

**Nebraska Children's Commission**  
Forty-Fifth Meeting  
November 14, 2017  
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
Southeast Community College, Rooms U104 & 106  
8800 O Street, Lincoln, NE 68520

**I. Call to Order**

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Chairperson of the Nebraska Children's Commission (Commission), Dave Newell, called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

**II. Roll Call**

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**Commission Members present (14):**

Teresa Anderson (9:22)	Vernon Davis	Susan Thomas
Beth Baxter	Kim Hawekotte	Kelli Wacker
Jim Blue	Felicia Nelsen	Paula Wells
Holly Brandt	David Newell	Bill Williams
Jennifer Chrystal-Clark	Deb O'Brien	

**Commission Members absent (3):**

Misty Frazier	Lisa Story	Janine Uchino
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**Ex Officio Members present (5):**

Michele Borg	Courtney Phillips (9:23)	Matthew Wallen
Jeanne Brandner	Deb VanDyke-Ries	

**Ex Officio Members absent (5):**

Sen. Kate Bolz	Judge Linda Porter	Julie Rogers
Sen. Patty Pansing-Brooks	Sen. Merv Riepe	

A quorum was established.

**Guests in Attendance (10):**

Dr. Katherine Bass	Foster Care Review Office
Bethany Connor Allen	Nebraska Children's Commission
Amanda Felton	Nebraska Children's Commission
Peg Harriott	Child Saving Institute
Sarah Helvey	Nebraska Appleseed
Liz Hruska	Legislative Fiscal Office
Kristen Stiffler	Nebraska Legislative Council
Chris Triebsch	Nebraska Legislative Council
Dr. Richard Wiener	UNL, Charles Bessey Professor of Law and Psychology

*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 websites in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. The publication would 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 the sign in table near the entrance of the room.

### III. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Vernon Davis and seconded by Susan Thomas to approve the agenda as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (13):**

Beth Baxter	Kim Hawekotte	Kelli Wacker
Jim Blue	Felicia Nelsen	Paula Wells
Holly Brandt	David Newell	Bill Williams
Jennifer Chrystal-Clark	Deb O'Brien	
Vernon Davis	Susan Thomas	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (6):**

Teresa Anderson	Jennifer Chrystal-Clark	Janine Uchino
Jim Blue	Deb O'Brien	Paula Wells

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

### IV. Consent Agenda

- a. [Minutes of the October 19, 2017 Nebraska Children's Commission Retreat](#)
- b. [Updates to Structure and Governance Memo](#)
- c. [Juvenile Services Committee Member Nomination](#)
  - Representative from DHHS, Division of Behavioral Health (Non-Voting):
    - Tamara Gavin – Deputy Director of the Division of Behavioral Health
- d. [Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee Co-Chair Nomination](#)
  - Co-Chair Representative from the Nebraska Children's Commission:
    - Bill Williams – Chief Operating Officer, COMPASS

It was moved by Paula Wells and seconded by Holly Brandt to approve the consent agenda as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (13):**

Beth Baxter	Kim Hawekotte	Kelli Wacker
Jim Blue	Felicia Nelsen	Paula Wells
Holly Brandt	David Newell	Bill Williams
Jennifer Chrystal-Clark	Deb O'Brien	
Vernon Davis	Susan Thomas	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (4):**

Teresa Anderson	Lisa Story
Misty Frazier	Janine Uchino

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

### V. Review of Commission Data and Survey

Chair Newell directed members to the summary [handout](#) of member feedback from the data survey they had been asked to complete. Members discussed how varied the responses were to the survey. The goal of the survey had been to help determine the best focus areas for the Commission to tackle given the available resources. Newell expressed that pulling in a facilitator to assist the Commission in focusing on set number of goals for the year ahead may be beneficial.

Members agreed that postponing the approval of the strategic plan was a good idea based on the varied responses from the survey and the discussion at the retreat the previous month.

**VI. Report Approvals**

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*a. Strategic Plan Approval*

This item was postponed for consideration at a future meeting.

