

## Alternative Response (AR) Advisory Committee

February 24, 2023  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Webex  
and  
Foster Care Review Office Conference Room  
1225 L Street, Suite 401  
Lincoln, NE 68508

### I. Call to Order and Welcome

Co-Chair, Susan Thomas, called the meeting of the Alternative Response (AR) Advisory Committee to order at 10:04 a.m., and asked members to introduce themselves. Roll call was taken through introductions.

### II. Roll Call and Introductions

#### ***Committee Members present (7):***

*Patrick Carraher*  
*Jennifer Carter*  
*Monika Gross*

*Sarah Helvey*  
*Ivy Svoboda*  
*Susan Thomas*

*Mikayla Wicks*

#### ***Committee Members absent (6):***

Alisa Baker  
Jarren Breeling

Alex Hildebrand  
Bri McLarty

Michelle Paxton  
Heather Sikyta

#### **A quorum was established.**

#### ***Guests In Attendance (1):***

Adam Anderson  
Amanda Adams  
Jacie Boelts  
Nathan Busch

MaryPat Coe  
Theresa Cusic  
Richard Hasty  
Lindsay Harrison

Michaela Hirschman  
Lisa Jurrens  
Michelle Padilla

#### *a. Notice of Publication*

Recorder for the meeting, Adam Anderson, indicated that the notice of publication for this meeting was posted on the Nebraska Public Meeting and Nebraska Children's Commission website 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 at the sign in table and on the Nebraska Children's Commission website.

### III. Approval of Agenda

**A motion was made by Patrick Carraher to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Mikayla Wicks.** There was no discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (7):**

Patrick Carraher  
Jennifer Carter  
Monika Gross

Sarah Helvey  
Ivy Svoboda  
Susan Thomas

Mikayla Wicks

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**ABSENT (6):**

Alisa Baker  
Jarren Breeling

Alex Hildebrand  
Bri McLarty

Michelle Paxton  
Heather Sikyta

**MOTION CARRIED**

*\*Minutes follow the order of discussion*

**IV. Approval of July 22, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

A motion was made by Monika Gross to approve the September 23, 2022 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Ivy Svoboda. There was no discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (7):**

Patrick Carraher  
Jennifer Carter  
Monika Gross

Sarah Helvey  
Ivy Svoboda  
Susan Thomas

Mikayla Wick

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**ABSENT (6):**

Alisa Baker  
Jarren Breeling

Alex Hildebrand  
Bri McLarty

Michelle Paxton  
Heather Sikyta

**MOTION CARRIED**

**V. Legislation**

Policy Analyst, Amanda Adams introduced herself and provided an update regarding current legislation. She shared that LB42 identifies activities that would no longer be considered neglect. She added, at the public there was discussion about what a reasonable person and sufficient maturity looks like. She continued, noting LB271 is a bill that would change the mandatory reporter requirements and there are amendments being considered on this bill. Lastly, Adams shared that LB473 creates a grant program that operates a safe and

secure treatment center for youth. She shared that the hearing focused on parents that don't have any other options for a safe and secure treatment option in the State of Nebraska.

Co-Chair Susan Thomas shared that she attended the online legislative training. Monika Gross shared that the budget for the Children's Commission will be considered on Thursday, March...

Mikayla Wicks noted that LB271 was discussed in the Equitable Provision of Services Workgroup to determine if it would have any fiscal impact on providers and whether it would have an impact on Alternative Response.

## **VI. Workgroup Updates**

### **a. Workforce Stability Workgroup**

Mikayla Wicks

Mikayla Wicks shared that the Workforce Workgroup has met three times. Discussions focused around caseload sizes and about the provider workforce. She shared that the workgroup invited Paige Piper from BraveBe to discuss the changes they have made at BraveBe to improve worker satisfaction and retention. Ben Danielson from Grace Children's Home was also invited to the discussion, and he presented information pulled from research from other states regarding their case counts and caseloads.

### **b. Oversight Workgroup**

Jennifer Carter

Jennifer Carter noted good participation and discussion at the workgroup. She thanked Mikayla Wicks and Michaela Hirschman for the data they have provided. Carter shared that the workgroup has discussed the existing oversight mechanisms, such as the oversight provided by the Office of the Inspector General. Carter noted that the OIG summarizes complaints received about AR in their annual report and investigates any death or serious injury for all child welfare participants. Carter continued by noting that the workgroup has discussed Red Team. Lastly, Carter shared that the workgroup discussed that possibility of looking at data that might point to trends as AR cases increase.

### **c. Equitable Provision of Services Workgroup**

Mikayla Wicks

Mikayla Wicks shared that this workgroup has met twice so far. Wicks discussed the struggle in the discussion regarding the prevention services. She noted that Nebraska Children and Families Foundation has been invited to discuss what they do, how to do warm handoffs to NCCFF's Central Navigators and community partners to support needs of the family. Wicks shared the workgroup discussed doing provider spotlights or service spotlights. Wicks discussed the trend of AR Workers who make connections with particular providers or individuals to receive referrals. Wicks discussed providers working together to hand off referrals when there isn't capacity or availability. Wicks noted the need for a Chair of this Workgroup.

### **d. Legal Resources Workgroup**

Pat Carraher

Pat Carraher shared that the group has met twice working on charter. He noted that the next step for the group is to determine what legal resources are out there and what resources are needed. Carraher discussed doing a survey or looking for a survey that has been done in the past regarding this issue.

## **VII. DHHS Update**

Wicks noted Children and Family Services Director Stephanie Beasley was not retained and Dannette Smith is currently serving as the Interim Director. Wicks shared that one project Smith has been working on is a

process matrix for AR that lists whether a requirement of AR is in federal regulations, state statute, or internal DHHS policy. She shared they are looking at an organizational survey and potential shift before onboarding a new director.

Wicks shared that the Red Team process improvement project has been conducted through weekly audits to determine whether process improvement policy and practice changes have been maintained to increase time saving and beneficial. She noted that after the weekly audits are completed, audits will be done monthly. Wicks continued, noting that there will be AR refresher training on family engagement which will refocus workers on why they brought AR to Nebraska and that they are making sure that AR workers are leaving families better-off than before. She noted with turnover at the Hotline there is the need for increased training on AR exclusionary criteria. Wicks also shared that there are higher numbers of intakes, and upper level staff are taking on documentation and intakes to help the workers in the Eastern Service Area.

Lastly Wick shared that CFS is working on their Annual Progress and Services Report. Wicks responded to a questions that ESA has a two dedicated AR teams and also some workers on other teams that have AR workers.

Wicks also shared that CQI team has taken over AR data and they are learning the process. Wicks will have new data at the next meeting. Wicks also shared statewide uptick in intakes, however noted that the uptick has slowed recently.

#### **VIII. New Business**

Amanda Adams shared information regarding the Children's Commission's strategic plan. She noted the strategic plan will be brought to the AR Committee for the Committee to determine how to impact that plan and the goals. Adams will send out the plan for review. Co-Chair Gross encouraged members to come to the next meeting with ideas on how to impact those strategic priorities.

#### **IX. Public Comment**

Deb VanDyke-Ries shared an upcoming lecture series Helping Babies from the Bench that will come out again in August. She will share the "save-the-date" with Anderson to share with the Committee once that date is decided.

#### **X. Upcoming Meetings:**

May 26, 2023, in person.

#### **XI. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Adam Anderson