

Normalcy Task Force Meeting

May 3, 2017

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Gere Branch Library, Room 2,
2400 S 56th St, Lincoln, NE 68506

I. Call to Order

The Normalcy Task Force (Task Force) of the Nebraska Children’s Commission was called to order at 1:15 p.m. by Co-Chair Vernon Davis.

II. Roll Call and Introductions

Task Force Members present (12):

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Payne Ackerman | Heather Colton | Sarah Helvey |
| Erin Bader | Nathan Collier | Claudette Grinnell-Davis |
| Cassy Blakely | Vernon Davis | Stacey Scholten |
| Marti Beard | Jude Dean | Lisa Story |

Task Force Members absent (9):

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|------------|
| Ashley Brown | Nikki Novak | Julia Tse* |
| Anna Brummer | Nicole Paul | |
| Patricia Frost | Mickey Sampson | |
| Kim Hawekotte | Deb Shuck | |

Ex Officio and Resource Members present (1):

Jim Bennett

Ex Officio and Resource Members absent (3):

| | | |
|----------------|------------------|--------------|
| A’Jamal Byndon | Timoree Klingler | Ronda Newman |
|----------------|------------------|--------------|

A quorum was established.

*Let it be noted for the record that Julia Tse was temporary proxy designated by Juliet Summers

Guests in Attendance (6):

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Erin Aliano..... | Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers |
| Becca Brune..... | Nebraska Appleseed |
| Bethany Connor Allen..... | Nebraska Children’s Commission |
| Amanda Felton..... | Nebraska Children’s Commission |
| Michele Lueders..... | Administrative Office of Probation, Juvenile Services Division |
| Felicia Nelsen..... | Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association |

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 website 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 the sign in table to the side of the meeting room.

III. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Cassy Blakely to approve the [agenda](#) with the following alterations: Items 9c and 9b will be moved up behind item 4 to respect time constraints of the presenters and attendees. Payne Ackerman seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (12):

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Payne Ackerman | Nathan Collier | Claudette Grinnell-Davis |
| Erin Bader | Heather Colton | Sarah Helvey |
| Marti Beard | Vernon Davis | Stacey Scholten |
| Cassy Blakely | Jude Dean | Lisa Story |

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (9)

| | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Ashley Brown | Kim Hawekotte | Mickey Sampson |
| Anna Brummer | Nikki Novak | Deb Shuck |
| Patricia Frost | Nicole Paul | Julia Tse |

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

For purposes of the minutes, items will be reflected in order of the original agenda.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Lisa Story and seconded by Payne Ackerman to approve the [minutes of the February 1, 2017 meeting as presented](#). There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (12):

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Payne Ackerman | Nathan Collier | Claudette Grinnell-Davis |
| Erin Bader | Heather Colton | Sarah Helvey |
| Marti Beard | Vernon Davis | Stacey Scholten |
| Cassy Blakely | Jude Dean | Lisa Story |

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (9)

| | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Ashley Brown | Kim Hawekotte | Mickey Sampson |
| Anna Brummer | Nikki Novak | Deb Shuck |
| Patricia Frost | Nicole Paul | Julia Tse |

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

V. Co-Chair Report

Co-Chair Vernon Davis, a young adult previously in Foster Care, greeted members and guests. Davis mentioned that the future meeting date conflicts with another organization. Co-Chair Sarah Helvey, Child Welfare Program Director with Nebraska Appleseed, reminded members that a doodle poll had been distributed to determine a new meeting date that would best accommodate members' schedules.

VI. Legislative Discussion

Co-Chair Helvey went on to summarize the various bills that had been introduced that were relevant to the work of the Task Force.

- a. *LB225 – Change provisions of the Child Protection and Family Safety Act, the Nebraska Juvenile Code, the Foster Care Review Act, and the Nebraska Strengthening Families Act as prescribed*

This bill was a merge of several bills including the work of the Task Force. It encompassed three items of recommendation from the Task Force – training of foster parents on trafficking, public dissemination of a photo of youth missing from care, and an amended version of the SFA extension to the JJ system. Helvey noted that the Youth Bill of Rights (YBOR) portion did not make it into the bill, but that the Department of Health and Human Services had plans to integrate recommendations from the Task Force into a policy memo.