*b. Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee Report*

A summary of the [Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee report](#) was provided by Co-Chairs, Jeanne Brandner and Mary Jo Pankoke. They highlighted the current issues being examined by the Committee which included the lower ability to claim IV-E funds than what initial projections had predicted as well as the steps already taken by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to increase the claiming. Also discussed was the external evaluation that was currently being reviewed for feasibility.

The Committee felt that it would be beneficial to the Bridge to Independence program to examine areas of duplication. Populations to be examined include young adults receiving funds from the Developmental Disability waiver as well as pregnant and parenting young adults. The Committee would also be exploring potential options for case management for this population. **It was moved by Kim Hawekotte and seconded by Vernon Davis to approve the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee report as presented. No further discussion ensued. Roll call vote as follows:**

**FOR (14):**

Teresa Anderson	Vernon Davis	Susan Thomas
Beth Baxter	Kim Hawekotte	Kelli Wacker
Jim Blue	Felicia Nelsen	Paula Wells
Holly Brandt	David Newell	Bill Williams
Jennifer Chrystal-Clark	Deb O'Brien	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (3):**

Misty Frazier	Lisa Story	Janine Uchino
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**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

*c. Juvenile Services Committee Report*

As Co-Chair of the group, Kim Hawekotte provided an update on the [Juvenile Services Committee report](#). Hawekotte explained that the Committee had recently joined forces with the Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice and that both groups had collaborated on the report. Areas of focus for the group included legislative issues, data mapping and analysis, evaluations and assessments, and placement transition.

**It was moved by Holly Brandt to approve the Juvenile Services Committee report as presented. Felicia Nelson seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:**

**FOR (14):**

Teresa Anderson	Vernon Davis	Susan Thomas
Beth Baxter	Kim Hawekotte	Kelli Wacker
Jim Blue	Felicia Nelsen	Paula Wells
Holly Brandt	David Newell	Bill Williams
Jennifer Chrystal-Clark	Deb O'Brien	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (3):**

Misty Frazier

Lisa Story

Janine Uchino

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

*d. Strengthening Families Act Committee Report*

Vernon Davis and Sarah Helvey, Co-Chairs, were both present to discuss the [Strengthening Families Act Committee report](#). Discussed were the efforts to achieve the three main priorities of the Committee which were to continue to monitor the implementation of the State and Federal Strengthening Families Act, to promote normalcy as a foundation to: prevent trafficking; address disparate impact on minorities; and support the successful transition to adulthood, and to coordinate implementation with other policy making bodies.

The presenters discussed more in depth the [APPLA](#) and [Trafficking](#) subcommittee reports. Issues such as encouraging stakeholder organizations and agencies to remove the term prostitution in their policies referring to trafficked youth and creating a series of youth centered staffing meetings to support permanency efforts for youth were items of discussion. Helvey also noted the recent creation of a Court Implementation workgroup to examine how SFA was being implemented in the court system.

**It was moved by Paula Wells and seconded by Deb O'Brien to approve the Strengthening Families Act Committee report as presented. No further discussion ensued. Roll call vote as follows:**

**FOR (14):**

Teresa Anderson

Beth Baxter

Jim Blue

Holly Brandt

Jennifer Chrystal-Clark

Vernon Davis

Kim Hawekotte

Felicia Nelsen

David Newell

Deb O'Brien

Susan Thomas

Kelli Wacker

Paula Wells

Bill Williams

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (3):**

Misty Frazier

Lisa Story

Janine Uchino

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

*e. Nebraska Children's Commission Annual Report*

Chair Newell directed attention to the [Nebraska Children's Commission](#) annual report. He clarified that based on the decision from earlier in the meeting, the section on the strategic plan would be update to reflect the group's hope to continue work on the plan. Deb VanDyke-Ries also pointed out that Appendix A had the incorrect table under the Workforce Workgroup header.

**It was moved by Paula Wells and seconded by Vernon Davis to approve the Nebraska Children's Commission report with the above alterations to the strategic plan section and Appendix A for the Workforce Workgroup section. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:**

**FOR (13):**

Teresa Anderson

Beth Baxter

Holly Brandt

Jennifer Chrystal-Clark

Vernon Davis

Kim Hawekotte

Felicia Nelsen

David Newell

Deb O'Brien

Susan Thomas

Kelli Wacker

Paula Wells

Bill Williams

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (4):**

Jim Blue  
Misty Frazier

Lisa Story  
Janine Ucchino

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**VII. Lunch**

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The Committee recessed for lunch at 11:27 p.m.

