

South Dakota Board of Social Services

Draft Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2024

Kneip Building, 1st Floor, DSS Conference Room
700 Governors Drive, Pierre, SD 57501

Board Members Present: Elton Blemaster, Sandy Diegel, Howard Grinager, Stacy Tieszen (virtual), and Colleen Winter

Board Members Absent: Karen Michels

Presenters: Matt Althoff, Department of Social Services (DSS) Cabinet Secretary; Brenda Tidball-Zeltinger, Deputy Secretary and Chief of Operations; Jason Simmons, Chief Financial Officer; Emily Richardt, Director of Communications and Administrative Services; Heather Petermann, Division Director Medical Services; Pamela Bennett, Director Child Protection Services; Tiffany Wolfgang, Chief of Behavioral Health; Carrie Johnson, Director of Economic Assistance; Jeremy Johnson, Human Services Center Administrator (virtual); Melanie Boetel, Director for the Division of Behavioral Health (virtual); Marcia Erickson, Grow SD (virtual);

DSS Support: Tracy Mercer, Special Projects Coordinator for DSS; Jordan Mouna, Program Specialist for the Division of Behavioral Health;

Guests: Bob Mercer, Keloland News (virtual); and Makenzie Huber, South Dakota Search Light (virtual).

Call to Order, Roll, and Declaration of a Quorum: Chair Winters called the roll and, with only one member absent, declared that a quorum had been met.

DSS in Data: Review of FY23/FY24 Budget Indicators:

Sec. Althoff explained that DSS's 11 divisions had been asked to provide an overview of their programming by presenting highlights from the FY24 budget indicators which had recently been submitted to the Legislature.

Deputy Secretary and Chief of Operations Brenda Tidball-Zeltinger explained the role of the Operations division in its management of facility operations for DSS offices throughout the state, which includes managing lease agreements, equipment needs, and information technology needs. She noted that DSS has a presence in approximately 48 communities across the state.

Tidball-Zeltinger also talked about the role of the Office of Licensure and Accreditation (OLA) which includes the licensing, registration and accreditation of service providers including child care programs; prevention, substance use disorder and mental health agencies; family foster homes, group care centers for minors, residential treatment centers, intensive residential treatment centers, independent living preparation programs, and child placement agencies.

Chief Financial Officer Jason Simmons gave an overview of how the Division of Finance manages accounting and financial reporting, accounts payable, provider reimbursement, budget and financial management, and also oversees recoveries from third parties. In FY23, \$10,309,742 were recovered from fraud and non fraud activity. The amount in FY24 was over double at \$21,960,486 due to contracting with a vendor for additional claims matching and recovery. Simmons explained that many of the recoveries come from situations like someone having primary health insurance.

An explanation of Legal Services' role in DSS was given by Division Director Jeremy Lippert. Legal Services provides counsel on legal issues to the Cabinet Secretary and all divisions, represents DSS in legal proceedings, assists with drafting and analyzing proposed legislation, assists in drafting administrative rules, and completes public records requests. In FY23 a total of 397 fair hearings were requested and 187 fair hearings held. In FY24 those numbers were 518 and 228. Althoff asked Lippert how often are there appeals of administrative hearings? Lippert responded that the legal team usually get it right.

Emily Richardt Director of Communications and Administrative Services was introduced and provided a description of how the Communications team serves the agency. Communications manages the internal and external communications including media, website, social media, publications, and the intranet. Grinager asked where do you tell your stories? Richardt responded that the message and delivery vary. Press releases and social media are large tools. We are continuing looking for ways to do a better job telling the DSS story. Grinager commented that he would like to see more people sharing happy stories involving DSS, highlight the positive outcomes.