- b. *LB226 - Provide for purchase of motor vehicles and insurance by certain juveniles, change foster care transition proposal provisions, and provide immunity from liability for caregivers*

This bill, which was introduced by Senator Wishart, focused on increasing access to driver's licenses for youth in out-of-home care. It also allowed for youth to purchase a vehicle and insurance with cash funds. These had been issues of discussion from the Task Force members, and if passed, the bill contained a provision requiring the group to examine the costs and benefits of implementing a program under which children in foster care may be insured. This bill had no priority, and was still sitting at the committee level. It would most likely remain in committee, but would hopefully move forward next session.

- c. *LB289 – Change provisions and penalties relating to pandering, human trafficking, labor trafficking, and sex trafficking and prohibit solicitation of a trafficking victim*

Introduced by Senator Pansing-Brooks, this legislation would change penalties for trafficking solicitation. This bill was on select file, but had not moved since March. There was concern on how the Senators were perceiving the definition of trafficking.

- d. *LB428 – Require schools and the State Department of Education to adopt policies relating to pregnant and parenting students*

In relation to pregnant and parenting students, Senator Vargas's bill would require schools to create policies that support these youth. It would ensure that the young women in the population were not forced to choose between their child and their education. This bill was amended into LB427, so that it now encompassed authorization for schools and the State Department of Education to adopt policies relating to pregnant and parenting students, authorization for training regarding such policies, and authorization for breastfeeding accommodations for student-parents. The Task Force members were unsure if there were significant changes to the language with the merging.

VII. Department of Health and Human Services Update

An update from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) was provided by Stacey Scholten, Service Delivery Administrator. She informed members that an NFOCUS meeting was held on April 9, 2017 to include several updates related to the Strengthening Families Act (SFA). Scholten also noted that the development of trafficking training for foster parents was in progress and that normalcy language would be worked into the contracts for the provider facilities.

Grievance Committee recommendations had gone to DHHS legal team in addition to the YBOR. Scholten invited Deanna Brakhage, Program Specialist, to discuss the YBOR policy. Brakhage shared the in progress [draft of the YBOR](#), remarking that the focus was on specific rights, enforceable by DHHS. The draft policy was previously presented to the Governor's Youth Advisory Counsel, who returned both positive and negative feedback. Additional support material would be needed to ensure that the information was easily interpreted by youth. A handbook would be developed to aid in this process along with updates to the Court Improvement Project's website to reflect SFA. Members also voice the need for inclusion of grievance information on the document.

VIII. Probation Update

An update from the Administrative Office of Probation, Juvenile Services Division was provided by Jim Bennett. Bennett reviewed LB225 and the amendments made towards probation within. While probation wasn't encompassed under the SFA, Bennett discussed the efforts to work with staff, parents, and involved youth to enhance normalcy as much as possible. Other topics of discussion included the Juvenile Justice Home-Based Initiative, the Juvenile Inventory for Functioning (JIFF) Pilot, efforts to focus on the DD population within juvenile justice, and examining the approach for juveniles who sexually harm.

IX. Subcommittee Discussion

a. Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) Subcommittee Report

The update for the APPLA Subcommittee was provided by Claudette Grinnell-Davis, Assistant Professor with UNO, Grace Abbott School of Social Work. She noted that areas of focus have been policy procedure and developmental domains. The need for youth and adult education about legal permanency was shared. The Subcommittee wanted to ensure that there would not be misinformation regarding qualification for programs such as Bridge to Independence that could lead to less stable placements. Grinnell-Davis continued by discussing a strong correlation between system involvement as a child and continued involvement as an adult. Other subjects covered included increased risk of pregnancy at a younger age, the increased likelihood of intentional pregnancy at a young age, and the need for community support programs like Project Everlast throughout the state.