**VIII. Subgroup Updates**

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*a. Psychotropic Medication Committee Update*

An update on the work of the Psychotropic Medication Committee was provided by the group's Co-Chair, Paula Wells. She informed the Committee that there was a team of three individuals, two of them practitioners, who would be spearheading the pilot to test out the informed consent form previously approved by the Commission. Another issue the group was looking at included the development of foster parent training on psychotropic medication. Kim Hawekotte suggested the group look into how to provide information on psychotropic specifically to relative and kinship foster homes since they lacked many of the supports available to traditional foster parents.

*b. Workforce Workgroup Update*

Co-Chair of the Workforce Workgroup, Deb VanDyke-Ries, shared information on the group. She shared that while the group had not met since June, several related items had happened in the past several months. One of these was the selection of DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to participate in the [Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development \(QIC-WD\)](#), a study to examine the staff recruitment and retention are persistent challenges child welfare agencies were facing. VanDyke-Ries also noted that several new members had joined the group, including Jude Dean, a former foster parent who was interested in Co-Chairing the workgroup.

**It was moved by Vernon Davis to appoint Jude Dean as Co-Chair of the Workforce Workgroup. Paula Wells seconded the motion.** There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (13):**

Teresa Anderson  
Beth Baxter  
Holly Brandt  
Jennifer Chrystal-Clark  
Vernon Davis

Kim Hawekotte  
Felicia Nelsen  
David Newell  
Deb O'Brien  
Susan Thomas

Kelli Wacker  
Paula Wells  
Bill Williams

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (4):**

Jim Blue  
Misty Frazier

Lisa Story  
Janine Ucchino

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

*c. Legal Parties Taskforce Update*

Kim Hawekotte provided an update on the Legal Parties Taskforce as the group's Chair. The bridge orders promoted by the taskforce was implemented under [LB180](#), but complications had been identified that may require an amendment to the bill. Hawekotte explained that there had been an issue regarding fees associated with the order when transferring cases from juvenile to district court, which would most likely be addressed in an amendment in the upcoming session.

Another issue that the group will begin to focus on was the exception hearings required for a child or youth in out-of-home care for 15 of the last 22 months in order to consider termination of parental rights. Data showed that this hearing was not being done regularly and that only 15-20% of the judges across the state were completing these hearings. The group would also be looking into the potential to have termination of parental rights be continually reviewed at subsequent hearings in addition to the initial review.

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### **IX. Foster Care Review Office Update**

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Dr. Katie Bass, Director of Research with the Foster Care Review Office (FCRO), was welcomed to share information on the data they collect. Dr. Bass distributed a [handout](#) to give members an idea of the basic information that is gathered by the agency. She referenced Dr. Webster's discussion from the retreat, highlighting of the need for case review data and how FCRO was doing a lot of that work already. The FCRO had recently initiated and was planning for more several changes to provide a better view of the larger picture. These included working to gather longitudinal data, editing reports to focus on red flag issues, working to connect with detention centers to gather data on their population, and streamlining forms for members of the citizen review boards.

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### **X. New Business**

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Courtney Phillips, CEO of DHHS, provided a brief review of the happenings at the agency. Items discussed included a review of the agency budget packet, work towards increased coordination between the Division of Behavioral Health and DCFS, and the upcoming November event to review and gather feedback on the recent federal Child and Family Service Reviews.

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### **XI. Upcoming Meeting Planning**

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Chair. Newell informed the Commission that there was the strong likelihood of a 1% reduction in funds in the next fiscal year. He also discussed the potential for hosting one of the quarterly meetings of the group at a location in central or western Nebraska. Members suggested the North Platte area as a potential area to host the meeting, and indicated that the July date may be the most conducive for member attendance.

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### **XII. Adjourn**

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The meeting adjourned at 11:58 a.m.

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