Minutes

The Vernon County Department of Human Services and the Department of Veterans Services Committee met on Wednesday, February 18, 2026. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 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 Kay Stanek. Motion approved.

Audience to Visitors

No public comment. Visitors- Charles Jacobson

Discuss and Take Action on Veterans Services Vouchers/Internal Transfers

None

Veterans Services Director's Report, Updates and Announcements

Office bills consist of $133 US Cellular Bill.

Commission: 4 total submissions

1 Service dog vet and training assistance; 3 heating/electric assistance

Due to the amount of claims going on we are spreading out office appointment times to allow for us to be able to work and submit documents in between appts for simple claims. Appeals still need to be worked around appt times and due to the large amount of appeals we are blocking out days during the week to work only appointments. We continue to work with Veterans who are not able to meet during available scheduled times. We have 193 Veterans listed on our active working spread sheet and we have been able to close out 20 of them since January. Close out means there is no further assistance needed from our office, but the Veteran may decide to re-open a claim or file another so they are kept on the list just grayed out. Leaving 173 active Veterans with claims being worked. Some Veterans have multiple claims being worked.

Nothing on the legislative side to report for Federal or State but there are multiple bills in both governments being worked on. I do meet with all the leaders from all of the Veteran State organizations on March 5th in DePere, to discuss new possibilities and current issues. I plan on bringing up the reduction of state residency for DIC claim from 5 years to 3 or 1 year.

Dinner event CJ and I are attending in Westby VFW tomorrow we plan on having a table there and assisting Veterans with getting appointments and answering questions. Asked to provide a 2025 economic impact statement after going through what it would take to provide the numbers to you now it is too much of a financial and time burden for me to go through all Veterans we assisted last year federal files to determine claims numbers. The VA will have the numbers to us for last year no later than September for last years impact statement. They may be ready by July.

The WDVA is late on getting the CVSO State grant opened it was supposed to be last month now we are hoping it will be before the end of this month.

WREA/Income Maintenance- Director

Bender gave the WREA report.

January Total recipients for Vernon County were 5,482, Health Care only was 4,852, Caretaker Supplement Recipients 8. FoodShare Recipients 2,462. FoodShare Benefit Issuance $351,681.00. WI Shares Child Care Families Served 27. WI Shared Child Care Children Served 45. WI Shares Child Care Subsidy Benefit Issuance $34,786.83.

The total number of recipients for the WREA Consortium were 55,199 for the month of January. Health Care only was 48,417, Caretaker Supplement Recipients 161. Health Care with FoodShare was 26,094, WREA FoodShare Benefits issuance was $3,932,008.53. WI Shares Child Care Families Served 337, WI Shared Child Care Children Served 516, and WREA Child Care Subsidy Benefit Issuance totaled $392,100.20.

Clerical/ES/Administration/WHEAP-Brenda Anderson

Anderson gave the report.

Clerical/Front Office: Call stats for January total were 607.

Economic Support: none

Administration/Salvation Army:

Salvation Army Vouchers for January: Lodging 9, Utilities 3.

YTD Salvation Army Vouchers: Lodging 9, Utilities 3

WHEAP:

Season Stats: Total Households Applied for Energy Assistance: 806, Total Households paid for Energy Assistance 694, Total Households paid a Heat Benefit 692, Total Households paid a Non-heating Electric Benefit 686, Total Households paid a Crisis Benefit 35, Total Households paid an HVAC Benefit 37, Total Households paid a Water Conservation Benefit 5.

Child Support- Brook Strangstalien

Strangstalien gave the report.

Performance for January. Caseload: 903; Court ordered performance: 91.58%; Paternity establishment: 97.46%; Current support collection: 80.89%; Arrears collection: 62.47%; Current Child Support Due in Vernon County in January $208,620.43 – CSA Collected $167,702.78.

Family and Children's Services-Theresa Berger

Berger gave the report.

Berger reports there were 7 CPS reports screened in, and 14 reports were screened out. CPS Maltreatment was 1 for physical abuse, 4 for neglect, 2 for sexual abuse, 3 for emotional abuse and 0 for unborn child abuse. Berger reported that there were 13 alleged victims screened in, 20 alleged screened out. 2 had a response same day, 0 had a response time of 24-48 hours, while 5 were within 5 business. There were 4 screened in-service reports for child welfare and 0 screened out. Screened in by service type Services intake Child Welfare 4 and Kinship 0. For youth referral there were 0 JIPS referrals, 4 delinquency referrals, and 0 Truancy. Berger reported that there are 29 kids in Foster Care, 27 in Kinship Care, 1 in a Group Home and 4 in Residential Care.

Berger stated there were 5 kids in Targeted Safety Support Funds and 12 in Coordinated Services Team. Berger stated the caseload total was 75. Berger stated that there were 8 total assessments approved in January. 2 assessments were open and 6 assessments were closed.

