

Nebraska Children's Commission – Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee

Ninth Meeting
April 17, 2015
1:00PM-3:00PM
Airport Country Inn & Suites,
1310 West Bond Circle, Lincoln, NE 68521

Call to Order

Peg Harriott called the meeting to order at 1:14pm and noted that the Open Meetings Act information was posted in the room as required by state law.

Roll Call

Subcommittee Members present: Peg Harriott, Corrie Edwards, Susan Henrie, Bobby Loud, Jackie Meyer, David Newell, and Lana Temple-Plotz.

Ex-Officio Members present: Jeanne Brandner and Nanette Simmons

Subcommittee Member(s) absent: Leigh Esau, Jodi Hitchler, Sherry Moore, Alana Pearson, Ryan Suhr.

Ex-Officio Members absent: Michele Anderson, Tony Green, and Karen Knapp.

Also attending: Bethany Allen, Jodi Allen, Lindy Bryceson, and Joselyn Luedtke.

Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by David Newell to approve the agenda as written, seconded by Bobby Loud. Voting yes: Peg Harriott, Corrie Edwards, Susan Henrie, Bobby Loud, Jackie Meyer, David Newell, and Lana Temple-Plotz. Voting no: none. Leigh Esau, Jodi Hitchler, Sherry Moore, Alana Pearson, and Ryan Suhr were absent. None abstained. Motion carried.

Approval of the May 16, 2014 Minutes

A motion was made by Lana Temple-Plotz to approve the May 16, 2014 minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Corrie Edwards. Voting yes: Peg Harriott, Corrie Edwards, Susan Henrie, Bobby Loud, Jackie Meyer, and Lana Temple-Plotz. Voting no: none. Leigh Esau, Jodi Hitchler, Sherry Moore, Alana Pearson, and Ryan Suhr were absent. David Newell abstained. Motion carried.

Chair's Report

Peg Harriott gave a brief Chair's report. She discussed the open membership slots on the Committee. The open slots are: a representative of a child welfare agency that contracts directly with foster parents from the South Eastern Service Area, a representative of an advocacy organization, the singular focus of which is issues impacting children, a representative from a foster and adoptive parent association, and a foster parent who contracts directly with the Department of Health and Human Services. Peg noted that they are accepting applications for these positions. She also discussed the need for a co-chair who sits on the Nebraska Children Commission. The next report legislatively required from the Committee will be due July of 2016 to the Children's Commission, and there may need to be a recommendation of a rate increase. In July of 2015, reports from DHHS, NFC, and Probation are due to the Committee.

Foster Care Rate Implementation Update from Various Viewpoints

DHHS

Nanette Simmons provided the Committee with an update on the Foster Care Rate Implementation from DHHS. She noted that after the roll out of the new rates and tool, DHHS held a mass training of staff and has continued to provide training. DHHS has collaborated with the Nebraska Children's Home Society, Nebraska Families Collaborative, and Right Turn to provide trainings on the CANS tool. She noted that DHHS continues to make improvements, including updating the tickler system for renewals. DHHS has implemented quality assurance compliance checks to ensure that the rates are implemented properly and evaluations are completed in an accurate and timely manner.

Nebraska Families Collaborative

David Newell provided an update on the Foster Care Rate Implementation from NFC. He noted that there were both strengths and barriers for the NCR. NFC has created a higher level of care, called "Professional Foster Care" which includes higher expectations of both the foster care agency and foster parent. Youth at this level of care have included youth at risk of out of state placement, youth returning from highly structured out of state placement, youth with very high medical needs, youth identified as DD but not receiving DD funding, Youth with extensive history of disruption due to their behavioral and/or emotional needs. NFC recommends that the definitions and categories within the NCR tool be reviewed to clarify overlapping items scored in multiple areas, addressing transportation, and consider adding an additional level of care.

Probation

Jeanne Brandner provided the group with an update on the Foster Care Rate Implementation from Probation. She noted Probation was not required by legislation to use the foster care rates. Probation has adopted the rates. Due to the population of youth served by Probation, the rates are on average for older and higher risk youth than the average in the child welfare population. Probation also has a much smaller number of youths in foster care. Jeanne noted that Probation has a different assessment process, and utilizes the YLS. She does note that Probation is working on recruiting foster homes for probation youth. Corrie Edwards noted that her agency's experience working with Probation has been smooth.

Foster Parent Input

Bobby Loud provided an update on the Foster Care Rate Implementation from Foster Parents. He shared that there have been some issues with collaborativeness, special placement pilots, and transportation. He asked about the retention rate in homes based on levels of payment. David Newell and Nanette Simmons stated that they would look at placement stability rates in relation

to levels of payment. Bobby shared that the policies regarding pre-assessment rates should be made clear to the workers, so the child is not experiencing multiple pre-assessments rates.

Foster Care Agency

Corrie Edwards noted that transportation is a continuing issue for her agency. Sometimes children in homes have different school schedules or appointments that make are difficult to coordinate, and it is unclear who holds the responsibility for rescheduling. Transportation is an issue, whether the children are served by DHHS or Probation. Susan Henrie noted that there were some challenges in collaboratively completing the NCR. There is also concern about the CANS being shared with the foster families. Her agency does not allow for additional pay for homes accepting sibling strips. She noted that her agency had 5% of children at the "intensive" level of care. The staff has found that the tool helps hold foster parents accountable for the care expected of them. She noted that staff is receiving limited information on referrals, and is generally not receiving safety assessments on the families, making it difficult to determine history and necessary information for the youth. Jackie Meyer noted that her staff has reported that caseworkers are not working in collaboration with the agency to fill out the NCR.

