

Strengthening Families Act Committee Meeting

October 11, 2018

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

CEDARS Northbridge, 1533 N 27th St, Lincoln, NE 68503

1. Call to Order

The Strengthening Families Act (SFA) Committee of the Nebraska Children’s Commission (Commission) was called to order by Co-Chair Sarah Helvey at 1:02pm.

2. Roll Call and Introductions

Committee Members present (13):

Payne Ackerman	Patricia Frost	Amara Madsen
Deanna Brakhage	Stephanie Gardella	Nicole Seymour
Ashley Brown	Ron Giesselmann	Lisa Story
Nathan Collier	Brandy Gustoff	
Heather Colton	Sarah Helvey	

Committee Members absent (7):

Simone Armstead	Kim Hawekotte	Deb Shuck
Rebecca Daugherty	Terri Knutson	
Vernon Davis	Sara Riffel	

Ex Officio and Resource Members present (3):

Rochelle Juilfs	Bailey Perry	Deb VanDyke-Ries
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A quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (7):

Crystal Aldmeyer.....	PromiseShip
Amanda Felton.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Sarah Forrest.....	Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers
Chris Jones.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Tom McBride.....	Nebraska Juvenile Justice Association
Felicia Nelsen.....	Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association
Julie Smith.....	Administrative Office of Probation, Juvenile Services Division

a. Notice of Publication

Recorder, Amanda Felton, indicated that the notice of publication for this meeting was posted on the Nebraska Public Meetings and Nebraska Children’s Commission websites in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act.

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.

3. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Nathan Collier to approve the [agenda](#) as presented. Payne Ackerman seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (13):

Payne Ackerman	Patricia Frost	Amara Madsen
Deanna Brakhage	Stephanie Gardella	Nicole Seymour
Ashley Brown	Ron Giesselmann	Lisa Story
Nathan Collier	Brandy Gustoff	
Heather Colton	Sarah Helvey	

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (7):

Simone Armstead
Rebecca Daugherty
Vernon Davis

Kim Hawekotte
Terri Knutson
Sara Riffel

Deb Shuck

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

4. Approval of Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Ashley Brown and seconded by Lisa Story to approve the [minutes of the July 19, 2018 meeting](#) as presented.

FOR (13):

Payne Ackerman
Deanna Brakhage
Ashley Brown
Nathan Collier
Heather Colton

Patricia Frost
Stephanie Gardella
Ron Giesselmann
Brandy Gustoff
Sarah Helvey

Amara Madsen
Nicole Seymour
Lisa Story

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (7):

Simone Armstead
Rebecca Daugherty
Vernon Davis

Kim Hawekotte
Terri Knutson
Sara Riffel

Deb Shuck

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

5. Co-Chair Report

Co-Chair Helvey welcomed everyone and thanked the new members for their interest in the group. She provided a brief history of the federal and state SFA and discussed the structure of the Committee and its subgroups. Chris Jones, Policy Analyst with the Commission, shared information on the upcoming sunset of the Commission and the work happening regarding [LR451](#) to review potential structure changes if the Commission was extended.

Members discussed the continued need for statewide collaboration in supporting Nebraska's system involved youth. There was concern that if the Commission and subgroups were to end, there would be a diminished effort and avenue to collectively address systemic concerns. Members were encouraged to spread the word on the work of the Commission and SFA Committee to stakeholders. The [Commission fact sheet](#) would be made available as a resource for members.

6. Department of Health and Human Services Update

Deanna Brakhage, Program Specialist with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), provided an update. Brakhage discussed the new Transitional Living Plan that was in draft form with a goal of implementation in December. She highlighted that the plan included a number of issues relevant to the SFA including the Youth Bill of Rights and questions surrounding the SFA Advisor.

7. Subcommittee Updates

a. Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) Subcommittee

An update on the work of the APPLA Subcommittee was given by the group's Chair, Crystal Aldmeyer. The subcommittee planned to keep the SFA Advisor as an area of focus with efforts going towards a communication plan to ensure that stakeholders and public were aware of the important role and resources available. She also discussed the group's recent efforts to look into alternative life skill assessments to the Ansell-Casey tool.

b. *Court Implementation Subcommittee Update*

Heather Colten, Chairperson of the Court Implementation Subcommittee, gave a brief summary on the work of the group. Updates were in progress on the Older Youth Court Form and the Caretaker Court Form. Once final recommendations were completed and approved, the subcommittee planned to partner with the courts and other stakeholders to develop a communications plan to inform relevant parties of the new documents.

c. *Normalcy Subcommittee*

Co-chairs, Tom McBride and Felicia Nelsen, were invited to provide an update on the work of the Normalcy Subcommittee. The group had met to review the normalcy plans and reports of congregate care facilities. In this process the provided feedback for a potential template form to be used for plans in the future. Members of the subcommittee had concerns that only congregate care facilities were required to create and submit normalcy plans, and planned to examine potential recommendations on expanding the scope of the statutory language to include all child placing agencies and institutions.

This led to a discussion on how to monitor the system and ensure that measures to provide normalcy were being implemented. While some of this could be done through site visits and audits, the voice of the youth would be the most telling way to determine progress. The subcommittee co-chairs noted that the group had discussed the potential for recreating a youth survey on normalcy experiences that had been previously conducted in 2015. If completed, the updated data would provide a glimpse into how far the state has progressed in implementation of the SFA and identify areas in need of continued focus.

d. *Trafficking Subcommittee*

An update on the work of the Trafficking Subcommittee was provided by Subcommittee Chair, Sarah Forrest. Members were provided a draft [trafficking subcommittee charter](#) for review. Forrest expanded on the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (JVTA) noting that several of its key elements fell in line with the work happening under SFA. The subcommittee hoped to continue to refine its goals at the next meeting and identify potential work products.

8. New Business

Julie Smith, Reentry Specialist with the Nebraska Probation Administration, Juvenile Division, provided some information on the Division's efforts toward normalcy for their involved youth. These included working to disseminate information on available services, expansion of Professional Foster Care, and addressing the impact of [Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-251.01](#) and the limitations it enacts regarding placement in detention.

9. Public Comment

Co-Chair Helvey invited any public forward who wished to make comment. No comment was offered.

10. Next Steps

Members were directed to the proposed meeting dates on the agenda remarking that unless there were objections, invitations for the listed times would be sent out following the meeting. Meeting times consisted of the following dates from 1:00 – 3:00 pm:

- January 10, 2019
- April 11, 2019
- July 11, 2019
- October 10, 2019

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:23 p.m.

AF