



# Normalcy Taskforce 2016 Annual Report

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE NEBRASKA CHILDREN'S COMMISSION

NOVEMBER 15, 2016

# Normalcy Taskforce Update

- ▶ The Normalcy Task Force presented preliminary recommendations and an update at the September 2016 Children's Commission meeting.
- ▶ The Taskforce has met once since the presentation, with significant work continuing in the Subcommittees.
- ▶ The Taskforce approved the Normalcy Task Force 2016 Annual Report to forward to the Children's Commission for approval.
- ▶ The report focuses on the four key issues identified by the groups, and the work and recommendations of the subcommittees.

# Key Issues



# Cross System Communication and Data Sharing

- ▶ Agencies must communicate and share data across systems to improve outcomes and enhance normalcy for youth.
- ▶ Both the federal and state Strengthening Families Act require a collaborative effort with entities across the state working together to implement the provisions.
- ▶ Implementation needs to be coordinated, coherent, and maximize resources as much as possible without creating incompatible practices.
- ▶ Effective data sharing can reduce duplicative efforts and provide information necessary for improving outcomes for children and families.

# Culture Change

- ▶ System-wide culture change is necessary to implement the Strengthening Families Act, starting with the principle that stakeholders should treat youth the way they would want their own children treated.
- ▶ One significant change is the use of the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS), which empowers caregivers to make day-to-day decisions for the youth in their care. This requires thoughtful engagement with the youth to gain a holistic understanding of the youth's needs, goals, strengths, and risk factors.
- ▶ Trafficking prevention requires a culture change away from viewing youth missing from care as "runaways" to recognizing these youth are truly vulnerable.
- ▶ Training for parents, caregivers, stakeholders and staff is critical to the success of this culture change.

# Family and Youth Voice

- ▶ All youth, families, and caregivers should be educated and empowered to drive their cases and receive necessary services and supports.
- ▶ Youth reported that they want and need to know as much information as possible about available resources and services.
- ▶ Youth need to be regularly and repeatedly noticed of their rights in age and developmentally appropriate ways. Youth reported that they did not know that their rights were while they were system involved.
- ▶ Youth need increased access to legal counsel to protect their rights and receive assistance in navigating existing grievance processes.

# Transition to Adulthood

- ▶ Normalcy is essential for all youth in out-of-home placements to acquire skills and experiences needed for successful transition to adulthood.
- ▶ Normalcy requires more than just access to extracurricular activities, and should include acquiring life skills, such as driving, job skills, and social activities such as prom and homecoming dances.
- ▶ Youth need to begin the transition to adulthood earlier, with additional thought to the youth's abilities, wishes, and goals.



# Key Changes in the Final Recommendations

# Normalcy Subcommittee

- ▶ Included information about how normalcy can be used to support the goals of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).
- ▶ Youth access to health care now includes a mention to sexual healthcare and information.
- ▶ Refugee and immigrant population is included as a special population.

# Trafficking Subcommittee

- ▶ Recommendation that foster parents be required by licensing standards to attend a human trafficking continuing education course within the first year of service. This will allow foster parents to identify and respond to signs and indicators of trafficking and recruitment, and keep youth safe and free from exploitation.
- ▶ Recommendation that agencies comply with the reporting requirements in Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-1303. This law requires DHHS and the Administrative Office of Probation to notify the Foster Care Review Office if a child in any foster care placement is considered a trafficking victim or immune from criminal prosecution due to the affirmative defense of being under the age of eighteen and/or being a trafficking victim.

# Grievance Subcommittee

- ▶ The Grievance Subcommittee has begun work to identify the principles and components of an effective grievance process.
- ▶ Additional recommendations related to a Central Navigator to help youth file grievances and enforce their rights will be released within the next sixty days.
- ▶ The group will also work to create a uniform brochure and electronic communications to provide youth with age and developmentally appropriate information about their rights and what to do if their rights are violated.

# Community and Family Voice

- ▶ The Draft Youth Bill of Rights was reviewed and approved at the most recent Normalcy Taskforce meeting.
  - ▶ Includes basic rights available to youth under federal and state law, as well as existing policy and regulations.
  - ▶ The group will work to create a youth friendly document to empower youth to understand and support their rights.
- ▶ The group will begin work to identify community resources to help families, caregivers, and youth access normalcy activities.