Foster Care Rate Planning for the Annual Report

Lana Temple-Plotz led a discussion of the items needed for the annual report. This information is available from the Level of Care Workgroup meeting minutes from April 1, 2012. The report is to be submitted by DHHS, Probation and NFC and with summary data and outline the role and effectiveness of the NCR. Information should include an analysis of the NCR tool, including total number of tools completed, percent in each category, and intersection between the frequency of review and score. Additional information required in the report includes an analysis of the assessment process to include the answers to the following questions: 1) Does the CANS gather the necessary information to identify the needs of the child and the resources needed as identified in the eight domains of the NCR? 2) Does the DSM provide adequate information to identify the needs of the child as they relate to the eight domains of the NCR? 3) Is the CANS needed given the information provided by the SDM? 4) Does the NCR adequately identify the skills and responsibilities of the foster parent(s)? 5) Does the NCR adequately ensure that the child's needs are being met? 6) Does the NCR meet the needs of DHHS, Probation, and NFC; 7) Does the NCR meet the needs of Child Placing Agencies? 8) How does the NCR impact subsidies? 9) Do the current rates work and are they reasonable? The report should also include the lessons learned, trends identified, and recommendations for future consideration. Lana noted that some additional information was identified in the meeting, including placement stability by payment level. Jeanne Brandner noted that because Probation does not utilize the NCR, Probation's report will not contain much of this information.

The Committee also discussed the need to create a survey to receive feedback from foster parents and agencies. Lana Temple-Plotz, Lynn Castrianno, Jodi Allen, and Bobby Loud will work to create 5 or less questions for foster parents and agencies to get feedback on the rates. The questions will be separate from the report.

Workgroup for Group Home Rate Recommendations

Peg informed the group that DHHS has requested that the Nebraska Children's Commission review and make recommendations on rates for Group Home Care and Emergency Shelter Care. The Commission has assigned that task to the Foster Care Rate Committee. She provided a list of Group Home Providers. Jeanne Brandner will examine the list to determine if any of

Probation's providers are missing from the list. The Committee discussed the make-up of the Committee and noted that the Co-Chairs would be Cindy Rudolph and Doug Kreifels. Corrie Edwards asked to be included on the sub-committee. She, at the request of Probation, is looking into providing group home services.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Review of Assignments/Action Plan

Peg led a discussion of assignments. DHHS, NFC, and Probation will submit reports to the Committee in July. Lana Temple-Plotz clarified that in addition to the items in the April 1, 2014, Level of Care Workgroup minutes, reports should include placement stability by payment level. Jeanne Brandner asked the Committee what items Probation should submit on its report to the Committee. The Committee requested information on barriers to placement and experiences with providers. Both DHHS and NFC agreed to make sure their workers are not mis-using the pre-assessment rate on children who are already known and have an established rate.

New Business

No new business.

Next Meeting Date

Peg noted that the next meeting would likely be in July to review the reports and survey information. A meeting could occur earlier if the Group Home Sub-Committee is ready with recommendations or needs input for this body.

Adjourn

Jackie Meyer made a motion to adjourn. Bobby Loud seconded the motion. The Committee adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

**Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility Tool
Foster Care Rate Committee
July 7, 2015**

This report is submitted by DHHS-CFS upon the request of the Foster Care Rate Committee to provide information regarding the implementation of the Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility Tool, which went into effect on July 1, 2014. This tool was implemented in response to LB 530, which called upon the Foster Care Rate Committee to develop a standardized level of care assessment tool to maintain comparable foster care reimbursement rates.

Does the CANS gather the necessary information to identify the needs of the child and the resources needed as identified in the eight domains of the NCR?

Currently DHHS continues to have staff utilize the CANS in the pilot counties, which are Lancaster County, Lincoln County, Adams County and Platte County. The remainder of the state, including Nebraska Families Collaborative (NFC), utilizes the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA). The CANS gathers the necessary information to identify the child's strengths and needs and the resources needed to meet those needs as identified in the eight domains of the NCR.

Does the SDM provide adequate information to identify the needs of the child as they relate to the eight domains of the NCR?

The SDM Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) has eleven domains in which the child is rated according to the current level of functioning. The eleven domains are emotional/behavioral, sexualized behavior, physical health/disability, education, family relationships, child physical and cognitive development, substance abuse, cultural identity, peer/adult social relationships, delinquent behavior, and life skills. The domains of the FSNA correlate to the caregiver responsibility categories of the NCR. DHHS believes the FSNA provides adequate information to identify the needs of the child. Our current policy and practice is to require all CFSS to complete the FSNA on every family.

Is the CANS needed given the information provided by SDM?

DHHS does not believe that there is a need to continue to utilize CANS. DHHS believes that the SDM FSNA is adequate in gathering the necessary information to identify the areas of needs of the child. Utilization of CANS is a duplication of assessments. DHHS completed a survey with Child and Family Services Specialists (CFSS) regarding the utilization of the CANS and FSNA. The majority of staff surveyed preferred utilizing the FSNA,

and felt the CANS and FSNA were duplication of assessments. DHHS recommends that we discontinue the use of the CANS and utilize only the FSNA.

Does the NCR adequately identify the skills and responsibilities of the foster parent (s)?

