

**Three Rivers Human Service Zone Board
Meeting Minutes
Three Rivers Human Services Board Room
Mandan
210 2nd Ave NW
January 16, 2025**

Meeting Call to Order:

- Dennis called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM

Roll Call:

Mandan: Dennis Meier, Jackie Buckley, Lori Flaaten, Heidi Peltz (Online), and Rose Mary Lawson.

Absent: Karen Rohr, Dawson Holle

Carson: Charlie Steinkuehler (Online) and Marty Meyer (Phone).

Absent:

Fort Yates: John PrettyBear (online)

Absent: Ken Snider

Others present: Jodie Leier, Vince Gillette, Jenny Wetsch, Mandy Garrett, Tracy Mertz and Wendy Bent

Approval of Agenda

- Moved by Heidi Peltz to approve the agenda seconded by Charles Steinkuehler. All in favor. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes of December 19, 2024

- Moved by Jackie Buckley to approve the minutes from November 21, 2024, seconded by Rose Mary Lawson. All in favor. Motion carried.

Review and Approval of December 2024/January 2025 Bills:

- Lori Flaaten and Jackie Buckley came early to review the bills. Questions were answered.
 - SPF bill to allow a client to obtain housing with the deposit and 1 month's rent. The check was canceled.
 - Bill for a child's placement not covered by foster care due to court order issue.
- Moved by Jackie Buckley, seconded by Lori Flaaten to approve the bills as presented. With a unanimous roll call vote the bills were approved.

Name	Roll Call	Bills Approved
Jackie Buckley	P	Y
Lori Flaten	P	Y
Rosemary Lawson	P	Y
Heidi Peltz	P (Online)	Y
Marty Meyer	P (Phone)	Y
Charlie Steinkuehler	P (Online)	Y
Ken Snider	A	Absent
John Pretty Bear	P (Online)	Y

Dennis Meier	P	Y
Karen Rohr	A	Absent
Dawson Holle	A	Absent

Budget Review

- TRHSZ does not have financials available currently due to the year-end closing process. It is expected that the financials will be available at the end of February/first part of March.
- Dennis mentioned we have purchased the vehicle approved in the 2025 budget. This vehicle will be picked up tomorrow.
- Our first payment for 2025 was received on January 9 in the amount of \$2,618,398.00. The second payment arrives approximately at the end of June/beginning of July.

Vince Gillette- Three Rivers Human Service Zone Tribal Liaison Report for December 2024

- There are approximately 50-75 SRST foster children placed in ND foster homes that help to facilitate visits.
- Standing Rock currently has 42 ND IV-E cases and 33 SD IV-E cases in ND Foster Homes and 16 in paid Foster Care placements.
- Vince attends ND IV-E and Tribal IV-E eligibility meetings. The meetings are about keeping cases current with court orders and paperwork, so the children don't lose their benefits.
- Vince spends a lot of time dealing with Medicaid payment issues for both ND and SD Foster children.
- ND Tribes all got their FMAP reimbursements totaling \$1,292,229.00 for SFY 24-25.
- Vince continues to track the Indirect Expenses for Fort Yates for Jodie to report to the state.
- Vince did 2 Foster Care visits for SRST and 1 for TRHSZ in December. Due to a death in his family, Vince's normal visits around the state were covered by Brittni Auck and Briana Wollen for a total of 56 visits for Standing Rock for the month from all over the state.
- Standing Rock had requested assistance for December, January and February due to their limited number of case managers.
- We are shorthanded on the Foster Care side, and Vince has been assisting with covering visits and transportation.
- Vince explained the first Keeping the Culture Alive class for Native Foster Children and Foster Parents. The first session was on December 17th at the Bismarck Public Library. The speaker was Joelle Bears Tail who wrote a book about her son being harassed and bullied because of his long hair in the Bismarck School System. There were 41 people who attended the event. The next one is tentatively scheduled for January 30.
 - Chelsea Flory out of BCHSZ currently does the finances and sets up the speakers, location, etc.
 - She is trying to schedule the 3rd Thursday of the month for these programs.
 - Invites have not been consistent yet, but foster kids and foster families are invited to attend. It would be nice if this could be a statewide program.
- From October 1 of 2022 to September 1 of 2023 there had been 930 Native children in the FC IV-E program.
- Vince has been in the Mandan Office full-time since September.
- SRST has hired a new case worker. They need 6. Their 2 administrative Assistants are helping with the case management.
- Vince explained the process of getting the vital statistics birth certificates and social security cards after adoption and how this can cause problems with Medicaid paying the bills.

Mandy Garrett – Income Maintenance/Eligibility Supervisor

Three Rivers Zone Office Information

- Current Openings: None
- **Medicaid**
 - Total Households: December 2024 - 2169
 - Total Individuals: December 2024 - 4057
 - Total Benefits: N/A
- **SNAP**
 - Total Households: December 2024 - 1312
 - Total Individuals: December 2024 - 3365
 - Total Benefits Paid: December 2024 – \$678.4K
- **LIHEAP**
 - Total Households: December 2024 – 106
 - Total Individuals: December 2024 – 287
 - Total Benefits: December 2024 – \$45.1K
- **TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)**
 - Total Households: December 2024 – 114
 - Total Individuals: December 2024 – 464
 - Total Benefits: December 2024 - \$47.1K
- **Childcare Assistance Program**
 - Total Households: December 2024 - 153
 - Total Individuals: December 2024 – 587
 - Total Benefits Issued December 2024 - \$180.4K
- **Call Center December Stats**
 - Total Calls Received: December 2024 – 28,672
 - Answered Calls: December 2024 - 18,327
 - Abandoned Calls: December 2024 – 8,869
 - Average Wait Time: December 2024 – 11 minutes
 - Average Talk Time: December 2024 – 6 minutes
- **Swim Lanes**
 - Group 4-CCAP/LIHEAP/MA/SNAP/TANF: Nothing to report.
 - Group 2/3-Workers: Nothing to report.
- **Support Specialists (Statewide)**
 - Processing current information, not backlogged.
 - Supervision of Support Specialists is going to call center supervisor Sara Zinc.
- **Foot traffic in the three offices has been monitored since May.**
 - Sioux County 173 in December.
 - Grant County 27 in December.
 - Morton County 384 in December.

