

Nebraska Children's Commission Meeting

September 18, 2019

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

CEDARS Northbridge

1533 N. 27th Street, Lincoln, NE 68503

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Dave Newell called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

2. Roll Call

Commission Members Present (11)

Beth Baxter	Terri Knutson (10:10)	Susan Thomas
Jim Blue	Felicia Nelsen	Kelli Wacker
Vernon Davis	Dave Newell	Bill Williams
Kim Hawekotte	Lisa Story	

Commission Members Absent (5)

Teresa Anderson	Misty Frazier	Janine Uchino
Holly Brandt	Deb O'Brien	

Commission Ex-Officio Members Present (6)

Senator Kate Bolz	Senator Patty Pansing Brooks	Deb VanDyke-Ries
Jeanne Brandner	Julie Rogers	Matthew Wallen

Commission Ex-Officio Members Absent (4)

Michele Borg	Judge Linda Porter
Courtney Phillips	Senator Merv Riepe

A quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (7)

Amanda Felton	Nebraska Children's Commission
Peg Harriott	Child Saving Institute
Chris Jones	Nebraska Children's Commission
Tami Soper	Office of Sen. Kate Bolz
Kristen Stiffler	Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature
Ivy Svoboda	Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers
Chris Triebisch	Office of Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks

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.

3. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by **Kim Hawekotte** and seconded by **Felicia Nelsen** to approve the agenda as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (10):

Beth Baxter	Felicia Nelsen	Kelli Wacker
Jim Blue	Dave Newell	Bill Williams
Vernon Davis	Lisa Story	
Kim Hawekotte	Susan Thomas	

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (6):

Teresa Anderson	Misty Frazier	Deb O'Brien
Holly Brandt	Terri Knutson	Janine Ucchino

MOTION CARRIED

4. Approval of July 31, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Kelli Wacker moved to approve the July 31, 2018 meeting minutes as presented. Susan Thomas seconded the motion. No further discussion ensued. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (10):

Beth Baxter	Felicia Nelsen	Kelli Wacker
Jim Blue	Dave Newell	Bill Williams
Vernon Davis	Lisa Story	
Kim Hawekotte	Susan Thomas	

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (6):

Teresa Anderson	Misty Frazier	Deb O'Brien
Holly Brandt	Terri Knutson	Janine Ucchino

MOTION CARRIED

5. Approval of Committee Member Nominations

It was moved by Beth Baxter and seconded by Jim Blue to appoint the following members:

Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee

- *Representative of the Executive Branch of Government*
 - Nanette Simmons (Voting) – Administrator, DHHS, DCFS

Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee

- *Designee of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Health and Human Services*
 - Jennifer Potterf (Non-Voting) – Service Delivery Administrator, DHHS, DCFS

Juvenile Services Committee

- *Representative of an Advocate Group:*
 - A'Jamal Byndon (Non-Voting) – DMC Coordinator, Douglas County

Psychotropic Medication Committee

- *Representative of the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care*
 - Jenny Minchow (Voting) – Pharmacist, DHHS, DMLTC
- *Representative of the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services*
 - Stacy Scholten (Voting) – Service Area Administrator, DHHS, DCFS
- *Representative of PromiseShip*
 - Adam Sicilano (Voting) – Treatment Supervisor, PromiseShip

There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (10):

Beth Baxter

Jim Blue

Vernon Davis

Kim Hawekotte

Felicia Nelsen

Dave Newell

Lisa Story

Susan Thomas

Kelli Wacker

Bill Williams

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (6):

Teresa Anderson

Holly Brandt

Misty Frazier

Terri Knutson

Deb O'Brien

Janine Ucchino

MOTION CARRIED

6. Discussion of Commission Structure

Chair Newell began the discussion of Commission structure by reviewing the history of the group. He noted that the Commission had been born out of a statewide crisis following the privatization of the child welfare system. Since its inception in 2012, the landscape of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems had evolved significantly. The discussion of the day was to focus on LR451 and how the Commission could best structure itself to meet the current needs of the systems most effectively.

Policy Analyst for the Children's Commission, Chris Jones, directed members to the [Structure Taskforce proposals for discussion](#). She let the group know that the proposed structures were in no means final options, but were to serve as jumping-off points for large group discussion. The document outlined three potential options for future structure including: 1) Maintain the current structure, clean up the statutes to modernize to present day activities, extend sunset date; 2) Change structure, Re-Conceptualized operations, introduce sunset dates statutory committees; extend Commission sunset date; or 3) Carry out the sunset of the Nebraska Children's Commission.

Jones reviewed the research that was conducted, in consultation with the National Conference of State Legislatures Three Branch Institute, and the Children's Cabinet Network, in order to assess alternative models of Children's councils, commissions and intra-agency cabinets. She highlighted the State of Indiana's Commission on Improving the Status of Children, from whose model components had been applied to structure option 2. Additional review of existing research entities, commissions, and similar entities in Nebraska was completed to understand the landscape of services and resources available to policy making bodies.

Members discussed at length the various options. Given that the Commission had served in multiple capacities in the past, discussion centered on identifying a structure that balanced advisory and oversight roles. While several Commission strengths were identified including the ability to coordinate the various stakeholders and to proactively examine issues, there was a desire to focus more on monitoring the implementation of Commission recommendations and responding to system issues and concerns in a timely manner.

7. Lunch

Members recessed for lunch from 12:10 – 12:30 p.m.

8. Discussion of Commission Structure (Continued)

The meeting resumed with conversation focusing on the issue of membership. The general consensus was that a future Commission structure should continue to include community stakeholder representation. The potential for providing all three branches voting rights was suggested as a way to ensure buy-in and inclusion on recommendations. However, per the state constitution, no more than one governmental branch could hold voting rights on a Commission or Committee. There was also an interest in examining alternative appointment methods for members of the Commission.

There was both discussion on what a continued version of the Commission would look like as well as what the impact would be if the Commission sunset. Matt Wallen, Director of Children and Family Services, voiced his opinion that the Commission was no longer necessary given the number of other oversight entities and the efforts of DHHS to evaluate their work internally. Members argued that the Commission was still a necessary body, especially given its wide stakeholder representation. The Commission served to ensure transparency of the systems as well as provide a venue for public to become educated and voice concerns. Several members, including Kim Hawekotte of the Foster Care Review Office and Jim Blue of CEDARS Youth Services, commented that while they agreed that the Commission as it was currently structured should not continue, that an updated version should be extended to address the system issues in the current environment.

Other areas discussed included the timeline structure of the Commission and the barrier it created in making timely recommendations as well as finding the best way to utilize the Commission's reach to continue to support Nebraska's vulnerable children, youth, and young adults. It was suggested to have the Commission serve as a body under the legislative branch given that the other two branches of government had the Governor's Commission for the Protection of Children and the Supreme Court Commission for Children in the Courts. Members discussed the benefit of having legislative champions to support the work of the Commission. It was also agreed that even with strong support from any of the three branches, a solid foundation needed to be in place so that the Commission could ensure continued momentum even in their absence.

Members concurred that it would be beneficial to have the Structure Taskforce gather again prior to the November meeting to examine questions and concerns from the day's discussion. The November meeting would be host to a continued discussion on recommendations for the future structure of the Commission when extended.

9. Public Comment

Chairperson Newell opened the floor for public comment. No public comment was given.

10. New Business

There was no new business.

11. Upcoming Meeting Planning

The November 14, 2018 meeting would be host to continued discussion on potential structure recommendations for the Commission moving forward.

12. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:01 p.m.