

Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee

November 3, 2016

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Community Health Endowment of Lincoln

250 N 21st St, Suite 2, Lincoln, NE 68503

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Mary Jo Pankoke called the meeting of the Bridge to Independence (B2I) Advisory Committee to order at 1:10 p.m.

II. Roll Call and Introductions

Committee Members present (9):

Lindy Bryceson	Sarah Helvey	Deb Shuck
Vernon Davis	Doug Lenz	Susan Thomas
Brandy Gustoff	Mary Jo Pankoke	Lana Verbrigghe

Committee Members absent (5):

Jodie Austin	Augusta Kamara	Jill Schubauer
Corrie Edwards	Amy Peters	

Committee Members Attending Via Phone (2):*

Mary Fraser Meints	Jennifer Skala
--------------------	----------------

Ex Officio Members absent (4):

Senator Kate Bolz	Timoree Klingler
Judge Douglas Johnson	Katie McLeese Stephenson

A quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (6):

Cassy Blakely.....	Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Deanna Brakhage.....	DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
Jeanne Brandner.....	Administrative Office of Probation, Division of Juvenile Services
Bethany Connor Allen.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Amanda Felton.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Juliet Summers.....	Voices for Children in Nebraska

a. Notice of Publication

Recorder for the meeting, Amanda Felton, indicated that the notice of publication for this meeting was posted on the Nebraska Public Meetings Calendar and Nebraska Children’s Commission website on August 26, 2016 in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. The publication will be kept as a permanent attachment with the meeting minutes.

b. Announcement of the placement of Open Meetings Act information

A copy of the Open Meetings Act was available for public inspection and was located on a table to the side of the meeting room.

III. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Vernon Davis and seconded by Sarah Helvey to approve the agenda as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

*Voting members attending via phone were not included in quorum nor voting matters.

FOR (9):

Lindy Bryceson
Vernon Davis
Brandy Gustoff

Sarah Helvey
Doug Lenz
Mary Jo Pankoke

Deb Shuck
Susan Thomas
Lana Verbrigghe

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (5):

Jodie Austin
Corrie Edwards

Augusta Kamara
Amy Peters

Jill Schubauer

ABSTAINED (2)

Mary Fraser Meints

Jennifer Skala

MOTION CARRIED

IV. Approval of October 4, 2016 Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Brandy Gustoff to approve the minutes of the October 4, 2016 minutes as presented. It was seconded by Vernon Davis. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Lindy Bryceson
Vernon Davis
Brandy Gustoff

Sarah Helvey
Doug Lenz
Mary Jo Pankoke

Deb Shuck
Susan Thomas
Lana Verbrigghe

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (5):

Jodie Austin
Corrie Edwards

Augusta Kamara
Amy Peters

Jill Schubauer

ABSTAINED (2)

Mary Fraser Meints

Jennifer Skala

MOTION CARRIED

V. Department of Health and Human Services Update on Bridge to Independence Program

The Committee returned to the information presented to members at the last meeting. Deanna Brakhage, Program Specialist with the Bridge to Independence Program, drew attention to the list of challenges that the program often experienced. She began with the difficulty in tracking the success of young adults after they left the program. Lana Verbrigghe, Director of Child Welfare Services with Child Saving Institute, described the exit procedures for their independent living program. These involved an initial exit survey followed by quality follow-ups at the 6 and 9 month anniversary of program completion. While the B2I program used the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) survey, no formal follow up surveys were done.

Another initial recommendation that was discussed was the use of an outside evaluator. To complete this recommendation it would require additional funding, most likely through private means. This emphasized the need for data to support the successful impact of the program. The department struggled to identify a means to best capture the information, and was seeking input and suggestions. There was hope expressed that by re-establishing the Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup, they would be able to examine this issue more in depth. Chair Pankoke noted that the workgroup would need to identify a new Chair and encouraged anyone interested to let her know.

The question was raised regarding accountability of funds provided to the young adults. Current procedures did not require the young adults to document how their money was spent. There was debate as to if all youth should be required to submit financial documentation. The general agreement among members was that required documentation could be used as a helpful tool for youth needing additional financial guidance. There was hesitance in mandating it in every

*Voting members attending via phone were not included in quorum nor voting matters.

situation, but rather that it should be used at the discretion of the Independence Coordinator (IC). Members decided to return to the issue of money management for consideration at a future meeting.