Like NFC, DHHS believes the responsibilities of foster parents are adequately identified through the use of the NCR. The three levels of care, Essential, Enhanced, and Intensive are adequate descriptors of the level of engagement to which a caregiver is committed to meeting the needs of a child. The narrative entered below each level of care is used to clearly document how the caregiver will meet the unique and individualized needs of the child beyond the basic level of care. This section is also an appropriate location where the skills and specific training of a caregiver can be documented in order to support the Enhanced and Intensive level of care.

Does the NCR adequately ensure the child's needs are being met?

DHHS believes that the NCR adequately ensures the child's needs are being met by the caregiver. DHHS recognizes that other factors, too, are involved with ensuring that the child's needs are being met, such as selecting caregiver placements that are in close proximity to the child's home school, accessible to visitation with the child's parents and family members, and matches the caregiver's skills with the child's needs. These factors are largely monitored through placement support plans and recruitment and retention plans required by contract with the Child Placing Agencies.

Does the NCR meet the needs of DHHS, Probation, and NFC?

DHHS believes the NCR meets our needs for consistency of rate reimbursement statewide. The NCR is a tool that helps hold the caregiver accountable for meeting the level of care to which they are committed. The completion of the NCR involves collaboration with CFS, caregiver and Child Placing Agency when applicable.

Does the NCR meet the needs of Child Placing Agencies?

At the beginning of implementation of the NCR, there were many questions from Child Placing Agencies. In an attempt to address the initial questions uniformly, NCR trainings were conducted jointly by DHHS-CFS, NFC, and the President of the Foster Family Treatment Association (FFTA) in various locations across the state in order to provide Child Placing Agencies with the opportunity to attend and improve their understanding of the use of the NCR. Many Child Placing Agency staff attended these trainings. Right Turn staff also attended the training as they work with families on post adoption and post guardianship services and may be involved when an adoptive/guardianship parent is requesting a review of their subsidy. Today, DHHS rarely receives questions regarding the use of the NCR. The NCR provides clarity to the CPA's on what their caregivers are willing and able to do to meet the unique needs of the children in their care, and what needs remain to be met by the CPA staff.

How does the NCR impact subsidies?

When determining the amount for a subsidy, per 479 NAC 7-004, "the amount must be no more than payment would be if the child had remained in the Department's care." Prior to the implementation of the NCR and the new foster care rates in July 2014, some Child Placing Agencies were paying caregivers a much higher rate than what the prior assessment tool, Foster Care Pay Determination tool, had determined the rate to be based on the child's behaviors and/or needs. It was difficult for caregivers to understand and accept a lesser rate of pay when it came time to establishing an adoption or guardianship subsidy. Now that there is consistency statewide with utilization of the NCR, DHHS has found that there are a fewer number of rate issues when subsidy negotiations occur.

Do the current rates work and are they reasonable?

DHHS believes the current rates utilized under the Essential, Enhanced and Intensive levels of care are reasonable. DHHS grandfathered-in, through August 31, 2014, those rates that exceeded what the reimbursement rate would have been upon completion of the NCR. This action to grandfather-in rates resulted in the need to enter into approximately 230 Letters of Agreement (LOA) to offset the higher payment. Many of these LOAs were in small amounts that covered an additional \$3.00 to \$30.00 per month. Currently, DHHS only has four youth requiring the need for an LOA to reimburse caregiver and the CPA at a higher rate than that which was determined by the NCR. Some examples of the need for an additional payment are for youth who are Developmentally Delayed (DD) and do not yet receive DD funding, youth with life threatening medical needs, and youth who are medically fragile. While a fourth level of care could be established to meet the higher needs of these youth, DHHS-CFS believes that it may be too early to move forward in this direction.

DHHS recommends the pre-assessment rate remain at the Essential Level of Care rate at the time of initial removal of the child from the home. Our data indicates that nearly 60% of the rates are determined to be at the Essential Level of Care upon the completion of the NCR.

DHHS' Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) team is reviewing the calculation of the NCR score and the completion of the NCR Tool on a quarterly basis. There are 95 cases reviewed each quarter statewide. All eight topics of the NCR are reviewed, as well as related questions pertaining to the individuals involved, timeliness, and needs assessment utilized. These reviews are completed by 2 CFS CQI unit staff and 1 CFS CQI Program Coordinator provides second level reviews on 25% of the reviews. Examples of information which CQI is reviewing are:

- Are the domain ratings supported by the NCR narrative?
- Did the worker engage the foster parent(s) in the completion of the NCR?
- Do the identified NCR responses reflect the identified needs/strengths in the formal needs assessment?
- Do the identified NCR responses reflect the information found in the case file?

DHHS data indicates there have been 7,281 NCR's completed from July 1, 2014 to June 1, 2015. This number reflects NCR's which are completed at initial placement of a child in foster care; after a child has been in placement for 6 months; upon the request of a caregiver; upon the request of a Child Placing Agency; upon the request of DHHS-CFS; and, upon any change in placement.

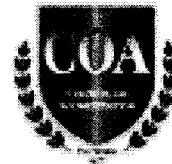
Our data indicated in January 2015, that 56% of completed NCR's were at the Essential Level of Care; 30% were at the Enhanced Level of Care; and, 14% were at the Intensive Level of Care. Our data indicated in June 2015, that 59% of completed NCR's were at the Essential Level of Care; 30% were at the Enhanced Level of Care; and, 11% were at the Intensive level of care. DHHS data continues to indicate the Level of Parenting falls primarily at the Essential Level of Care.

