

**Traverse County Board of Commissioners  
Social Service Board Minutes  
August 15, 2023  
9:00 AM**

Traverse County Social Services Department  
202 8<sup>th</sup> Street North, Wheaton MN 56296

The regular meeting for the Traverse County Board of Commissioners/Social Service Board was held at the Traverse County Social Services Department, Wheaton, MN on August 15, 2023. Commission Chair, Kayla Schmidt, called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

**ROLL CALL:**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mark Gail  
Chad Metz  
Dwight Nelson  
Jerrel Olson  
Kayla Schmidt

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**CONSENT AGENDA (Routine Actions requiring Board Action):**

- Approval of Agenda, Minutes of Previous Meeting, and Donation(s) received from:
  - 1) Ave Maria Ladies Guild - \$45.00

Upon a motion by Commissioner Nelson, second by Commissioner Olson, and carried unanimously, the agenda, donation to the agency, and July minutes were approved.

**CASELOAD TOTALS:** Reviewed.

	<b>07/31/22</b>	<b>07/31/23</b>
Social Services (Workgroups)	72	57
Income Maintenance	699	717
Child Support	63	60
Child Care Assistance - Cases	5	4
Child Care Assistance - Providers	7	6
Totals	846	844

**OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS:** Reviewed and discussed the placement numbers. There are currently two children using the independent living, 18-21 program; one child placed by corrections; and three children in placement through child protection. There are a few more potential corrections placements that we are working on with Probation.

- Total - 6
- Social Services - 5
- Corrections – 1

**FISCAL REVIEW:** Reviewed and discussed.

- Cash Balance as of 07/31/2019 - \$1,708,890.17
- Cash Balance as of 07/31/2020 - \$1,673,746.66
- Cash Balance as of 07/31/2021 - \$1,909,441.91
- Cash Balance as of 07/31/2022 - \$2,266,259.90
- Cash Balance as of 07/31/2023 - \$2,423,093.17

**DISCUSSION/DECISION:**

**A. BUDGET:**

1. The July 2023 Financial Summary was reviewed with the board. Our cash balance is up \$156,833.17, which isn't surprising, since we just received several state grants that are for the whole year. We are tracking closer to on target, which has been the goal. We would like to get our budget as close to reality as possible. The director explained that things like out-of-home placements, commitments, do not meet criteria days, and other social services expenses, are very hard to predict. We are under budget for some of those areas so far this year, but we also know that it only takes a couple of

clients or large families to negatively impact us. We are at 58% for the year; our revenues are at 55%, and our expenditures are at 48%. Our revenues are close to budget thus far, and our expenses are a little low. There have been two county burials for the year, as of July. Thus far, we have collected \$42,033.97 in estate recoveries. We keep 25% of that total, and the remainder goes to DHS. That is an unpredictable revenue, as well. We generally try and look at three years of data for these expenses. While that helps, our budget is small enough that one thing can have major impacts to the budget.

## **B. DHS UPDATES:**

1. The director updated the board on the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), and work that is being done on the state version of that law, the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA). The director indicated that the tribes are seeking to have counties perform at 100% on the audits and have financial penalties for not doing so. The director indicated that one factor for us is that we work with an out-of-state tribe most of the time. MIFPA is not legally used or upheld in other states, so we struggle sometimes to meet the performance measure. The other factor is that only one case is audited per year, which is not a statistically valid sample.
2. The director talked about potential legislative proposals that we will need to watch to see the potential impact on us. The new department that DHS is seeking to make, DCYF, for children, could have some impacts to us, in terms of communication and workflow. There are also potentially some legislative proposals coming about 18-21 transition placements for children who have aged-out of care. Currently, this statute applies to youths placed under 260C, but not to youths under 260D. It is voluntary for the child. Counties are required to send them a letter six months before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, outlining the options they have, and telling them about 18-21 foster care. The proposal that was brought to counties last month would include 260D youths and would also auto-enroll the kids. So, they would need to opt out if they didn't want to do it. The director talked about the youths that are being placed under 260D, and the fact that they are placed for their own disability. Generally, there is an adult service world for these kids, that kids placed under 260C do not have. There would be a significant cost to counties for these children.