Carrie Johnson Director of the Division of Economic Assistance explained that the Division of Economic Assistance promotes wellbeing and provides supports to achieve self-sufficiency for individuals and families. Those served are low-income families, pregnant women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Services provided depend on eligibility but can include: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) and Weatherization Assistance Program, and Child Care assistance. In FY24 the weatherization program assisted with weatherizing 261 homes. The number was 215 in FY23. LIEAP served 23, 278 homes in FY23 increasing to 23,676 homes in FY24. Johnson discussed the SNAP and TANF programs. The number of households served in FY23 was 34,246 increasing to 36,779 in FY24. TANF households served increased from 2,383 to 2,460. Grinager asked "how do we let people know help is available?" Johnson responded by word of mouth, partners, and the DSS website. Winter asked who approves retailers for EBT. Johnson explained that the Federal Government makes those decisions.

Director of the Division of Child Support Max Wetz stated the goal of child support services is to ensure parents take financial responsibility for their children. The division helps families who need to collect child support and help adults with legal guardianship or custody of minor children. They can help with locating parents, establishing paternity, enforcing child support orders, enforcing health insurance coverage, and assisting with modification requests and finally collecting and distributing child support payments. In FY23, 1,233 child support orders were established and in FY24 1,395 were established. The number of support order modifications processed were 2,153 and

2,242 respectively. It was asked if modifications increase the amount of support paid. Wetz explained that modifications can either increase or decrease the amount of support ordered.

Pamela Bennett Director of the Division of Child Protection Services (CPS) provided a summary of who is served by CPS and the services provided. The division serves families referred due to threats to child safety relating to neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse. CPS also serves kinship, foster and adoptive families, and children in need of permanency. Services provided includes intake of reports of child abuse and neglect, family assessments, and direct and referral services to maintain or reunite family; foster care, group care and residential treatment placements for children; independent living services for teens; guardianship services; adoption services and support; and parenting education. Bennett shared that in FY23 there were 242 adoptions and 304 adoptions in FY24. The number of children placed in kinship increased in FY24 as well. With 328 placed in FY23 and 356 placed in FY24. A total of 392 children received independent living services in FY23, increasing to 484 in FY24. Diegel wondered if the increase was because of the foster turnover. Grinager asked if we are working with parents. Bennett responded that we provide ongoing services to families, 65% of children are reunited within in 12 months.

Tiffany Wolfgang, Chief of Behavioral Health, explained the division supports a comprehensive array of publicly funded behavioral health prevention, crisis, treatment, and recovery. These services included prevention and crisis services, outpatient mental health services, outpatient and inpatient substance use disorder treatment, recovery services, and support services. Wolfgang noted that the newest area is crisis services. Behavioral Health works with contracted providers licensed through the OLA. Wolfgang remarked that over 16,000 individuals received mental health services offered through the Division of Behavioral Health. Grinager asked what is being done about veterans. Wolfgang responded that they work closely with the VA. Grinager followed up by asking if behavioral health understaffed as he knows there is a shortage of mental health professionals. Wolfgang explained that workforce is a challenge for everyone, but our providers are good at getting help to those in an immediate crisis. Wolfgang talked about recovery support services offered. She noted these services are important as chance of recovery or better if you have a safe, sober, secure living an environment. Currently there are 225 funded recovery housing beds. An update was also given on the 988 helpline. In FY24, 97% of 988 calls resolved without additional intervention. More than 12,000 contacts were made to the helpline in FY24.

Jeremy Johnson, Administrator of HSC, spoke about the state's only psychiatric hospital. The goal at HSC is to help stabilize and return to the community individuals with behavioral health needs who can't be served in less restrictive settings. Services provide through HSC include adult and adolescent inpatient psychiatric treatment, adult inpatient substance use disorder treatment and court ordered competency restoration. HSC is also a licensed nursing facility. The average daily census at the hospital in FY23 was 127.8 and in FY24 it is 140.5.

Medicaid Director Heather Petermann provided an overview of who is served by the program and the services provided. Those served are low-income families, pregnant women and children, elderly, and people with disabilities. In FY23 the total monthly average of persons enrolled was 143,350 and in FY24 the number is 127,644 (includes both Medicaid and CHIP). Diegel asked if expansion numbers were less than predicted. Simmons explained that administration prepared for the worst. Althoff added that nothing says we still won't get there. Petermann presented additional indicators.