b. Community and Family Voice Subcommittee Report

Jude Dean, Adoptive Parent and Co-Chair of the Community and Family Voice Subcommittee, provided a brief update on the group. Due to the time constraints of the Subcommittee members, the group had not met in several months. Dean hoped reconvene and see what role the group could play in supporting the YBOR moving forward. She also expressed willingness of the group to assist in the creation of a handbook to accompany the YBOR as well as to provide support for the implementation of any grievance recommendations.

c. Grievance Subcommittee Report

Co-Chair Davis informed the members that the Grievance recommendations had been accepted by Nebraska Children's Commission.

d. Normalcy Subcommittee Report

Brian Rader updated the committee in lieu of Normalcy Subcommittee Co-Chairs Tom McBride and Theresa Barron-McKeagney. Rader shared that the Subcommittee has identified three key issues: disproportionate minority contact (DMC), driver's licensing and car insurance for foster youth who are state wards, and religious practice and participation of Foster Youth.

The Normalcy Subcommittee felt that DMC was a complicated subject that surpassed the scope of the group. They recommended that the issue be taken to the Children's Commission to identify a structure for how to best address the issue. The target audience for DMC would be any cultural, racial or ethnic group that was disproportionately represented in the foster care system. The Juvenile Services Committee under the Commission and the Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice would be discussing DMC at their upcoming meeting. Members conversed on if it may be worthwhile to wait and see what transpired from this effort.

Rader continued by noting how driver's licensing and car insurance crosses paths with the discussions in many other groups including the APPLA Subcommittee of the Task Force and the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee. With such a complex issue, the group hoped to continue to examine ways to overcome the barriers associated with it. The group would partner with DHHS as well as monitor the status of Senator Wishart's bill surrounding driver's license and insurance provisions for foster youth.

The subcommittee's work aimed to promote religious normalcy by adding language to strengthen their [previous recommendations](#) addressing religious and cultural support. DHHS regulation supported the religious rights of foster children, however some of this language was outdated and work was in progress to update it. Members expressed concern that referencing the regulations could be problematic because they were in the process of being re-drafted.

It was moved by Claudette Grinnell-Davis to accept both [Normalcy Subcommittee recommendations](#) with the removal of the reference to the administrative code in the section on cultural practices and religious beliefs. Nathan Collier seconded the motion. There was no more discussion.

FOR (11):

Erin Bader
Marti Beard
Cassy Blakely
Nathan Collier

Heather Colton
Vernon Davis
Jude Dean
Claudette Grinnell-Davis

Sarah Helvey
Stacey Scholten
Lisa Story

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (10)

Payne Ackerman
Ashley Brown
Anna Brummer
Patricia Frost

Kim Hawekotte
Nikki Novak
Nicole Paul
Mickey Sampson

Deb Shuck
Julia Tse

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

e. Trafficking Subcommittee Report

An update on the work of the Trafficking Subcommittee was provided by Erin Aliano, Subcommittee Co-Chair and Special Projects Coordinator with the Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers. Aliano informed the Task Force that the subcommittee was working with the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force, DHHS, and Juvenile Probation to develop an in-depth screening tool to indicate high-risk in order to minimize the rates of missing youth. This in-depth pre-screening tool began in April and data would become available near the end of the year. Development of a way to address sexual orientation and its correlation to the reasons for youth going missing and the increased involvement and training for SFA advocates were other topics of discussion.

Aliano remarked on a recent barrier identified by current efforts. Currently, procedure did not warrant an initial investigation by child welfare staff if the suspected trafficker was a non-family member outside of the home. The subcommittee hoped to have the DHHS hotline be better utilized by probation or law enforcement officers to prevent children from going missing. Safety assessment in the home needed to be a priority to attempt to determine the reason for the child going missing. Some of these reasons may be independent from the conditions of the home, but every aspect of the child needs to be taken into consideration.

X. Next Steps

Normalcy Task Force reminded members of the goal to have draft recommendations or updates ready for August.

XI. New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

XII. Public Comment

Co-Chair Helvey invited any members of the public to speak. No public comment was given.

XIII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:51 p.m.

MG