Jenny Wetsch – Child Protection

See the attached Statistical information which was presented during the meeting.

- 97 total reports in October: 2 Reports in Grant County and 0 Reports for Sioux County.
 - 59 assigned as Full.

- 1 ATP Assessments.
- 37 Administratively Assessed or Administrative Referrals.
- 0 Alt Response.
- 0 Substance Exposed Infant (SEI).
- 6 Child Sex Cases
- 0 Prenatal Drug Cases
- 0 Courtesy Interview Requests from other zones/1 Law Enforcement
- 0 Conflict cases for another Zone

Tracy Mertz-Foster Care/In Home -

- See the attached statistical information which was presented during the meeting.
- Currently we have 78 cases.
 - 57 Foster Care
 - 21 In-Home Cases, ICPC, Courtesy Case Management & Home Study's
 - 31 Foster Homes/PATH
 - 0 QRTP/PRTF
 - 19 Relative Care
 - 7-18+
 - 0-YCC

Child Welfare Unit Updates

- The Case Manager Supervisor position has been filled by Tracy Mertz who began her duties on January 2.
- Tracy's Lead Worker position was advertised, and interviews took place. Libbie Vettel, TRHSZ Case Manager, was offered the Lead Worker position. Her first day in her new position will be 2-3-2025.
- We will be submitting a request to fill Libbie's Family Service Specialist position.
- We received case management supervision assistance from Lisa Giese until the end of December.
- People have noticed substantial improvements in the environment and level of communication within the case management unit. Over the past few months, the atmosphere on the unit has been more positive and conducive to teamwork and best practice implementation. Some of the things people have noticed are the new pictures on the walls, the doors being open rather than closed, and staff consistently having lunch together.
- Tracy shared her perspective of how things are going in the unit. She feels things are changing, there is growth, staff are coming together, the attitudes are more positive, and the feeling that the unit is moving forward. Jackie Buckley stated she is hoping that the Sr. staff is working with the newer staff to help them acclimate to the job and to ensure the past is not brought back again.
- The newest workers are starting to take some cases.
- On the 21st in the afternoon, Vince, Tracy and Dennis are meeting with the state regarding child visits. We are 1 of 2 zones that didn't meet the requirements for the monthly visits to foster children. We need to develop a plan on how we are going to get back into compliance in 2025. This includes making sure that documentation is being placed correctly in the system. One of the things that may help with visit compliance is that we are able to use parent aid for FC/IH visit requirements, which includes the monthly face-to-face visit.

Eligibility Redesign Update

- No updates at the time of this meeting.

Zone Director Update

- A question was asked about the GA Burial process. If the funeral home does cremation prior to us receiving the application and providing approval, is it an automatic denial? That is the directive given by the department and supported in policy.
- The Zone Directors Association made a motion to contract an individual to monitor legislative bills for the 2025 session.
- An ICWA bill from the last session made it a state bill. The state made 5 changes, but nobody can answer what they are. They are waiting for the full bill and its clarification.
- The Standing Rock Transit provided us with information regarding pick-ups from Mandan to the hub of Ft. Yates for a nominal fee. Medicaid will pay for it. Transit will take you to work at the Standing Rock Casino or wherever you need to go down there. There is also a next-day Taxi within Ft Yates for a dollar.
- TRHSZ Plan Updates need to be done before the end of the month. It requires updates to insurances, organizational charts, board members and contracts.
- Jackie requested that Dennis send Karen Rohr and Dawson Holle an email to see if they would be able to attend one of our meetings when they have cross-over to provide us some updates.

Legislative Update

- SB2115 Heart River Correctional Center to have children 0-18 months onsite with parents. The speaker spoke about the reduction in recidivism other states who have experienced since implementation. Question about when a CPS report would be referred to the Institutional CPS Unit.
- HB1034 Reinstatement of parental rights. DHS supports it if the parents are doing well. This bill refers to kids that would linger in care and not be adopted.
- HB1012 NDHHS Fiscal Bill
- SB2121 ND PERS Bill on defined contributions (401K)
- HB1095 CPS Liaison Bill Proposes a school district being allowed to hire a CPS Liaison to assist with CPS cases. They would act as the primary point of contact for CPS cases originating at the school, assist with investigations and provide an annual report with their recommendations. The Zones are to provide training for the Liaison. Some feel this may compromise the confidentiality of the children and families we serve.
- HB1268 is the mandatory drug testing bill. This bill would require drug testing prior to an unsupervised visit of children who were removed from their parent/guardian when illicit drug use and paraphernalia were a contributing factor for the removal. This bill currently has a \$100,000 fiscal note attached to it. This bill shows a strong likelihood of passing.

Zone Director Evaluation

- Wendy went over the draft of the evaluation of Director Meier. The finalized version will be available at the next meeting.

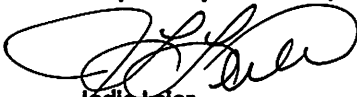
Other:

Adjourn:

- Moved by Jackie Buckley, seconded by Charlie Steinkuehler to adjourn the meeting at 11:49 AM. All in favor. Motion carried.

Next Meeting February 20, 2025 – 10 AM, Mandan

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jodie Leier', written in a cursive style.

Jodie Leier

Fiscal Services

Three Rivers Human Service Zone