Claims processed in FY23 was 7.3 million and 7.1 million in FY24. Petermann added that they continue to work to make processing more efficient. The average cost per Title XIX enrollee was 5,401 in FY23 and \$6,915 in FY24 while the average cost for a Medicaid Expansion enrollee was \$10,745. Diegel commented that seems relatively cheap considering the cost of health care.

988: Who in South Dakota is this resource serving: This topic was deferred until the spring meeting due to time constraints.

Feature Outreach: Grow South Dakota, a community action resource:

EA Division Director Carrie Johnson introduced Marcia Erickson Executive Director with Grow South Dakota. Johnson explained that the Division of Economic assistance has partnerships on many fronts with Grow South Dakota. Erickson spoke about the organization's evolution beginning as a statewide nonprofit in 1966 through the creation of the Northeast South Dakota Community Action Program (NESDCAP) that serviced three counties. With federal, state and local resources the agency opened its doors in Sisseton, South Dakota, to provide a means to assist low-income individuals and families become more self-reliant and improve daily living. An expansion in 1974 added service to seven counties and seven more counties were added in 2001 bringing the expanded service area to 17 counties in northeast South Dakota. The Northeast South Dakota Economic Corporation (NESDEC) was established in 1978 through NESDCAP's vision to stimulate small business ownership, business development, and job creation in low-income and rural communities of a 10 county service area. As inquiries for these innovative NESDEC business development programs and services increased from adjacent counties, the service area was expanded to serve a total of 22 counties in 1987.

Visible economic impacts in the region and the continual success of expanding agency services and the revolving loan fund created a demand for statewide services. As a result, Grow South Dakota was established in 2007 to service all 66 counties in South Dakota. In 2012, NESDCAP, NESDEC, and Grow South Dakota unified their three core initiatives of housing, community and economic development, into the now recognized brand of GROW South Dakota. Although NESDCAP, NESDEC and Grow South Dakota continue to operate as separate legal entities, with varying service areas, the same great care is provided to the residents and communities we serve.

The organization offers emergency services for those a 125% of the federal poverty level. The service includes help with rent, utilities, and miscellaneous needs. The weatherization assistance program began in 1975 and helps with energy savings of up to 25% annually. Over 8,000 homes have been weatherized through the program. This includes air sealing, caulking, weather-stripping, insulation and furnace repair or replacement of water heater. The home repair program invested 12.9 million dollars into 2,000 homes. Repairs included shingles, siding, electrical, plumbing structural, and energy conservation. Johnson noted that the homeowners were made to feel involved in the repair process. For example, they could choose the colors and type of materials used. Housing financing and counseling are also offered by Grow South Dakota. They are also involved with the Governor's House and have sold over 800 homes. Other services include business lending,

small business development. Grow South Dakota sponsors the BIG Idea Competition for High school youth. Grinager noted that his grandchildren won that scholarship for their idea on a trailer rental/share.

Althoff stated that agencies like Grow South Dakota help the Department form a safety net for that expands beyond the individuals and families who are eligible for benefits from DSS. Grinager asked if the state has resources for people with average income. For example, for someone who makes adequate income, but are receive a setback due to an illness. Althoff explained that specialists and supervisors in local offices have the responsibility of being familiar with the nonprofits and churches in communities. Their ministry/outreach provides augmentation to the income-qualified benefits administered by the Department. DSS specialists, in concert with resources such as 211, connect the families referenced in Grinager's question to these non-governmental resources.

Public Comment: No public comment was provided.

Attrition: The board thanked Sandy Diegel, whose term on the board ends on October 31, 2024, for her service. Board members were invited to share suggestions for replacement for the vacancy created. Diegel's completion of her terms leaves two vacancies on the board.

Future Agenda Items/ Next Meeting: April 25, 2025 was selected for the next meeting.