

Nebraska Children's Commission

Fourteenth Meeting
August 20, 2013
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Country Inn and Suites, Omaha Room
5353 N. 27th Street, Lincoln, NE

Call to Order

Karen Authier called the meeting to order at 9:05am and noted that the Open Meetings Act information was posted in the room as required by state law.

Roll Call

Commission Members present: Pam Allen, Karen Authier, Beth Baxter, Nancy Forney, Candy Kennedy-Goergen, Kim Hawekotte, Janteice Holston, Martin Klein, Norman Langemach, Jennifer Nelson, David Newell, John Northrop, Mary Jo Pankoke, Dale Shotkoski, Becky Sorensen, and Susan Staab.

Commission Members absent: Gene Klein and Andrea Miller.

Ex Officio Members present: Ellen Brokofsky, Senator Kathy Campbell, Senator Colby Coash, Hon. Linda Porter, Thomas Pristow, Julie Rogers, Vicky Weisz, and Kerry Winterer.

Ex Officio Members absent: Senator Jeremy Nordquist.

Also in attendance: Leesa Sorensen from the Nebraska Children's Commission.

Approval of July 16, 2013, Minutes

A motion was made by John Northrop to approve minutes of the July 16, 2013, meeting. The motion was seconded by Candy Kennedy-Goergen. Voting yes: Pam Allen, Karen Authier, Beth Baxter, Nancy Forney, Candy Kennedy-Goergen, Kim Hawekotte, Janteice Holston, Martin Klein, Jennifer Nelson, David Newell, John Northrop, Mary Jo Pankoke, Dale Shotkoski, Becky Sorensen, and Susan Staab. Voting no: none. Gene Klein, Norman Langemach, and Andrea Miller were absent. Motion carried.

Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Beth Baxter to approve the agenda, as written. The motion was seconded by John Northrop. Voting yes: Pam Allen, Karen Authier, Beth Baxter, Nancy Forney, Candy Kennedy-Goergen, Kim Hawekotte, Janteice Holston, Martin Klein, Jennifer Nelson, David Newell, John Northrop, Mary Jo Pankoke, Dale Shotkoski, Becky Sorensen, and Susan Staab.

Voting no: none. Gene Klein, Norman Langemach, and Andrea Miller were absent. Motion carried.

Chairperson's Report

Karen Authier informed the Commission members that the Nebraska Children's Commission website would be shut down by DHHS at the conclusion of the August 20, 2013, Commission meeting. The Commission is currently working on getting a new website set up but was delayed due to the budget not being in effect until July 1, 2013.

Karen also provided information on the hiring of the policy analyst as required by LB269. The Department of Administrative services has not yet completed its work on the job description. The position will be posted as soon as the description is approved.

Leesa is working on a new membership listing that will include the new Commission members added by LB269.

Karen provided an overview of the items that would be covered during the meeting including the Juvenile Services (OJS) committee action items; the nomination of committee members for the Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee; the System of Care Grant panel presentation; and the presentation of facilitated conferencing information as required originally by LB821.

Karen also noted that the Commission has a large amount of work to accomplish in order to meet the deadlines established in legislation. Karen indicated that due to the volume of work, the group may need to consider extending meeting times in October and November. Karen informed the group that Leesa Sorensen would be sending out an e-mail poll to check on Commission member availability.

Legislative Update

Senator Colby Coash provided information on a November 14 public hearing regarding the front-end processes in child protective services to gather input on potential improvements. The afternoon session of the hearing will address Native American placements and jurisdiction issues. Senator Coash invited Commission members to contact him if they felt they had information and a perspective that would be helpful for the planned hearings.

Young Adult Voluntary Services and Support Advisory Committee Report

Mary Jo Pankoke reported on the Young Adult Voluntary Services and Supports Advisory Committee (YA Committee), including an update on the July 31, 2013, meeting. The committee created six workgroups to develop recommendations related to the work required by LB216. The YA Committee collaborated with DHHS to combine the identified workgroups with internal committees already created by DHHS. The workgroups are: 1) Eligibility and Transition from

Current Service Array; 2) Case Management and Supportive Services; 3) Placement; 4) Case Oversight; 5) Communication/Marketing; and 6) State Extended Guardianship Assistance Program. Mary Jo reported that there has also been great participation on the workgroups by a variety of stakeholders.