Our data also indicates in our Federal Composite Measure on Placement Stability that the COMPASS measure on June 30, 2014 was 101.3. The Placement Stability COMPASS measure as of June 30, 2015, was 109.5. This Federal Composite Measure reports on a rolling 12 month period. Placement Stability has improved this past year, however, it is unclear if the implementation of the NCR Tool has a direct influence on the Federal Composite Measure for Placement Stability.

The NCR tool has been an adjustment for foster parents, child placing agencies and DHHS-CFSS staff to utilize. The previous tool utilized by DHHS-CFSS to determine the maintenance payment for a foster parent, the FC Pay, was primarily based on the child's behaviors/needs. The NCR is based on what the caregiver is willing to provide to meet the needs of the child. DHHS believes that the process of completion of the NCR has shown great collaboration between the foster parents, child placing agencies, and DHHS-CFSS.



**Prepared by Nebraska Families
Collaborative for the
Nebraska Children's Commission
Foster Care Reimbursement Rate
Committee
July 1, 2015**



VERITAS LIBERABIT VOS 1827

Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility Tool

- **Does the CANS gather the necessary information to identify the needs of the child and the resources needed as identified in the eight domains of the NCR?**
 - Because DHHS had designated specific pilot sites for testing the CANS tool, NFC does not utilize the CANS at this time so this information is not available.

- **Does the SDM provide adequate information to identify the needs of the child as they relate to the eight domains of the NCR?**
 - The SDM Family Strengths and Needs Assessment adequately identifies the areas of child strength and need.
 - There appears to be sufficient crossover between the SDM domains related to child need and the NCR domains related to caregiver (foster parent) responsibilities.
 - The area that is not covered and requires enhanced critical thinking is if the child has a need and the caregiver is not meeting that need within the home.
 - There is no mechanism in place to reimburse the Child Placing Agency at a higher Provider Administration and Support rate if the agency is supplementing the foster parent efforts to ensure that the needs of the youth are met.
 - For example: a youth who has significant support needs that would score at Intensive if the foster parent were to be able to meet all the needs, but in this example, the foster parent can't provide all the supports to meet the needs of the youth. In this situation, the foster parent is rated as providing Enhanced responsibilities, but the CPA is providing the other necessary supports.
 - NFC would like to see a mechanism for separating the maintenance rate from the Admin and Support rate to justify increases to CPAs if they are supplementing supports.
 - In order to do this type of separation it would require enhancements to the NCR that would include CPA efforts/responsibilities as well as those of the foster parents.
 - Critical thinking is also required to identify the level of support or activity required to meet the identified need.

- **Is the CANS needed given the information provided by the SDM?**
 - NFC does not recommend that there is the need for the CANS given that the SDM domains are thorough and adequately identify areas of need based on current level of functioning.

- **Does the NCR adequately identify the skills and responsibilities of the foster parent(s)?**
 - The NCR generally addresses the responsibilities of the foster parents with the exception of transportation.
 - The NCR reflects cooperation, collaboration and actions to support but does not adequately address foster parent responsibility or participation in transportation of the youth to the required supports if they take place outside of the home.
 - With respect to the skills of the foster parent, there is no measure that identifies the skill level or experience of foster parents.
 - There is reference throughout the NCR to the implementation of special programming and strategies, utilization of specialized equipment and level of involvement with various service providers to meet the needs of the youth.
 - The NCR should contain language regarding specific training the foster parent has received in order to adequately meet the needs of the youth. This should be specific to the individualized needs of the youth to include items such as:
 - Training on specific medical interventions and monitoring (diabetes).
 - Training on the care, maintenance and utilization of specialized medical equipment.
 - Training on behavioral interventions or modification.
 - These trainings should be verified through some proof of attendance and should be outside of the scope of trainings received as part of the support agency standard training requirements.

- **Does the NCR adequately ensure that the child's needs are being met?**
 - If utilized correctly, it would appear that the NCR would support the youth's needs being met within the foster home.
 - It would further ensure the needs of the youth are being met if there was a method to identify the responsibility of the Child Placing Agency supporting the foster home as well.
 - It would be helpful if the NCR was merged with the SDM Strengths and Needs assessment so as to document within the NCR the specific needs of the child so that it is available for reference when completing the assessment.
 - Information directly embedded into the NCR regarding the youth needs would also assist with supervisory review, thus ensuring that the categories selected within the NCR directly relate to the needs of the individual youth.

- **Does the NCR meet the needs of NFC?**
 - The NCR reflects a move toward ensuring that foster parents are being reimbursed for the services and supports they are providing to youth.

