

# Nebraska Children's Commission Meeting

May 9, 2023  
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Lincoln Community Foundation  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room  
215 Centennial Mall South  
Lincoln, NE 68508

## 1. Call to Order

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Chair Misty Flowers welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 9:10 AM She asked attendees to introduce themselves. Roll call was taken by Adam Anderson through introductions.

## 2. Introductions and Roll Call

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### *Commission Members Present (8)*

Misty Flowers	Melissa Nance	Proxy for Susan Thomas, Sheena Halverstadt
Richard Hasty	Felicia Nelsen	
Sara Hoyle	Lana Temple-Plotz	
Terri Knutson		

### *Commission Members Absent (7)*

Jarren Breeling	Kathy Dinkel	LaShawn Young
A'Jamal Byndon	Rachael Folds	
Vernon Davis	Ron Giesselmann	

### *Commission Ex-Officio Members Present (5)*

Jeanne Brandner	Monika Gross	Deb VanDyke-Ries
Jennifer Carter	LaDonna Jones-Dunlap	

### *Commission Ex-Officio Members Absent (4)*

Senator Beau Ballard	Senator Myron Dorn
Senator Carol Blood	Judge Amy Schuchman

Roll call was taken, and a quorum was established.

### *Guests in Attendance (5)*

Amanda Adams	Nebraska Children's Commission
Adam Anderson	Nebraska Children's Commission
Gabriel Hinrichs	Office of Senator Blood
Michaela Hirschman	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Joshua Stark	Voices for Children
Ivy Svoboda	Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers
Julie Wragge	Foster Care Review Office

#### 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 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 at the sign-in table and on the Children's Commission Website.

### 3. Approval of the Agenda

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It was moved by Lana Temple-Plotz and seconded by Sara Hoyle to approve the agenda as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (8):**

Misty Flowers	Melissa Nance	Proxy for Susan Thomas, Sheena
Richard Hasty	Felicia Nelsen	Halverstadt
Sara Hoyle	Lana Temple-Plotz	
Terri Knutson		

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAIN (0):**

**ABSENT (7):**

Jarren Breeling	Kathy Dinkel	LaShawn Young
A'Jamal Byndon	Rachael Folds	
Vernon Davis	Ron Giesselmann	

**MOTION CARRIED**

*Note that the order of items in the minutes will not be reflective of the original agenda*

### 4. Approval of the Consent Agenda

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- a. [February 14, 2023 Meeting Minutes](#)
- b. [Member Nomination Report](#)
- c. [Co-Chair Nomination Report](#)

It was moved by Richard Hasty and seconded by Felicia Nelsen to approve the Consent Agenda items.

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

**FOR (7):**

Misty Flowers	Terri Knutson	Lana Temple-Plotz
Richard Hasty	Melissa Nance	
Sara Hoyle	Felicia Nelsen	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAIN (1):**

Proxy for Susan Thomas,  
Sheena Halverstadt

**ABSENT (7):**

Jarren Breeling	Vernon Davis	Rachael Folds
A'Jamal Byndon	Kathy Dinkel	Ron Giesselmann

## **MOTION CARRIED**

### **5. Executive Committee Update**

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Vice Chair Melissa Nance reminded the Commission regarding the ability for members to delegate a proxy if they are unable to attend. She noted recent discussion regarding an internship opportunity with the Commission as well as discussion regarding the Strategic Priorities of the Commission.

### **6. Foster Care Review Office (FCRO) Foster Success Story**

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Julie Wragge, FCRO Oversight Specialist, shared success stories she learned of through her work conducting case reviews. She shared two stories from successful foster care families.

### **7. Legislative Update**

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Policy Analyst, Amanda Adams shared that LB14, which expands b2i eligibility to Probation youth, is a priority bill that is on general file within AM1146. LB306 has not advanced, likely due to the addition of 19 new CFS Specialists that would be added, and a \$2M budget impact. She shared 5% rate increases for foster care and providers was recommended in testimony from DHHS.

Members discussed rate increases. Lana Temple-Plotz shared that her organization has spent money to support their state contracts.

Monika Goss shared that the FCRO did not request additional funds for the Commission budget over the amount that would cover Commission staff raises.

### **8. Strategic Priorities Update**

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Policy Analyst, Amanda Adams shared the Strategic Priorities. She noted the Priority Tracker is available on the [Google Drive](#). She reviewed the priorities and the strategies that are being implemented at the Committee and Subcommittee levels.

Members discussed assignments of strategies 1.3 and 1.4 from the Tracker. Members noted that the Foster Care Reimbursement Rates Committee (FCRRC) Agency Rate Workgroup will be working on strategy 1.3 and the previously formed NCR Workgroup will change focus and will be working on strategy 1.4.

Members discussed strategy 1.4 as it relates to concerns regarding criteria and barriers for placements with kinship and relative placements. Members noted a lack of training and support for relative and kinship placements. Monika Gross shared information from the December 2021 FCRO quarterly report. Members noted that a kinship licensing workgroup used to exist.

Members discussed strategy 2.2. Michaela Hirschman noted that the 1173 Workgroup will be looking at this goal. Hirschman noted that membership info regarding the focus groups is available on the 1173 Workgroup website. Members discussed that previous workgroups looked at the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) state plan and previous efforts, and there are IV-E funding clearinghouses of available services. Temple-Plotz speculated that this strategy is a big ask of the Committee unless the strategy is very narrow only to find and recommend a funding source. Adams noted that the Commission will wait until 1173 finalizes their report in the fall.

