Minutes

The Vernon County Department of Human Services and the Department of Veterans Services Committee met on Wednesday, March 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 Jean Klousia to approve the minutes as presented. Second, by Kay Stanek. Motion approved.

Audience to Visitors

No public comment. Visitors on Teams- 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; 1 total submissions

1 travel pay got appointment for VA

We seem to be having a new trend for this year. Despite the number of calls and walk-ins decreasing slightly from last year the number of actual claims is increasing. I reported 193 individual Veterans we are currently working claims on that number is now 265 active veteran claims. The numbers are not slowing in this regard for claims and appeals as we are booked out into May.-With the VA and the rest of the medical world finally acknowledging Gulf War Syndrome as a diagnosable medical condition we have begun to see Veterans being told to come into our office to claim this condition. We have such a good report with the Tomah VA that they are now telling their Vets which CVSO office to go to based on where they live. Vets who have never applied for services are bringing this letter and coming in for appointments. One Veterans doctor is going out of his way and already explaining on the letter how the Veterans medical conditions are now considered Gulf War Syndrome and how it relates to their other medical conditions. If this trend keeps going we will probably see more 90s era Veterans coming into the office. --The Westby dinner even that CJ and I attended went exceptionally well we have a very full house at the VFW. The Veterans really appreciated being able to speak to VA reps and find out more about their benefits within the VHA. -The State CVSO Grant has not opened up as of yet.-I was supposed to meet with the heads of all the Veterans Organizations in Wisconsin and the Wisconsin VA last month but it was postponed. It has been rescheduled for April 9th in DePere, WI and I am planning on attending. -Spring State VA training is scheduled for April 27th through May 1st which is coming up fast.-I did get another chance to text with Leddia her unit is still scheduled to be back home at the end of May. They have not been directly attacked in this Iran situation but remain on high alert especially for drone attacks. The 10th Mountain Div is supposed to relieve them but with Iran situation it is up in the air.

WREA/Income Maintenance- Director

Bender gave the WREA report.

Total recipients for Vernon County were 5,469, Health Care only was 4,851, Caretaker Supplement Recipients 10. FoodShare Recipients 2,489. FS Benefit Issuance $343,604.15. WI Shares Child Care Families Served 27. WI Shared Child Care Children Served 43. WI Shares Child Care Subsidy Benefit Issuance $36,641.67.

The total number of recipients for the WREA Consortium were 55,121 for the month of February. Health Care only was 48,416, Caretaker Supplement Recipients 163. Health Care with FoodShare was 26,035, WREA FoodShare Benefits issuance was $3,933,416.29. WI Shares Child Care Families Served 340. WI Shared Child Care Children Served 521, and WREA Child Care Subsidy Benefit Issuance totaled $400,933.03.

Clerical/ES/Administration/WHEAP-Brenda Anderson

Jill Bender gave the report.

Clerical/Front Office: Call stats for February total were 650.

Economic Support:

Administration/Salvation Army:

Salvation Army Vouchers for February: Rent 2, Lodging 3, Disaster/Fire 1, Food 1 Utilities 2.

YTD Salvation Army Vouchers: Rent 2, Lodging 12, Disaster/Fire 1, Food 1, Utilities 5

Season Stats: Total Households Applied for Energy Assistance: 881, Total Households paid for Energy Assistance 761, Total Households paid a Heat Benefit 758, Total Households paid a Non-heating Electric Benefit 753, Total Households paid a Crisis Benefit 46, Total Households paid an HVAC Benefit 43, Total Households paid a Water Conservation Benefit 11.

Child Support- Brook Strangstalien

Brook Strangstalien gave the report.

Performance for February. Caseload: 905; Court ordered performance: 91.27%; Paternity establishment: 99.55%; Current support collection: 81.43%; Arrears collection: 65.94%; Current Child Support Due in Vernon County in February $191,372.23 – CSA Collected $160,018.11.

Family and Children's Services-Theresa Berger

Theresa Berger gave the report.

Berger reports there were 15 CPS reports screened in, and 22 reports were screened out. CPS Maltreatment was 5 for physical abuse, 4 for neglect, 6 for sexual abuse, 0 for emotional abuse and 0 for unborn child abuse. Berger reported that there were 19 alleged victims screened in, 31 alleged screened out. 1 had a response same day, 2 had a response time of 24-48 hours, while 12 were within 5 business. There were 11 screened in-service reports for child welfare and 2 screened out. Screened in by service type Services intake Child Welfare 11 and Kinship 0. For youth referral there were 0 JIPS referrals, 0 delinquency referrals, and 2 Truancy. Berger reported that there are 28 kids in Foster Care, 27 in Kinship Care, 2 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 81. Berger stated that there were 10 total assessments approved in February. 2 assessments were open and 8 assessments were closed.