- The NCR helps NFC in managing foster parent accountability and compliance to contractual agreements.
 - This tool holds providers and foster parents more accountable to provide supports, interventions, and strategies that better meet the individualized needs of the child(ren).
 - The NCR has been helpful to NFC in reducing and eliminating bartering by agencies and foster parents for increased rates in order to secure placement for youth.
 - The NCR supports the needs of NFC by creating a more measureable and increasingly defined method of ensuring that foster parents are reimbursed for the services and supports they are providing to youth.
 - The NCR supports consistency in foster parent reimbursement between Child Placing Agencies thus minimizing foster parent movement between agencies to obtain higher reimbursement rates.
- **Does the NCR meet the needs of Child Placing Agencies?**
 - While this would be best answered by the Child Placing Agencies, NFC has noted that there have been situations where the Child Placing Agencies are in disagreement with rates or levels of care identified.
 - This has been predominately due to interpretation of the provided definition, thus more enhancements to the NCR definitions and some requirement of supporting documentation for identified L3 areas would be beneficial.
 - It may also reduce disagreements if there were a method to increase or decrease the Provider Administration and Support rate based on supplemental services provided by the Child Placing Agencies to accommodate those areas where the foster parent is not able to meet the needs of the youth.
- **How does the NCR impact subsidies?**
 - NFC has noted that there are remaining issues similar to those experienced with the Foster Care (FC) Pay checklist. This would include rates being approved at higher levels than allowed within the subsidy determination.
 - Subsidies require supporting documentation that is not required as part of the NCR process, thus there are continued struggles with rates having to decrease upon subsidy determination.
 - Specifically when FPS and/or foster parents are asked to provide documentation to support higher levels they are either unable to provide the supporting documentation or the documentation is insufficient to meet the needs of DHHS in the subsidy determination.
- **Do the current rates work and are they reasonable?**
 - NFC is in support of the continued rates related to Essential, Enhanced and Intensive and feels that they are reasonable.

- NFC recommends that the pre-assessment rate be increased to reflect the initial proposed rate identified by the Children's Commission.
 - Support for this recommendation would include having little knowledge about youth needs upon initial placement.
 - Continued struggles making initial placement of youth at the minimal rate given that little information is available.
- NFC has identified a need for one additional rate of Level of Care related to youth with more significant needs.
 - Populations identified with these needs would include:
 - Youth who are Developmentally Delayed and have a co-occurring mental health diagnosis that have not yet received DD funding;
 - Youth with significant behaviors that are stepping down from an out of state or PRTF placement who require a stabilization period and enhanced services and supports to be successful in foster care;
 - Youth with extreme, life threatening medical needs who require enhanced care to maintain quality of life.

The information below is to be considered an estimate based on information available:

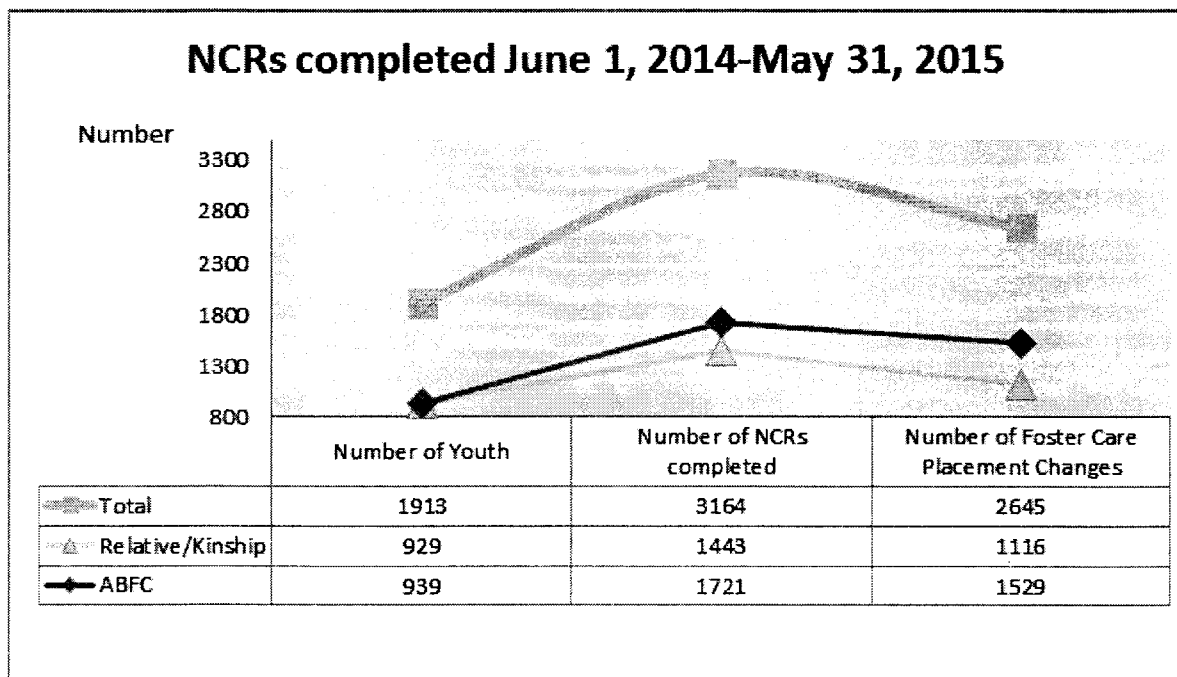
Total Number of Tools Completed

- An estimated total of 3,164 NCR tools were completed during the time period of July 1, 2014 through May 15, 2015 on an estimated total of 1,913 youth.
 - Of these youth, 44% (n=852) had one NCR completed.
 - 563 youth experienced at least one foster care move.
 - A move is defined as only movement between foster homes. Movement to other placement types is not included.
- Of youth experiencing moves:
 - 28% (n=158) experienced a level move

Number of foster care moves	Number
0	1351
1	405
2	114
3	30
4	9
5 or more	4

Number NCRs completed	Number
1	852
2	737
3	226
4	35
5	4

Number of foster care moves	Number
Up one level	108
Up two levels	13
Down one level	35
Down two levels	2