## **C. TRAVERSE COUNTY UPDATES:**

1. The director presented a two-year contract for Mended. Mended is a service that we use for child protection cases. Mended does parent/child supervised visits for kids in placement and gives us documentation of those visits for court. She also does parent education on the basics, in terms of parenting. She works with our 18-21 population, as well as on budgeting. Family Group Decision Making facilitation is also included in the contract; something that we get reimbursed from a regional grant, if we pay it out to her. The rates have increased but remain substantially lower than other providers. The service is valuable to our child protection team. Upon a motion by Commissioner Nelson, and a second by Commissioner Olson, the motion carried unanimously, and the contract was approved.
2. The director went over the 2021 child maltreatment report that the state put out. All child protection information is statewide, as well as county specific. The director compared Traverse County to the statewide measures, as well as showing the Western Prairie ones, since the same staff are doing the work. We talked about the high percentage of Native Americans served in our small county, as compared with other counties our size.
3. The director reviewed the PrimeWest versus Blue Plus enrollment for Traverse County in the different areas that they serve. The director noted that there are some areas where we have no Blue Plus clients, and others, where we have a small number. The director gave the board the numbers for all counties, as reported by PrimeWest.
4. The director presented a contract with Stevens Community Medical Center for the remainder of 2023. The rates are the same as 2022. They contacted the director because we didn't get our contract renewed, and were working off of 2022's contract, which is the same as this one, but with the dates updated. Upon a motion by Commissioner Olson, and a second by Commissioner Gail, the contract was unanimously approved.
5. The director reviewed the most current Human Services Performance Management (HSPM) report that we received with child protection measures, and the self sufficiency

report. The director indicated that she struggles with these measures and has brought them up to the HSPM board on multiple occasions. The director has been a member of the HSPM board since its inception. The director indicated that none of our samples are statistically valid, since we have very small numbers. She further noted that in most of the child protection measures, we either have to be perfect, or we fail, which is not the intention of the measure, and is not what other counties face. We did not meet two of the four measures, and since it is the second year we have not met them, the director did not apply for an extenuating circumstance (EC). The HSPM board has never given an EC to a county that is in a current PIP. Here are the four measures and the barriers that we face:

- a) Percent of children with a substantiated maltreatment report who do not experience repeat maltreatment within twelve months, is the first measure. The threshold is 90.9%, and Traverse County had fourteen cases, and a performance of 100%.
- b) Percent of children discharged from out-of-home placement to permanency in less than twelve months. The threshold for this is 40.1%, and Traverse County was at 37.50%, with a denominator of eight children. This is our second year in a PIP for this. In 2021, we had a sample of six children, and were at 0%. Here are the barriers that we face:
  - 1) We have a small sample size, so we have no room for anything that doesn't meet the measure, and our denominator is statistically invalid.
  - 2) We are a IV-E county, so all corrections placements are included in this. Not only do we have no control over those cases, but it isn't uncommon for those kids to spend significant time in out-of-home care.
  - 3) We had some adoptions that were finalized in this year. By definition of the law, unless they are reunified, they will not meet the standard. This standard used to only apply to children who are reunified, but changed more than three years ago to all children who exit placement in that year, per a federal measurement. For a permanency petition other than reunification to be filed, we are generally at ten months. A termination of transfer of custody order has to be in place before we can start any adoption or transfer process. That generally happens at the eleven-to-twelve-month mark. An adoption can take six months to a year, if you have an identified adoptive parent. We cannot do a statewide search until a permanency order is in place, at that eleven-to-twelve-month mark. If we have to search for a permanency option, it can take six to eighteen months to find one, and then six to twelve months to get all of the paperwork done and approved by DHS and the court. The federal government is banking on a scale large enough to account for this. Traverse County does not have that scale, so we often don't meet this measure.
  - 4) Minnesota has a statute, 260D, to address kids in placement for their own disability. These kids are not subject to permanency guidelines, and often exceed twelve months in care. There is no permanency option for them, as they will remain in placement until it is not needed.
- c) Percent of days children in family foster care are spent with a relative. The threshold is 36.5%, and Traverse County was at 31.5%, with a denominator of ten children. So, we did not meet the measure. Because we have a IV-E agreement with corrections, those kids who sit in detention and are court-ordered to placement, are counted in this measure. Children placed for their own disability are also counted, yet won't be placed at a relative's house, since they are often receiving specialized care. Children who are in care as 18 to 21-year-olds are also not placed with relatives. We have not met this measure in the past five years, and it will be very hard to meet it with the numbers we have, and the factors listed above. For instance, we have kids in placement who are in the 18-21 categories, and kids who are placed via our IV-E agreement, and those are kids whose placement with a relative and length of time in placement, are likely not to meet the measurements and are out of our control.
- d) Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) Self-Support Index: this measure is individualized to certain characteristics of each county and has a range that we need to fall within. Our range is 56.29% - 69.65%, and we met the measure at 56.56%. We have generally performed quite high on this, but it has been decreasing over the past few years. There is no doubt that COVID played a factor. The director will be talking to our contracted employment services about what trends they are seeing and what we can do to meet the measure. This measure is

for people who receive family cash assistance (MFIP). It measures if they move successfully off the program or not, and if they are working thirty hours per week or more, three years after leaving the program.

6. The director showed the board the letter we received indicating we had successfully completed our PIP for measure A above. We have struggled to meet that and will likely continue to struggle. The small numbers we have make this very difficult.

**ADMINISTRATIVE/VENDOR PAYMENTS:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Olson, the vendor payments were unanimously approved.

## **Adjourn**

**Next meeting: September 19, 2023 @ 9:00AM**

Attested to by:

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Stacy Hennen/Director

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Kayla Schmidt/Board Chair