

**MANITOWOC COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT
BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER:

The Manitowoc County Human Services Department Board met at 4:15 p.m. on Thursday, February 26, 2026 in open session at the Manitowoc County Human Services Department, 801 Jay Street, Manitowoc, WI.

Board Members Present: Agnew, Bruns, Falkowski, Klein, Ruggirello, Schiesl, Shimulunas

Board Members Excused: Naidl, Muench

Board Members Absent:

County Board Members Present: Heilman

County Staff Present: Foster, Fure, Johnson, Kubec, Whitney, Williquette, Ziegelbauer

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY MATTER PERTAINING TO THE HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT:

None

APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 22, 2026 MINTUES:

A MOTION WAS MADE BY FALKOWSKI, SECONDED BY AGNEW TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 22ND MEETING. MOTION WAS CARRIED.

EDUCATION TOPIC – SAFE HAVEN BABY BOX – Jena Foster

Jena presented on what a Safe Haven Baby Box is and use of boxes across the US. Over the past year, a collaborative group representing multiple organizations has met regularly to pursue grant funding and worked to bring a Safe Haven Baby box to Manitowoc. They were successful and a box will be installed at Manitowoc Fire Station 3, making it one of six in Wisconsin.

This gives parents another option to relinquish a newborn anonymously. Under safe haven laws in Wisconsin, a parent can surrender an unharmed newborn up to 72 hours old at a hospital, fire or police station, or inside a safe haven baby box. This reduces the risk of babies being placed in dumpsters or hidden.

Once a baby is placed inside the box, it locks, and law enforcement is immediately alerted. The babies are taken to a hospital, and then CPS gets involved with placing the infant and the adoption process begins. This protects both newborns and their mothers.

In 2025, in the US there were 5,267 babies surrendered to safe haven boxes.

FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS FOR JANUARY, 2026 – Daniel Whitney

Dan Whitney presented the February financial report, current status of the budget and projects he is working on to recoup additional reimbursement. We currently have a surplus of \$448,000.00.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT ON AGENCY OPERATIONS - Lori Fure

Since our last meeting, another Daytime Crisis worker resigned, a CCS psychotherapist resigned, a CLTS waiver specialist retired and one of our financial services specialists accepted the open staff accountant position. We continue to work on efficiencies and cost saving measures. As such we are holding open the 9 vacancies. Employees are taking on more work and not receiving performance increases this year, which has impacted morale. The supervisors are doing a good job of encouraging positive, supportive environment and sending the message that we can weather this temporary situation.

We applied for a crisis grant in January and recently received notice we will be awarded \$100,000. The funding was supposed to start March 1st, but is delayed. The state is not able to estimate when we will be able to start collecting the funds.

The biggest impacts on our budget that outside of our control are placements for adults with chronic mental illness, hospitalizations and youth placements.

We have purchased 3 portable panic buttons, one at each building, that staff can check out anytime they have a safety concern for a home visit. If the button is pushed, 911 is called immediately showing their location, so worker does not have to call for help.

We received a letter from the State Department of Children & Families recognizing Manitowoc County as one of the highest performing counties statewide when it comes to children in out-of-home care having face-to-face visits at least once per month. The federal requirement is that 95% of children placed in out-of-home care have face-to-face contact with a caseworker at least once a month. Our rate was 99.59% in 2025.

QUESTIONS FROM BOARD MEMBERS ON THE STATUS OF THE HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Would the use of interns help fill some of the vacancies? The short answer is no. Interns are temporary and require significantly more supervision than employees. Currently two of our vacancies are supervisor positions. So right now, particularly in clinical services, we do not have the capacity for interns. Generally, we do take interns and have hired them when positions are available.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The next regular meeting of the Human Services Department Board will be held on March 26, 2026 at 4:15 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Manitowoc County Human Services, 801 Jay Street, Manitowoc, WI.

ADJOURNMENT:

A MOTION WAS MADE BY AGNEW, SECONDED BY RUGGIRELLO TO ADJOURN THE MEETING OF THE HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT BOARD AT 5:12 P.M., MOTION CARRIED.