Mary Jo indicated that the YA Committee will be meeting on September 3, 2013, to review the proposed recommendations from the six workgroups. The YA Committee plans to have a panel presentation on the recommendations for the Children's Commission meeting on September 17.

Juvenile Services (OJS) Committee Report

Ellen Brokofsky and Martin Klein provided an update on the Juvenile Services Committee, including a written report. The committee held a full day meeting on August 13 to continue its work on the strategic recommendations of the Juvenile Services (OJS) Committee. During the August 13 meeting, the committee discussed the recommendations made in the *Nebraska Juvenile Justice System Evaluation* report written by Dr. Terry Lee. The report evaluated the Nebraska juvenile justice system and made recommendations to improve the system of care. The key points highlighted by committee members included legal representation for youth; enhanced family engagement in the juvenile justice process; evidence-based practices; and proper youth assessment. The committee will be utilizing this report as it continues the strategic planning process.

Marty reported that the committee has one nominee for a vacancy on the OJS committee. The committee voted on August 13 to nominate Cindy Gans, Director of Community-Based Juvenile Services Aid, Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice for the open committee position. Marty also noted that Stacy Conroy would no longer be functioning as a resource to the committee due to accepting a new position. A motion was made by Marty Klein to approve Cindy Gans for OJS committee membership. The motion was seconded by Mary Jo Pankoke. Voting yes: Pam Allen, Karen Authier, Beth Baxter, Nancy Forney, Candy Kennedy-Goergen, Kim Hawekotte, Janteice Holston, Martin Klein, Jennifer Nelson, David Newell, John Northrop, Mary Jo Pankoke, Dale Shotkoski, Becky Sorensen, and Susan Staab. Voting no: none. Gene Klein, Norman Langemach, and Andrea Miller were absent. Motion carried.

Ellen reported that on August 13, 2013, the committee approved the August 9, 2013 draft of the Solicitation of Proposals to select a technical consultant/facilitator/writer. The committee voted to recommend to the Nebraska Children's Commission that the Solicitation of Proposals be approved as written. If approved at the August 20, 2013, Children's Commission meeting, the proposal will then be immediately distributed to the community in order to contract with a technical consultant/facilitator/writer as a contractor by no later than September 3, 2013. The contractor will be working with the Juvenile Services (OJS) Committee to facilitate the remaining strategic planning efforts and write a report that will fulfill the requirements as outlined in LB 561. It is the intention of the committee that the finalized draft Juvenile Services (OJS) committee report will be delivered to the Nebraska Children's Commission for consideration at its November 19, 2013 meeting. A motion was made by Marty Klein to approve the August 9, 2013 Solicitation of Proposals, as written. The motion was seconded by Susan

Staab. Voting yes: Pam Allen, Karen Authier, Beth Baxter, Nancy Forney, Candy Kennedy-Goergen, Kim Hawekotte, Janteice Holston, Martin Klein, Norman Langemach, Jennifer Nelson, David Newell, John Northrop, Mary Jo Pankoke, Dale Shotkoski, Becky Sorensen, and Susan Staab. Voting no: none. Gene Klein and Andrea Miller were absent. Motion carried.

Ellen provided information on the Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility visit that took place on July 19, 2013. Members of the Juvenile Services (OJS) committee and the Nebraska Children's Commission toured the Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility. Warden Ryan Mahr arranged for the group to speak with three youth who are currently being held in that facility. The youth answered questions from the committee about what led to each of the youth being involved in the juvenile justice system. It was noted that many of the youth in this facility did not receive family visits and that many of the youth distrusted the juvenile justice system.

Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee Nominations

Karen Authier reminded Commission members about the nomination request form that was e-mailed to Commission members in July, for the Foster Care Reimbursement Rate committee. Karen Authier, Beth Baxter, Pam Allen, and Thomas Pristow served as a nominating committee to prepare a slate of nominees from applications/nominations that were received.

Pam Allen provided a list of nominees for the Commission's consideration to approve as members of the Foster Care Reimbursement Rate committee and made a motion to accept the list of nominees and to have Peg Harriott function as the Chair of the committee. The nominees are: Peg Harriott (Chair), Susan Henrie, Jackie Meyer, Katie McLeese Stephenson, Ryan Suhr, Corrie Edwards, Lana Temple-Plotz, Shannon-Jo Hamilton, Barb Nissen, David Newell, Alana Pearson, Bev Stutzman, Jena Davenport, Sherry Moore, Bobby Loud, Leigh Esau, Thomas Pristow, Sara Goscha, Lindy Bryceson, Debbie Silverman, Michele Anderson, and Karen Knapp. The motion was seconded by Mary Jo Pankoke. Voting yes: Pam Allen, Karen Authier, Beth Baxter, Nancy Forney, Candy Kennedy-Goergen, Kim Hawekotte, Janteice Holston, Martin Klein, Norman Langemach, Jennifer Nelson, David Newell, Mary Jo Pankoke, Dale Shotkoski, Becky Sorensen, and Susan Staab. Voting no: none. Gene Klein, Andrea Miller and John Northrop were absent. Motion carried.

Ellen Brokofsky suggested that it might be helpful to have someone representing juvenile justice issues on the committee. Ellen recommended that the committee consider adding Richard Pope. A motion was made by Susan Staab to add Richard Pope to the Foster Care Reimbursement Rate committee as an ex-officio member. The motion was seconded by Janteice Holston. Voting yes: Pam Allen, Karen Authier, Beth Baxter, Nancy Forney, Candy Kennedy-Goergen, Kim Hawekotte, Janteice Holston, Martin Klein, Norman Langemach, Jennifer Nelson, David Newell, John Northrop, Mary Jo Pankoke, Dale Shotkoski, Becky Sorensen, and Susan Staab. Voting no: none. Gene Klein and Andrea Miller were absent. Motion carried.

System of Care Grant Report

Vicki Maca and Sheri Dawson provided a presentation on the Substance Abuse – Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) System of Care Expansion Planning Grant. The award period for the grant is July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014, and provides a federal award of \$504,500 with a State and local match of \$311,654. The grant will be used to help create a planning framework to infuse systems of care through the system with coordination and integration across partnerships. The goals of the planning grant are to: 1) develop a plan to infuse the system of care (SOC) framework and philosophy to improve the lives of children experiencing serious mental health challenges (SED) and their families; 2) develop a logic model describing inputs, approaches, outputs and outcomes to support infusion of SOC approach statewide; and 3) develop a culturally and linguistically competent social marketing/strategic communication plan. Vicki and Sheri also reviewed the SOC structure, planning phases, key planning processes, and the SOC workgroup list of stakeholders identified in the grant application. The list of stakeholders includes the Nebraska Children's Commission. Vicki and Sheri indicated that they would be willing to give updates to the Commission as the process moves forward.

Facilitated Conferences in Juvenile Court

Kelli Kauptman and Judge Larry Gendler provided a presentation on facilitated conferencing and mediation in Nebraska juvenile cases. The presentation including information on the purpose of facilitation/mediation, types of facilitation/mediation, outcome data, frequency of facilitation, current capacity for facilitation, and recommendations related to facilitation/mediation for consideration by the Nebraska Children's Commission. The types of facilitation/mediation currently used include: Initial Pre-hearing Conference; Family Group Conference; PHPR – Permanency Pre-hearing Conference; PHTPR – Pre-hearing TPR Conference; Child Welfare Mediation; and Restorative Justice/Victim-offender Mediation.

