Minutes

The Vernon County Department of Human Services and the Department of Veterans Services Committee met on Wednesday, January 21, 2026. The meeting was called to order at 9:32 a.m. by John Pedretti. Jill Bender stated there was proper public notice. Recording disclaimer was announced. Motion made by David Strudthoff to approve the minutes as presented. Second, by Nancy Bongers. Motion approved.

Audience to Visitors

No public comment. Visitors- Charles Jacobson attending as visitor, Tim Hundt attending via TEAMS.

Discuss and Take Action on Veterans Services Vouchers/Internal Transfers

None

Veterans Services Director's Report, Updates and Announcements

Office Bills $133 US Cellular Bill for December 2025.

Claims have been non-stop with no end in sight more and more Veterans are realizing they can apply for benefits, and they are calling we are booked out now to the 1st week of March for appointments and Monday Walk in days are averaging 20 Veterans in the office with at least another 20 phone calls. Most Monday mornings we start our day with 5-10 Veterans waiting in the office waiting area and this stays constantly full until about 2pm. So if you know a Vet that wants to come in tell them 2pm or later unless they like to sit and wait their turn. We thought about possibly doing another walk in day, but we are so booked with appointments there is no room to do it and still be able to get claims completed. Yesterday we saw a Veteran every hour and tomorrow it will be the same.

Nothing was requested of our Commission this last month. Although I did receive a call yesterday from a social worker from Inclusa who was working with a Veteran. There was no Release of Information in place so she could not identify the Veteran to me. She did tell the Veteran to get in touch with our office as he is now going through an eviction and we have a wide array of resources they can utilize to get back on their feet to include the commission. I did also relay the list of homeless veteran resources to the social worker so she can pass this on to all Inclusa social workers so they can better assist their Veterans.

One great update is that the Veterans Services Wisconsin Drivers License Veteran Identifier passed and we are now waiting for it to be sent to the Governor's desk for signature. This has been a problem from the beginning and qualified Veterans have been denied this simple benefit far too long. Now National Guard and Reserve soldiers who

meet the criteria for getting a VA Home Loan also now meet the criteria for the Veteran Identifier. To speak simply if you served your initial contract in good standing even during a Peacetime period of service you can now get the Veterans Identifier on your driver's license. This will go into effect the day after the Governor signs the bill. If you want to look specifically at the bill is SB387.

Our Office is getting more and more requests to create or attend events for Veterans we are more than happy to attend as far as creation until Leddia gets back we are spread way too thin to be able to spend the time necessary to create and run an event in Vernon County.
Even with her back it will still be very few opportunities as there are so many claims to work.

With the help of an awesome volunteer and both Sandi and Tammy they were able to get through all of the deceased Veterans files and get the uploaded into an electronic storage system. They are now working on the current living Veterans. Once this is complete and the rest of the documents shredded they will move on to verifying our cemeteries veterans burial records with the State database and getting that all updated. We eventually wish to document all of the graves on Find a Grave web page but this will take field trips to each cemetery.

Asked to provide a 2025 economic impact statement for next meeting / discussed what we know as far as the 2024 impact.

WREA/Income Maintenance- Director

Bender gave the WREA report.

The total number of recipients for the WREA Consortium were 55,236 for the month of December. Health Care only was 48,517, WREA FoodShare Benefits issuance was $3,967,032.89, and WREA Child Care Subsidy Benefit Issuance totaled $421,021.44. Total recipients for Vernon County were 5,457; Health Care only was 4,822. Vernon County was $351,305.00, for FoodShare Benefit Issuance and $43,919.94 for Child Care Assistance.

Clerical/ES/Administration/WHEAP-Brenda Anderson

Anderson gave the report.

Clerical/Front Office: Call stats for December total were 839.

Economic Support:

Administration/Salvation Army:

Salvation Army Vouchers for December: Lodging 4, Rent 1, Utilities 2, Fuel 1 and Cab 2.