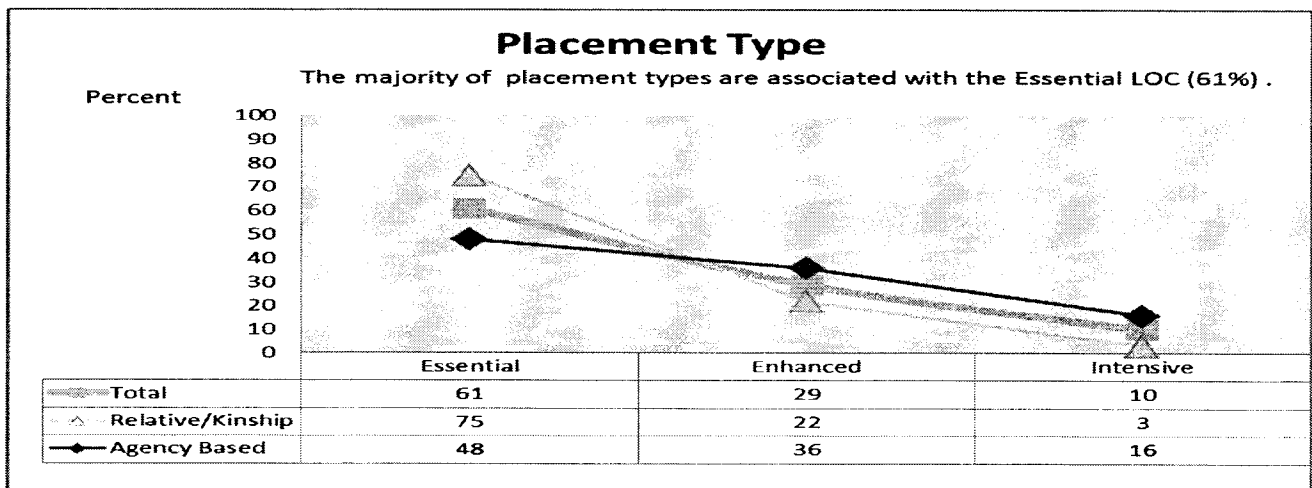


Category/Percent

Below is information regarding the percentage of youth based on NCR Level.

- 61% are at the Essential LOC
- 29% are at the Enhanced LOC
- 10% at the Intensive LOC

For both Kinship and Agency Based Foster Care, the majority of placement types are associated with the Essential level. The majority of Enhanced and Intensive are with Agency Based Foster Care:



Recommendations for Future Consideration

- Mechanism for separating Provider Administration and Support rate from Maintenance Rate so that when CPAs are supplementing the supports provided by the foster parent to ensure youth needs are met this can be compensated.
- Add a section to the NCR that specifically addresses the transportation needs of the youth and the foster parent ability/follow through in meeting these needs.
- Require supporting documentation to justify some of the areas within the NCR.
 - This will assist in ensuring that there is less transition of reimbursement and levels during times for subsidy determination.
 - It will also reduce grey areas when determining scoring on the NCR.
- Youth who have already received a scoring on the NCR tool should transition from one home to another home at their current level, as opposed to having to move youth to the pre-assessment level if the NCR cannot be completed at the time of placement.
 - FPS/CFS are already aware of the needs of the youth.

- Placement should not be made unless a foster parent and agency can accommodate the needs of the youth.
- A NCR rate above the Intensive rate that would address youth with more significant/persistent conditions such as:
 - Youth with Developmental Disabilities or similar traits that are not funded by DD.
 - Youth with significant behaviors that are stepping down from an out of state or PRTF placement who require stabilization and enhanced supports to be successful in foster care.
 - Youth with extreme life threatening medical needs who require enhanced care to maintain quality of life.

SUPREME COURT OF NEBRASKA



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS & PROBATION

Corey R. Steel
State Court Administrator

Ellen Fabian Brokofsky
State Probation Administrator

To the Nebraska Children's Commission and Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee,

Legislative Bill 530 occurred prior to the juvenile justice reform efforts, however Probation has been represented and engaged in the Foster Care Rate Committee. Probation is aligned with the foster care rate structure in that we implemented a single rate, most closely associated with the older age and higher risk/needs of youth served in the juvenile justice system. Therefore, Probation does not use the Structured Decision Making (SDM) process, the Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility Tool (NCR), or Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) to quantify needs of the child and necessary resources. The rate utilized by Probation is that of the intensive parenting level. The daily administrative rate is also aligned.

Probation relies on the Foster Care System administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, who oversees licensure and recruits homes. It is essential for statewide Foster Care services to be coordinated in order to adequately meet the needs of Nebraska youth. Probation registers Agency Supported Foster Care entities for payment through the Fee for Service Voucher System.

This report outlines data related to youth who are supervised by probation and are placed in relative/kinship and foster care. Also included in this report as requested by the committee, Probation has collected information regarding barriers to placement and experiences with providers.

Relative/Kinship and Foster Care Data:

Probation's data collection for out of home youth underwent changes and improvements that were implemented on January 1, 2015. This report outlines relative/kinship and foster care data from January 2015 – June 24, 2015.

- Number of youth in relative/kinship and foster care:
 - 130 as of 6/24/15
 - 49 relative/kinship and 81 agency
- Relative/kinship and agency supported foster care since January 1, 2015:
 - 270 youth as of 6/24/15
 - 98 relative/kinship and 172 agency
- Average length of stay:
 - For discharged youth = 147 days per placement
- Average age:
 - 15 years old for all placements active since Jan 1, 2015. (Including those currently placed)

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Report to the Committee – Probation Feedback:

To compile the requested information on barriers to placement and experiences, Probation Administration provided a questionnaire to Juvenile Justice Resource Supervisors (JJRS) that represent the twelve Probation Districts in Nebraska.