Members discussed strategy 2.5. Michaela Hirschman noted the availability of outcome data from providers that contains information from families. Jennifer Carter discussed the survey engagement from the Alternative Response program during its pilot phase. Carter speculated that maybe more exit surveys with or without incentive would be beneficial. Members discussed an ad-hoc workgroup regarding family voice. Temple-Plotz suggested formally requesting that the Stephens Group interview the Co-Chairs of the Committees of the Children's Commission. She would appreciate that the voice of the Commission be considered in the report and would like to vote on this at the next Commission meeting.

## 9. DHHS Update

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### a. Structure/Staff Changes

Michaela Hirschman noted that DHHS is looking for a new Director of Children and Family Services. She shared that the process should be concluded by July. She added that herself and Camas Holder are now under Deputy Director Alger Studstill. Kathleen Stolz has been moved to the Interim Director position. Hirschman shared that projects are underway and an action plan will be presented to CEO Dannette Smith this week. Amanda Adams noted that the plan is related to the projects being developed by the 1173 Workgroup. Hirschman expanded that one of the projects is to improve the Eastern Service Area. Temple-Plotz will share with Hirschman a previous report from Promiseship regarding their successes and previous plan prior to the contract renewal period.

### b. LB1173 update

Hirschman noted that May 2 was the last 1173 meeting. During this meeting the group looked at case management. She shared that the [reimaginewellbeing.ne.gov](https://reimaginewellbeing.ne.gov) website has all the information from the workgroup. Hirschman continued, noting that the next focus groups will be on May 31. Hirschman noted extensive plans for focus groups across the state. The Stephens Group is also meeting directly with Probation and CFS staff, as well as judges and individual stakeholders. The next meeting is June 2, from 2:00-4:00 PM at the 5220 South 16th location. An education meeting will follow in July.

### c. Treatment Family Care

Hirschman shared that on May 11th there will be a meeting to discuss Treatment Family Care (TFC). She shared specific information regarding TFC, and she noted that the meeting will discuss information regarding the behavioral assessment part of plan.

## 10. Probation Update

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Probation Deputy Director Jeanne Brandner shared information regarding the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Grant. The report will be posted for [public comment](#) through August 1, 2023. She shared excitement for this project and work being done in Lincoln. Brandner noted that as communities are exiting the pandemic they are experiencing staff shortages as well as increases in costs. She shared thoughts regarding recent increases in community safety issues as well as the need for 24-hour care.

Brandner noted that there is a new residential service definition available for public comment from RADIUS Omaha. RADIUS will hold an open house in June.

Brandner shared that Probation received a grant through Columbia University as a site for the Emerging Adults program. Brandner noted that a subset of this population are young adults that may be served in the future by this program.

Brandner discussed the new youth detention facility in Douglas County. She spoke to the census details of the current facility and youth that will have to be relocated to the new facility. Brandner discussed contracts ending with Lancaster and Douglas Counties. She added that there are questions about the true cost of caring for youth in detention facilities. She also noted that Probation is doing well at determining which youth should be on probation and using diversion programs to keep this population very targeted.

Members discussed the statewide approach as opposed to a community-based approach. Brandner noted the differences between what a community like Lincoln needs and a community like Grand Island needs. Members talked about the difficulty in hiring clinical-level staff in rural communities.

## 11. Kids Count Presentation

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The Commission welcomed Joshua Shirk from Voices for Children to present information from the [2022 Kids Count Report](#).

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## 12. Commission Membership & Vacancies

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Adam Anderson reminded the Commission members to visit the [Governor's Website](#) for the appointment application to the Commission. He noted that all member terms on the Children's Commission will expire on June 30, 2023, and that application for reappointment will need to be made. He shared that Commission staff will hopefully be in contact with the Governor's Office prior to the end of the current term.

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## 13. Committee Update

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### Alternative Response Committee

AR Co-Chair Monika Gross shared that there are four active workgroups working on identifying priorities and recommendations for the August meeting of the Children's Commission. She shared information regarding the work of the workgroups and next steps. Amanda Adams noted the need for additional Chairs for two workgroups.

### Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee:

Co-Chair Richard Hasty shared information regarding the May 4th meeting of the B2i Advisory Committee. He shared updates from the Data and Evaluation Workgroup, noting that Heather Wood provided data from the recent outcomes towards participants' goals. He noted specific data points from the report. Hasty shared recommendations from the workgroup.

### Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee:

FCRRC Co-Chair Felicia Nelsen noted that the most recent meeting was cancelled due to overlap with the 1173 meeting. Amanda Adams shared information regarding the work of the workgroups. She noted that the Base Rate Workgroup will not be changing the formula and will be recommending a rate increase. She also shared some of the history regarding the work of the Treatment Family Care Workgroup. Members discussed the rate of the recommended increase.

### Juvenile Services Committee:

JSC Co-Chair Deb VanDyke-Ries updated the Commission that the Racial and Ethnic Disparities and the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center workgroups are working towards reforming with new leadership. She shared information regarding the Access to Services workgroup, noting that they are working on recommendations regarding a Community Treatment Aide service and Care Coordination service recommendations.

### Strengthening Families Act Committee:

Amanda Adams shared an update from Co-Chair Ron Giesselmann regarding the work of the Committee as well as the work of the Subcommittees.

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## 14. Public Comment

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Chair Flowers opened the floor for public comment. There was none.

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## 15. New Business

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Amanda Adams shared that the Commission would like to begin planning an all-day retreat to be held November 14, 2023. Members discussed locations and options.

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## 16. Upcoming Meeting Planning

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- a. August 8, 2023
- b. November 14, 2023

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## 17. Adjourn

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The meeting adjourned at 1:50 PM

Respectfully Submitted,  
Adam Anderson