YTD Salvation Army Vouchers: Disaster/fire 0, Lodging 25, Rent 11, Utilities 59, Clothing 1, Food 4, Fuel 4, Prescriptions 0, and Cab/Bus 3, School Supplies 1.

Season Stats: Total Households Applied for Energy Assistance: 741, Total Households paid for Energy Assistance 616, Total Households paid a Heat Benefit 614, Total Households paid a Non-heating Benefit 611, Total Households paid a Crisis Benefit 31, Total Households paid an HVAC Benefit 30, Total Households paid a Water Conservation Benefit 4.

Child Support- Brook Strangstalien

Strangstalien gave the report.

Performance for December. Caseload: 907; Court ordered performance: 91.18%; Paternity establishment: 95.81%; Current support collection: 81.08%; Arrears collection: 58.27%; Current Child Support Due in Vernon County in December $188,753.43 – CSA Collected $155,443.81.

Phone calls on CSA Line- December 165

Family and Children's Services-Theresa Berger

Berger gave the report.

Berger reports there were 11 CPS reports screened in, and 13 reports were screened out. CPS Maltreatment was 2 for physical abuse, 4 for neglect, 4 for sexual abuse, 4 for emotional abuse and 0 for unborn child abuse. Berger reported that there were 20 alleged victims screened in, 25 alleged screened out. 2 had a response time of 24-48 hours, while 8 were within 5 business days and 1 for same day. There were 5 screened in-service reports for child welfare and 2 screened out. For youth justice there were 0 JIPS referrals, 2 delinquency referrals and Truancy 0. Berger reported that there are 28 kids in Foster Care, 30 in Kinship Care, 0 in a Group Home and 5 in Residential Care.

Berger stated there were 4 kids in Targeted Safety Support Funds and 13 in Coordinated Services Team. Berger stated the caseload total was 76. Berger stated that there were 9 total assessments approved in December; 2 assessments were open and 7 assessments were closed.

Long Term Support/MH- Jeri Lynn Lindner

Lindner gave the report.

Lindner stated that in December: 29 children were receiving services in the Birth to 3 Program, 113 in the Children's Long-Term Support Waiver Program and 47 in the Children's Community Options Program. Lindner reported in December: 2 Emergency Detention, 13 Court Committed consumers, 7 MH Placements, 78 Comprehensive Community Services consumers and 43 Community Support Program consumers. Reported by Lindner 50 Adult Protective calls for information and resources, 4 Adult Protective Service investigations, 2 Guardianship referrals and 1 Emergency Protective Placements. There is 1 consumer in AODA Treatment and 84 Protective Placement annual reviews.

Aging & Disability Resource Center of Vernon County

Olson gave the report.

The ADRC had 891 telephone calls and 83 walk-ins during the month of December. For a year-end total, there were 10,753 telephone calls and 1,264 walk-ins. This is an 18 percent increase in telephone calls and a 34 percent increase in walk-ins over the year prior.

The Dementia Care Specialist provided case management to 4 individuals and services to 11 others. Teresa will be having 2 new support groups this year. Teresa will be offering Powerful Tools for Caregivers starting this month and continues with Hillsboro office hours.

The Disability Benefit Specialist has 57 open cases, 21 appeals, 5 new cases and 1 case was approved. Lynette had 225 new client meetings in 2025, and her December financial impact was $724,151 and her 2025 financial impact was $3,428,449. This was a significant increase over 2024 which was $1,487,344. AARP tax aid starts on February 12 and runs through April 9.

The Elder Benefit Specialist had 83 new clients in December. Katie had 511 annual contacts. Her monthly financial impact was $964,883 and her yearly financial impact was $5,505,826. This is above 2024 financial impact dollars.

The transportation program provided transportation for 50 individuals with the volunteer driver program, 54 for the minibus, 40 for the minivan for a total of 144 individuals who utilized this program. There were 1,898 individuals who utilized the transportation program which is consistent with 2024 numbers. 85.21 grant was submitted in December.