The responses below represent recurring themes present within the questionnaire responses:

- **What have been the barriers to placing probation youth into foster care in your area?**
 - Lack of service providers
 - Capacity building (Girls' homes always full, no one taking older male youth, youth with aggression or sexual charges are difficult to place)
 - Many homes are unwilling to take probation youth
 - Homes not in communities close enough to keep family and school engaged
 - Length of time the referral process takes
 - Difficulties to place youth due to transportation issues
- **What has been your experience with working with the agency supported foster care?**
 - The overwhelming response was very positive (engaged with probation, supportive of youth, and willing to help out)
 - Some concern that the DHHS process to approve a youths placement is time consuming and may be discouraging to possible foster families
 - Needed clarification for foster families regarding probation placed youth versus abuse/neglected youth. Confusion on the differences between child welfare and juvenile justice placement; especially when families are engaged in the foster care placement
- **What needs to be done to improve the availability and usage of foster care by Probation in your area?**
 - Targeted recruitment. Potentially, probation specific homes or homes that are looking for older youth and maybe more open to shorter lengths of stay
 - Education regarding probation's role in the placement and how that might be different from DHHS
 - Additional education for foster parents (dually supervised youth, criminogenic risk reduction)
 - Improvement regarding transportation: many foster families are struggling with transportation expectations
 - Simplification of the DHHS process to get a Probation youth placed into a foster home especially when a DHHS youth is currently placed there.

Report to the Committee – Provider Feedback:

To compile the requested information on barriers to placement and experiences, Probation Administration contacted six providers across the state to determine their perspective on barriers to placement and experiences.

The responses below represent recurring themes from the providers:

Administrative Office of the Courts & Probation
P. O. Box 98910, Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-8910
Phone (402) 471-3730
Fax (402) 471-2197

- **What barriers have you seen in placing probation youth into foster care in your area?**
 - Difficulty placing youth in a home where there is already a state ward. This process takes a long time and makes things difficult in emergency or urgent situations
 - Trouble recruiting beds due to the stigma of Probation youth and a lack of understanding about the needs of Probation youth
- **What has been your experience with working with Probation as it relates to foster care in your area?**
 - Overall there was a positive response to working with probation officers
 - In a few areas are seeing struggles in Probations case management of youth in foster care in the areas of family team meetings and service implementation
 - Most providers experienced some struggles early on regarding the voucher system and have since gotten more familiar with its usage
- **What needs to be done to improve the usage of foster care in your area by Probation?**
 - There is a need to coordinate with DHHS on foster care in hope of creating some consistency
 - Improved service utilization by probation with youth while in foster care
 - Need for recruitment of probation specific homes
 - Seeing some youth in foster care who don't need to be or that could be served in a relative/kinship placement
- **What has been the impact of the new rates as it relates to usage by Probation specifically?**
 - No problems noted as reference to the rate
 - One payment is appreciated

Probation – Next Steps:

1. Collaboration with DHHS and Providers in relation to recruitment
2. Increased education of Agency Supported Foster Care regarding the juvenile justice population
3. Increased training of Probation staff to best practices in case management of youth in Foster Care

FP Survey on NCR Tool Proposed Process and Questions

After speaking with Jodi Allen at CFS and Lynn Castrianno at NFC, I recommend we streamline our questions and process.

In order to ensure foster parents aren't generalizing or thinking of the process overall, Lynn recommended we do a stratified sample utilizing the following process:

- Randomly select cases where the NCR has been completed in the last 4 months
 - a. eliminate from the sample those NCR's completed based on age changes
 - b. eliminate from sample those NCR's completed due to reassessment
 - c. So, only look at new NCR's

- Begin the survey with the following: You had an NCR completed on _____ in the last 4 months. Thinking specifically of this youth and your experience completing the NCR with this youth, answer the following questions:
 - a. What county do you live in?
 - b. I completed the NCR with
 - i. my agency staff
 - ii. my HHS worker
 - iii. neither
 - iv. both
 - c. The foster parent responsibilities I am currently providing to the youth are consistent with those outlined in the NCR tool
 - i. true
 - ii. false
 - d. The NCR tool does an adequate job of describing foster parent responsibilities
 - i. true
 - ii. false
 - e. Additional comments or concerns (text box here)

GROUP HOME RATE SUBCOMMITTEE

5/27/2015

a	b (a * %)	c	d	e	f (d * e)	g (f * %)	h ((f + g) * %)	i (f + g + h)	j (i / b / 365)
Direct Care Specialist				8760/2080=4.21fte's		+6/52			
				365*24 = 8760		11.5%	Ann + Adj * .34	Total	
(MIN LICENSE STAND)	85%			4.212 fte		(6 wks =2 hol+4 vac ill & train)	0.34	Wages	Per Placement
<u>Avg ratio per 24 hr</u>	<u>Adj for occupancy %</u>		<u>Hourly \$</u>	<u>Hrs per year</u>	<u>Annual \$</u>	<u>Adj for pd leave</u>	<u>Benefits</u>	<u>Taxes Bens</u>	<u>Per Day Calc</u>
7.500	6.38	Shelter	13.50	8,760	118,260	13,645	44,848	176,753	75.96
7.500	6.38	Group Home A	13.50	8,760	118,260	13,645	44,848	176,753	75.96
7.500	6.38	Group Home B	13.50	8,760	118,260	13,645	44,848	176,753	75.96

