unanimous to approve the agenda as written.

Bauerly/Popp unanimous to approve the Consent Agenda: 1) approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of August 2, 2016 as written.

Nicole Ruhoff, Benton County Public Health Nursing Supervisor, reported that Benton and Stearns County Human Services and Public Health administration have been meeting with the MN Department of Health to explore options that may be available for better collaboration of services. She noted that Cross Jurisdictional Sharing (CJS) is not a new concept; there are many resources that promote CJS as a way to better serve constituents and create efficiencies across counties. Brenda Menier, Public Health Nurse Consultant with the MN Department of Health, reported on CJS initiatives that are occurring across the region. She noted that there are increasing demands on public health and the resources to address those demands are not necessarily keeping up; CJS is one avenue to explore to address this issue. Mark Sizer, Stearns County Human Services Director, spoke of the shared similarities between the populations of Stearns and Benton Counties for which CJS "makes sense". He stated his belief that this process will result in better service to clients, a stronger public health system between the two counties, improved fiscal responsibilities with resources, and more efficient use of staff. Renee Frauendienst, Stearns County Public Health Division Director, spoke of the three goals that staff would like to pursue in the CJS planning process. Buerkle/McMahon unanimous to authorize staff to work with Stearns County Human Services staff and officials to explore more formal cross jurisdictional sharing of public health programs and to appoint Board member, Warren Peschl, to represent Benton County on the workgroup.

Sandi Shoberg, Human Services Supervisor, introduced Janelle Rooney and Audrianna McNeil, Social Workers who split the truancy caseload. Rooney provided an overview of truancy in Benton County for school year 2015-2016:

*Number of students referred to Benton County Attorney for Letter of Concern: 83 total letters sent

*Number of student cases opened for Truancy Mediation Case Management: 27 total cases

*Number of cases carried forward from the 2014-2015 school year: 9 cases

*Number of out-of-home placements resulting from truancy: 4 placements

*Number of cases that had CHIPS petitions filed during the school year: 3 cases

Rooney reported that Benton County Human Services has made changes that may have assisted in reducing the number of truancy cases from the previous year; these changes include engaging the families in discussions as to what may be causing the truancy concerns.

Janel Sczublewski, Human Services Supervisor, referenced a handout containing county burial information across the Region 7 counties. She noted the 2016 budget for Benton County burials is \$60,000; at this point, \$56,000 has already been spent. Sczublewski pointed out that the average payout for cremations across the regional counties is \$1,800 (Benton County pays up to \$2,800) and \$2,090 for traditional burials (Benton County pays up to \$2,800). Noting that Benton County pays a considerable amount over the average, Bob Cornelius, Human Services Director, inquired if the Board

desired to adopt a new price scale. He added that Benton County is experiencing a continuous rise in county burials. Buerkle noted that the end result of making such an adjustment at the county level would be asking for a larger subsidy from the providers. Following brief discussion, motion by Bauerly to adjust Benton County's pricing to the survey average for cremation and traditional burials. Second by Popp. Monty Headley, County Administrator, pointed out that the county may be obligated to hold a public hearing before changing fees/prices. Cornelius clarified that staff would be seeking an effective date of January 1st for such a change. At this point, Bauerly withdrew his motion and Popp withdrew his second.

Nina Kutz, Sue Worm and Carilyn Robak (Eligibility Specialists in Benton County Human Services) were present to provide a presentation on METS (Minnesota Eligibility Technology System), also known as MnSure. Kutz spoke to the issue of staff caseload sizes; there are about 2,400 cases in both the METS and MAXIS systems for health care, an increase of about 1,300 cases since 2013. She indicated that each worker gets about 35 phone calls per day. Kutz spoke of staff struggles with an ineffective and inefficient METS; many eligibility functions take much longer than in the former MAXIS system and other tasks require manual work-arounds/follow-up and telephoning state staff to resolve. Worm reported on the lack of interface between the eligibility and billing portions of the system, along with software "glitches" which creates duplicates, blocking the entry of new cases. She also noted the long wait times to access the State "Help Desk". Robak reported on two new programs—"Migration" (counties must now "migrate" the remaining MA cases in MAXIS to METS starting in October) and also implement "Periodic Data Match" (used to project eligibility and identify which enrollees need to change from one program to another). Cornelius reiterated the goal of converting all the MN Care, Medical Assistance and MnSure cases into the METS, a system which has been "fraught with problems from the very beginning"; the State projects a 30% increase in county staff workload, which is likely understated. Cornelius spoke of the stress level of his staff members and their clients who must work with a system that just doesn't work. Bauerly commented "...on behalf of the taxpayers, I apologize to our employees...I can't imagine the mean phone calls you must get from frustrated customers...it's too bad that we can't create a system that works..."

Chair Peschl adjourned the meeting at 10:10 AM.

Warren Peschl, Chair
Benton County Human Services Board

ATTEST:

Montgomery Headley
Benton County Administrator