The nutrition program provided 2,207 home delivered meals and 878 congregate meals for a total of 3,085 meals. There were 2 days that the nutrition program was canceled due to inclement weather. Emergency meals have been delivered to participants. Total meal counts for 2025 are 27,372 home delivered meals, 12,478 congregate meals for a total of 39,850 meals. This is a decrease from 2024 numbers. There is an open meal hauler position open in Desoto.

The social workers had 127 new intakes/referrals and completed 51 face to face visits, 11 functional screens, 8 Medicaid applications, 8 enrollments and 2 disenrollments. They visited 10 communities and worked with individuals in 13 facilities. They continue to see more difficult cases both financially and psychosocially. Visits are taking longer and they are seeking out help due to needing help with obtaining basic things like food and shelter/housing. There was an increase in intakes in 2025 over 2024 by 33%.

Financial- Marsha Everson

Everson gave the report.

Everson presented the Fund 80 at 97.84%, Aging Programs are at 93.86%, ADRC 101.21%, Mental Health Court Committed at 73.68% and State Mental Health Facilities at 65.41%.

Human Services Revenue- 96.7%

Review Human Services Service Contracts & Amendments—review item

Bender presented an amended Human Services service contract amendment for 2026, the change amount for $162,879. Bender reviewed the 2025 contract amendments for STRIVE CCS for the total change amount $102,000.

Discuss Human Services on Vouchers/Internal Transfers—review item

Bender presented Internal Transfers with total amount of $118.18. Bender reviewed department monthly expenses with the committee. Questions on vouchers were answered. The monthly vouchers for Human Services for the month of December were $653,156.21. The monthly vouchers for Human Services for the month of January were $653.12.

Discuss and take action on RFP for department vehicle—potential action item

Chairperson Pedretti opened the sealed bids. Discussion occurred with the committee on the vehicle options for the department. Motion made by David Strudthoff to accept bid from Sleepy Hollow Chevy for the 2026 Chevy Equinox. Seconded by Kay Stanek. Motion carried.

Discuss and take action on RFP STRIVE CCS Program—potential action item

Bender reported to the committee that the department only received one bid which was from Kickapoo Counseling, Inc. Bender recommended awarding the bid to Kickapoo Counseling, Inc. Motion made by Jean Klousia to award Kickapoo Counseling, Inc, the STRIVE CCS contract. Seconded by Nancy Bongers. Motion carried.

Human Services Directors Report, Updates, & Announcements

Bender reported that the department along with the health department were approved for funding for 3 years through Vernon County Opioid and Abatement Steering Committee. The department currently only opening is a part time social worker for the CLTS Waiver program.

Bender recognized employee Holly Starr on her 5 years with the department and with Vernon County.

Bender introduced Tonia Hanson, Economic Support Specialist who works in Benefit Recovery for WREA. Tonia gave a presentation on her specialty and WREA's unit that focuses on benefit recovery and fraud.

Agenda Items for next meeting

The next meeting of the Human Services and Veterans Services Committee will be held Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 9:30 a.m. Motion made by David Strudthoff to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Kay Stanek. Motion carried.

Submitted by,

Ashley Bean
Administrative Assistant

Members Present	**Absent Members**	**Others Present**
Kay Stanek	Patrick Sullivan	Jill Bender
Jean Klousia	Kathleen Sullivan	Brook Strangstalien
David Strudthoff		Jeri Lynn Lindner
John Pedretti		Theresa Berger
Alycann Taylor – TEAMS		Brenda Anderson
Nancy Bongers		Crystal Knoll
Wayde Lawler-TEAMS		Marsha Everson
		Charles Jacobson
		Cassier Hanan
		Ashley Bean
		Brenda Olson
		Tonia Hanson
		Holly Starr
		Tim Hundt-TEAMS