Direct Care Supervisor

7*7.5*.85/(4.21*1.115)

Ratio <u>to children</u>	Ratio <u>to dir care wrks</u>		<u>Hourly \$</u>	<u>hrs per year</u>	<u>Annual \$</u>	0.34 <u>Benefits</u>	Total <u>Wages</u>	<u>Taxes Bens</u>	(i / a / 365) Per Placement <u>Per Day Calc</u>
9.50	7.00	Shelter	23.30	2,080	48,464	16,478	64,942		18.72
9.50	7.00	Group Home A	23.30	2,080	48,464	16,478	64,942		18.72
9.50	7.00	Group Home B	23.30	2,080	48,464	16,478	64,942		18.72

			provider survey non-sal	provider survey non-sal	(d+e+f+g)	h * 20%	(h + i)
	Direct Care IV E Maintenance Staffing	Supervisor IV E Mnt Staffing	IV E Maint	IV E Facility Operations	IV E Sub Total	0.2 Indirect	TOTAL
Shelter	75.96	18.72	53.28	10.03	157.99	31.60	189.59
Group Home A	75.96	18.72	68.24	4.63	167.55	33.51	201.07
Group Home B	75.96	18.72	63.72	7.91	166.32	33.26	199.58

It should be noted that the methodology used in the calculations reflects *current minimum licensing standards* of 1 staff to 6 client for 18 hours and 1 staff to 12 clients for 6 hours in a 24 hour period. ***This is significantly different than the actual ratios used by providers in safely staffing their programs and has significant impact on the results of the calculations.*** All other variables used were much more representational of current practices.

Minimum Licensing Standards

<u>staff</u>	<u>clients</u>	<u>hours</u>	<u>calc</u>
1	6	18	108
1	12	<u>6</u>	<u>72</u>
		24	180
avg ratio in 24 hr period			7.5

Compiled Provider Surveys* for non salary costs

	<u>SHELTER</u>	<u>GH A</u>	<u>GH B</u>
Assistance to Youth and Families	\$ 200,306	\$ 250,967	\$ 1,339,623
Includes food, clothing, allowances, rec programming, Costs must be directly beneficial to an individual youth or family. No expenses relating to employees should be reported here.			
Occupancy	416,520	1,250,084	5,204,148
Includes rent, building depreciation, utilities, building insurance, cleaning services, real estate taxes, etc. All costs involving the occupancy and maintenance of a home or structure used for the program.			
Transportation/Travel	48,923	98,968	608,346
Includes travel and mileage reimb costs for staff transporting youth in personal vehicle as well as auto fuel, taxes, insurance and maintenance for agency owned vehicle used for transporting clients. If your agency owns vehicles, do not include capital expenditures but do include depreciation.			
Maintenance Subtotal	\$ 665,749	1,600,019	\$ 7,152,118
Care Days	12,496	23,449	112,239
Total Maintenance Cost per Care Day	\$ 53.28	68.24	\$ 63.72
Contract Services	\$ 25,393	\$ 10,033	\$ 181,534
Includes professional fees, marketing services, printing, etc. Contracted Services applicable to the program, but not directly beneficial to individual youth or families or occupancy.			
Supplies	60,442	75,702	594,075
Includes office supplies, household supplies, postage, small equip (not capital items). Materials and supplies applicable to the program, but not directly beneficial to individual youth or families.			
Equipment Rental and Maintenance	5,374	13,305	18,633
Includes costs involving rental and maintenance of equip such as copy machines. Not for expenses related to autos.			
Employee Relocation		-	16,779
Relocation expenses for program staff.			
Communications	14,860	9,637	74,450
Costs related to telecommunications, internet and cable.			
Interest			
Interest expense directly related to program.			
Other - please separate and identify if significant	19,246	-	2,746
Other expenses directly related to the program. <i>This is not meant to include indirect costs which will be dealt with separately.</i>			

Facility Operations Subtotal	\$ 125,315	108,677	\$ 888,217
Care Days	12,496	23,449	112,239
Total Facility Operations Cost per Care Day	\$ 10.03	4.63	\$ 7.91

* Provider Surveys compiled from Boys Town, CEDARS, CSI, Release Ministries and Rite of Passage in May 2015 for Group Home Rate Subcommittee.

Group Home Rate Sub-Committee

May-15

	Organization	Region	Group Home Type	Area of expertise
Co Chairs				
Cindy Rudolph,	Cedars	SE	GHA/ESC	CFO
Doug Kreifels	DHHS			DHHS
Committee Members				
Kendra Leonhardt-Driggs	Nebraska Youth Center	W	GHA	Program Leader
Mike Cantrell	Rite of Passage	E	GHA	Program Leader
Becky Steiner	Cedars	SE	GHA/ESC	Program Leader
Randy Ptacek	Boys Town	E	GHA/GHB/ESC	Finance
Jeff DeWispelare	Omaha Home for Boys	E	GHB	COO
Garrett Swanberg	Release Ministries	E	GHB	Program Leader
Lisa Blunt	Child Saving Institute	E	ESC	COO
Corrie Edwards	Mid-Plains Center for Behavioral Healthcare Services		GH in progress	CEO
Ross Manhart	DHHS			
Nanette Simmons	DHHS			
Robin Chadwell	NFC			
Kari Rumbaugh	Probation			