Long Term Support/MH- Jeri Lynn Lindner

Bender gave the report.

Bender stated that in January: 31 children were receiving services in the Birth to 3 Program, 116 in the Children's Long-Term Support Waiver Program and 47 in the Children's Community Options Program. Bender reported in January: 2 Emergency Detentions, 13 Court Committed consumers, 6 MH Placements, 77 Comprehensive Community Services consumers and 43 Community Support Program consumers. Reported by Bender 95 Adult Protective calls for information and resources, 5 Adult Protective Service investigations, 2 Guardianship referrals and 1 Emergency Protective Placements. There is 2 consumers in AODA Treatment and 86 Protective Placement annual reviews.

Aging & Disability Resource Center of Vernon County

Olson gave the report.

The ADRC had 877 telephone calls and 98 walk-ins during the month of January.

The Demetia Care Specialist provided services to 7 individuals and case management to 9 others. Teresa provided Dementia Capable Care Training, held support groups, and led a Powerful Tools for Caregivers class. Teresa had 28 individuals involved in her outreach this month.

The Disability Benefit Specialist has 61 open cases, 24 pending appeals and 5 new applicants. Lynette had 1 case approved this month and it will have a $2124 monthly payment as well as a $6198.00 back pay. Lynette has been facilitating the AARP tax aid program and appointments are booked through the end of March. Lynette's monthly financial impact was $290,111.00.

The Elder Benefit Specialist had 33 monthly contacts in January. Most of these contacts were regarding Medicare Advantage Plans and retirement. Katie currently has 2 new disability applicants. Katie's monthly financial impact in January was $358,090.00.

The transportation program provided 110 1-way rides with the volunteer driver program, 46 with the minibus and 120 with the minivan. There was a total of 276 1-way rides in January. The graph was changed to show 1-way rides verses people receiving rides to be more consistent with reports needing to be submitted for the 85.21 and 5310 grants. VCTCC meeting was held in February.

There were 2,340 home delivered meals and 890 congregate meals for a total of 3,230 meals in January. Of note, there was one day when meals were not provided due to inclement weather. Serving times have been moved to 11 am for the Viroqua and La Farge meals sites. There was 1 new driver hired for the Desoto route, there is an open position for the Stoddard route and an on call HDM/transportation driver was hired. Nutrition Advisory Committee was held in February.

The social workers had 107 new calls in January as well as 45 face to face visits, 13 LTCFS administered, 10 Medicaid applications submitted, 11 enrollments and 0 disenrollments. Beth and Tracy visited 12 communities and worked with individuals in 8 facilities.

The ADRC had 2 outreach events this month: Over 50 regarding transportation options and Hometown Village Apartments in La Farge.

Financial- Marsha Everson

Everson gave the report.

2025: Everson presented Fund 80 at 101.68%, Aging Programs are at 95.12%, ADRC 103.87%, Mental Health Court Committed at 73.80% and State Mental Health Facilities is at 65.41%.

2026: Everson presented Fund 80 at 4.42%, Aging Programs are at 5.41%, ADRC 5.66%, Mental Health Court Committed at 0.68%

2025 Human Services Revenue 97.0%

Review Human Services Service Contracts & Amendments—review item

Bender presented a new Human Services service contract for 2026, in the amount of $128,700.

Discuss Human Services on Vouchers/Internal Transfers—review item

Bender presented Internal Transfers in the amount of $20.87. Bender reviewed department expenses with the committee. Questions on vouchers were answered. The monthly vouchers for Human Services 2025 $65,983.67.

The monthly vouchers for Human Services for the month of January 2026 were $393,751.78.

Human Services Directors Report, Updates, & Announcements

Bender reported that the department is fully staffed. The department is working on end of the year report, claiming, and reconciliation for 2025. Human Services and Public Health Departments continue to meet two times a week with Main Street Computing regarding the discovery process for electronic health record implementation process. Bender showed pictures of the new dept vehicle for staff to use for travel and home visiting needs. The committee briefly discussed committee membership and terms.

Presentation for the committee by Beth Brendel, Options counselor and social worker for the ADRC of Vernon County.

Agenda Items for next meeting

Had discussion regarding "Find your own driver"- ADRC.

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

Submitted by,

Ashley Bean
Administrative Assistant

Members Present	**Members Absent**	**Others Present**
Kay Stanek	Wayde Lawler	Jill Bender
Jean Klousia	Nancy Bongers	Brook Strangstalien
David Strudthoff		Theresa Berger
Kathleen Sullivan		Brenda Anderson
John Pedretti		Crystal Knoll
Alycann Taylor - TEAMS		Marsha Everson
Patrick Sullivan		Charles Jacobson
		Brenda Olson
		Ashley Bean
		Cassie Hanan