

<b>From a System Characterized by:</b>	<b>To a System Characterized by:</b>
Fragmented service delivery	Coordinated service delivery
Categorical programs and funding	Blended programs and funding
Limited array of services	Comprehensive array of services
Action that is reactive and crisis-oriented	Action to intervene early and prevent crises
Focus on “deep end,” restrictive settings	Focus on least restrictive settings
Children and youth out of home	Children and youth within families
Centralized authority	Community-based ownership
Fostering “dependency”	Building on strengths and resiliency

Pires, S. (1996). *Characteristics of systems of care as systems reform initiatives*. Washington, DC: Human Service Collaborative.

- **Survey, Evaluation, Report:** A third party that specializes in Medicaid (such as Mercer) should conduct a cross-system analysis of current services and funding sources to identify state General Funds currently in use that Nebraska can better leverage to generate federal funding. The analysis would identify current resources that could potentially be better allocated to more effective services when at-risk children and youth currently served in out-of-home placements begin the transition to home- and community interventions. This would enable the state to determine the resources available to support implementation of the Department of Children's Services. It would also identify what changes would be needed to obtain federal dollars as a match to state General Funds.
- **Fiscal:** A primary goal would be to replace state General Funds for at-risk children with federal funds, so the state can expand the funding base for children’s programs while reducing overall state General Fund expenditures. As financing options are reviewed there would be a better understanding of the array of services that could be implemented.
- **Process and Timeline:** DHHS, in collaboration with and direction from the Nebraska Children’s Commission, should complete a plan for the integration of agencies into the Department of Children's Services by January 1, 2013 and report to the HHS Committee and the Legislature, with implementation by July 1, 2013.

### **3. CREATE THE CHILDREN’S COMMISSION TO OVERSEE CHILD WELFARE IN NEBRASKA.**

- **Wide Membership, Strategic Plan:** The Nebraska Children’s Commission would function as an advisory body to all three branches of government. It would recommend how to develop and implement the Department of Children's Services and a statewide strategic plan for child welfare system reform. The Nebraska Children’s Commission would

provide a permanent forum for collaboration among state, local, community, public, and private child welfare stakeholders.

- ***Commission Membership: Three Branches of Government and a Broad Coalition of Stakeholders:*** There would be twenty-five members of the Nebraska Children's Commission representing all three branches of government and a wide array of public and private stakeholders. Membership would include:
  - The CEO of the Children's Bureau (CFS Director), who would serve as commission chair and also be a member of the Executive Committee of the Commission;
  - The Governor, or his or her designee, who will also be a member of the Executive Committee of the Commission;
  - The Chief Justice of Nebraska Supreme Court, who will also be a member of the Executive Committee of the Commission;
  - The Chairman of the Judiciary Committee of the Legislature, who will also be a member of the Executive Committee of the Commission;
  - The Chairman of the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature, who will also be a member of the Executive Committee of the Commission;
  - A member of the Judiciary Committee of the Legislature;
  - A member of the Appropriations Committee of the Legislature;
  - A member of the Health and Human Service Committee of the Legislature;
  - Three members appointed by the Governor;
  - Three members appointed by the Chief Justice;
  - Twelve members representing stakeholders appointed by the Executive Committee of the Nebraska Children's Commission through an application and selection process as determined by the Executive Committee;
    - Representative groups of stakeholders may include prosecuting attorneys, preferably who practice in Juvenile Court; guardians ad litem; biological parents currently or previously involved in the child welfare system; foster parents; CASA volunteers; Foster Care Review Board members or volunteers; children's service providers; foster youth; and advocacy organizations.
- ***Executive Committee of the Nebraska Children's Commission:*** This committee would advise the commission with respect to the interaction among the three branches of government regarding child welfare programs and services. Each member of the Executive Committee would represent his or her own branch of government. No member of the Executive Committee would participate in actions (a) that could be deemed to be the exercise of the duties and prerogatives of another branch of government or (b) that improperly delegate the powers and duties of any branch of government to another branch of government.

- **Funding:** Initial funding of the Nebraska Children’s Commission would be through the annual appropriation from the Health Care Cash Fund to the HHS Committee.

The Health and Human Service Committee envisions that the Children's Commission would consider the following issues in developing the strategic plan.

- **Lead Agencies:** A review of the current lead agency model in an urban/geographic area as well as other models. Examples include lead agencies that focus on evidence-based programs for target populations within communities and/or function as brokers for coordination of services.
- **Prevention and Early Intervention:** Emphasis and leadership to construct intentional strategies to support high-quality, evidence-based prevention efforts that both reduce risks and enhances protective factors for children.
- **Realignment of DHHS Service Area:** In collaboration with the Supreme Court the DHHS service areas would be realigned to coincide with judicial districts and the Eyes of the Child teams.
- **Evaluation:** Inclusion of a system-wide evaluation by a third party national entity with expertise in welfare systems, as a part of the strategic plan
- **Community Network:** Encourage each service area to foster a sense of community by creating a network of stakeholders. Each service area's network would identify its unique needs and resources, as well as strategies for addressing those needs and using those resources. This would help meet two vitally important objectives: strengthening the continuum of services, and strenthening community-based services.

#### **4. CONTINUE TO REVIEW CHILD WELFARE REFORM.**

The Health and Human Services Committee should monitor progress made toward its recommendations, those of the Auditor of Public Accounts, and those made by the Legislative Performance Audit Committee through LR 37. A report from the committee should be sent annually by December 15<sup>th</sup> from 2012-2014 to the Legislature, the Governor and the Chief Justice. DHHS should continue to provide information requested by the Health and Human Services Committee in a timely fashion. Additionally, reports required by DHHS to the Health and Human Services Committee should be completed and forwarded to the committee by September 15<sup>th</sup> each year. Additionally, DHHS should provide a copy of the annual statement required in Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-534 regarding Children and Family Policy to the Health and Human Services Committee by September 15<sup>th</sup> of every year. DHHS should present the child welfare budget to the HHS Committee in a budget request review hearing in accordance with Rule 8(4)(a) of the Rules of the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature as adopted January 12, 2011.