The next challenge expressed by Ms. Brakhage was the struggle with the category of “Promoting and Removing Barriers to Employment,” otherwise known as the “Barriers” program. Youth falling under this category were enrolled in a program that offered support while young adults applied for employment, found volunteer or internship opportunities, or located other activities to gain job experience for at least 40 hours every month. She commented that the Omaha area was seeing a large percentage of youth enrolled in the program who lacked motivation meet its requirements. ICs and program staff struggled with how to address these situations.

With no limit on how long a young adult could be in the Barriers program, the only factors for termination included age, death, loss of communication with ICs, incarceration, or failure to meet category/eligibility requirements of the program. While young adults may be terminated from the program, there was nothing preventing them from re-enrolling in the program immediately thereafter. While the Barriers program served as a helpful tool for youth in need of additional support, the members discussed the possibility of implementing stronger consequences for failing out of the category. Potential solutions discussed included inability to re-enroll after failing out, looking to provide stipends issued directly for specific needs such as housing, and mandating additional steps such as administrative approval for enrollment or the completion of curriculum on financial management.

Discussion moved towards the issue of low IV-E penetration rates. Per current regulations, the program was required to follow the state plan of determining IV-E eligibility, which was to carry over status from when the participants were in foster care. A pilot was in progress to examine if the income of the young adults would lead to higher IV-E penetration rate. Complications with receiving the paystubs of the young adults was proving to be an issue. With a penetration rate of less than 20%, and only 1/3 of the population working, addressing the issue was identified as an area of focus moving forward. The group hoped to bring in a DHHS representative familiar with IV-E funding as well as the potential for national experts on the issue.

VII. Juvenile Justice Extension Taskforce Report and Recommendations

Cassy Blakely, Assistant Vice President of Youth Policy with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, presented on the work of Juvenile Justice Extension Taskforce. A small group of individuals working in partnership with Senator Bolz examined the potential for extended supports and services for youth with juvenile justice system involvement. Ms. Blakely reviewed the recommendation for eligibility requirements noting that it would target only the youth without a safe and stable place to return to once aging out of the system. The already established hearings that occur every 6 months for this population could be utilized as opportunities to address if the youth will have support once exiting the system.

The group went on to discuss the barriers that are faced by juvenile justice youth. These youth did not have the same opportunities to access funding that youth involved in child welfare had. The same sentiment of the state taking responsibility for these youth as they have done with B2I and child welfare, needed to be emphasized for the juvenile justice youth. This circled back to the need to examine IV-E funding and how it can be utilized to best serve Nebraska’s youth.

After much discussion, **it was moved by Sarah Helvey and seconded by Susan Thomas to approve the report provided and present it to the Children’s Commission for consideration.** There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Lindy Bryceson
Vernon Davis
Brandy Gustoff

Sarah Helvey
Doug Lenz
Mary Jo Pankoke

Deb Shuck
Susan Thomas
Lana Verbrigghe

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (5):

Jodie Austin
Corrie Edwards

Augusta Kamara
Amy Peters

Jill Schubauer

ABSTAINED (2)
Mary Fraser Meints

Jennifer Skala

MOTION CARRIED

VIII. Public Comment

Chair Pankoke opened the floor for public comment. There was no public comment given.

IX. New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

X. Upcoming Meeting Planning

Chair Pankoke listed potential topics to discuss at future meetings:

- Host an in-depth discussion on the IV-E penetration rate.
 - Look to pull in national experts to gather information on potential avenues to take.
- Examine ways to better work with B2I participants that are based out-of-state.
 - Research the possible use of technology such as skype and how to better promote interstate support of the program.
- Caseload size
 - See if hands-on case management is happening and if a weighed system would be beneficial.
 - Try to bring in a current B2I participant and/or an IC.
- Address money management for youth:
 - There was the potential to bring in a member of the CYI team to discuss the “My Money My Goals” training.

Chair Pankoke indicated that another meeting would be scheduled for early 2017 with an attendance poll being sent to members via email to determine a final date.

XI. Adjourn

It was moved by Brandy Gustoff and seconded by Doug Lenz to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

AF