Long Term Support/MH- Jeri Lynn Lindner

Jill Bender gave the report.

Bender stated that in February: 30 children were receiving services in the Birth to 3 Program, 118 in the Children's Long-Term Support Waiver Program and 47 in the Children's Community Options Program. Bender reported in February: 4 Emergency Detentions, 13 Court Committed consumers, 6 MH Placements, 77 Comprehensive Community Services consumers and 43 Community Support Program consumers. Reported by Bender 94 Adult Protective calls for information and resources, 3 Adult Protective Service investigations, 4 Guardianship referrals and 0 Emergency Protective Placements. There is 1 consumer in AODA Treatment and 84 Protective Placement annual reviews.

Aging & Disability Resource Center of Vernon County

Brenda Olson gave the report.

The ADRC had 825 telephone calls and 126 walk-ins during the month of February.

The Demetia Care Specialist provided services to 6 individuals and case management to 16 others. Teresa had 13 support groups or events scheduled in February. There were 26 attendees at her events.

The Disability Benefit Specialist has 56 open cases, 24 pending appeals and 4 new applicants. Lynette had 1 case approved this month and it will have a $2,210 monthly payment as well as a $16,000 back pay. Lynette has been facilitating the AARP tax aid program, and all appointments have been spoken for. Her February financial impact was $76,238

The Elder Benefit Specialist had 34 monthly contacts with individuals and has 2 open disability cases. Katie is scheduling her outreach events for May through August. Katie's monthly financial impact in February was $319,786.

The transportation program provided 102 1-way rides with the volunteer driver program, 30 with the minibus and 110 with the minivan. There was a total of 242 1-way rides in February. There are 2 full buses for the special trip in March- going to the Casino Queen. The first bus filled up by the second day it was advertised so added a second day.

There were 2,425 home delivered meals and 976 congregate meals for a total of 3,401 meals in February. Currently we have been interviewing for on call HDM drivers. Ashley is working on getting a pop-up dining experience approved with GWAAR for the senior fair.

The social workers had 83 new intakes/referrals in February as well as 42 face to face visits, 10 functionals screens, 6 Medicaid application approvals, 8 enrollments and 3 disenrollments into Long Term Care Programs. Beth and Tracy visited 11 communities and worked with individuals in 8 facilities.

The ADRC had 2 outreach events in February. There was an ADRC Advisory Meeting on March 3rd.

Senior Fair is scheduled for Wednesday, May 6 and preparations are underway.

Financial- Marsha Everson

Everson gave the report.

2026 Everson presented the Fund 80 at 15.95%, Aging Programs are at 12.31%, ADRC 13.80%, Mental Health Court Committed at 11.52% and State Mental Health Facilities is at 1.17%.

Review Human Services Service Contracts & Amendments—review item

None to review.

Discuss Human Services on Vouchers/Internal Transfers—review item

Bender presented Internal Transfers in the total amount of $41.85. Bender reviewed department expenses with the committee. Questions on vouchers were answered. The monthly vouchers for Human Services for the month of February $901,471.17.

Find Your Own Driver Program Information and Policy—action item

Olson presented a new transportation program to be offered by the ADRC of Vernon County. Find Your Own Driver Program reimburses the passenger for medical related trips. The passenger pays the driver of their choice to such related medical related trips. Find Your Own Driver Program was approved by the committee, motioned by Wayde Lawler and second by Jean Klousia. Motion approved.

Review and Approve Department Policies—potential action item

Bender presented a new STRIVE CCS Policy "Contracts and Agreements with Independent Providers" the policy was approved by the committee, motioned by Wayde Lawler and second by Jean Klousia. Motion approved.

Bender presented an updated policy for STRIVE CCS program. The update policy was the" STRVE CCS Vendor/Provider Application." Changes were discussed with the committee. The policy was approved by the committee, motioned by Jean Klousia and second by Wayde Lawler. Motion approved.

Bender and Olson presented the Vernon County National Family Caregiver Support Program Policy. This is a new policy that reflects state compliance and best practice to support the use of these state funds. The policy was approved by the committee, motioned by Jean Klousia and second by Wayde Lawler. Motion approved.

Human Services Directors Report, Updates, & Announcements

Bender expressed that the dept has one opening at this time, a part-time administrative assistant for the CCS program. Bender recognized and congratulated Michelle Hanson on 5 yrs with the dept. Bender recognized and congratulated Melony Hansen on 25 yrs with the dept.

Agenda Items for next meeting

2025 department report.

The next meeting of the Human Services and Veterans Services Committee will be held Wednesday April 15, 2026, at 9:30 a.m. Motion made by Jean Klousia to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Wayde Lawler. Motion carried.

Submitted by,

Ashley Bean
Administrative Assistant

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