A motion was made by Marty Klein to recess the Commission meeting for work group meetings. The motion was seconded by Beth Baxter. Voting yes: Pam Allen, Karen Authier, Beth Baxter, Nancy Forney, Candy Kennedy-Goergen, Kim Hawekotte, Janteice Holston, Martin Klein, Norman Langemach, Jennifer Nelson, David Newell, John Northrop, Mary Jo Pankoke, Dale Shotkoski, Becky Sorensen, and Susan Staab. Voting no: none. Gene Klein and Andrea Miller were absent. Motion carried.

The Commission recessed at 11:10am for work group discussions that included members of the public.

The Commission reconvened at 11:49am.

Commission Members present: Pam Allen, Karen Authier, Beth Baxter, Nancy Forney, Candy Kennedy-Goergen, Kim Hawekotte, Janteice Holston, Martin Klein, Norman Langemach, Jennifer Nelson, David Newell, John Northrop, Mary Jo Pankoke, Dale Shotkoski, Becky Sorensen, and Susan Staab.

Commission Members absent: Gene Klein and Andrea Miller.

Ex Officio Members present: Ellen Brokofsky, Senator Kathy Campbell, Senator Colby Coash, Hon. Linda Porter, Thomas Pristow, Julie Rogers, Vicky Weisz, and Kerry Winterer.

Ex Officio Members absent: Senator Jeremy Nordquist.

Phase II Strategic Plan – Workgroup Reports

Each workgroup reported on the work they are currently doing related to the four goals included in the Phase 1 Strategic Plan:

Community Ownership

The Community Ownership workgroup discussed the possibility of creating a Handbook for Communities that will help share lessons learned and items to consider for newer community groups. The workgroup discussed how the listening session information can be used for a model or tool kit especially for smaller communities. The workgroup also discussed the need to begin formulating the next series of recommendations for the Phase II strategic plan.

Workforce

The Workforce workgroup invited DHHS staff to speak with them about workforce training, development, and human resource issues. The workgroup plans to continue those discussions at future Commission meetings. The workgroup hopes to discuss staff retention and career trajectories as a part of these future discussions. The workgroup is also researching tuition reimbursement and student loan forgiveness possibilities.

Technology

The Technology workgroup continued its discussion of whole population measures. The workgroup will meet on September 6 at 1:30pm. The workgroup plans to review information about community initiatives and information about the Iowa data system.

System of Care

The System of Care workgroup discussed the System of Care planning grant in greater detail with Vicki Maca and Sheri Dawson during the workgroup time. The workgroup specifically discussed readiness assessments, opportunities for collaboration with the Community Ownership workgroup, and the process for bringing various groups together.

New Business

John Northrop provided copies of an August 16, 2013, Hastings Tribune newspaper article about Nebraska Chief Justice Mike Heavican's tour of the Maryland Living Center. The center opened August 1 and is a permanent housing facility that works to transition homeless youth ages 16 to 24 into independent living within 12 to 18 months. The Hastings Community has been recognized for its efforts in renovating the structure to serve the homeless youth population in their community.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is September 17, 2013, 9:00am-12:00pm at the Country Inns and Suites, 5353 North 27th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska. The meeting will be held in the Lighthouse room.

Adjourn

A motion was made by Janteice Holston to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Becky Sorensen. The meeting adjourned at 12:02pm.

DRAFT

Nebraska Children's Commission
Voting
Pam Allen
Karen Authier
Beth Baxter
Nancy Forney
Candy Kennedy Goergen
Kim Hawekotte
Janteice Holston
Gene Klein
Martin Klein
Norman Langemach
Andrea Miller
Jennifer Nelson
David Newell
John Northrop
Mary Jo Pankoke
Dale Shotkoski
Becky Sorensen
Susan Staab
Ex Officio
Ellen Brokofsky
Senator Kathy Campbell
Senator Colby Coash
Senator Jeremy Nordquist
Hon. Linda Porter
Thomas Pristow
Julie Rogers
Vicky Weisz
Kerry Winterer

Psychotropic Medications Committee
Voting
Pam Allen
Beth Baxter
Amanda Blankenship
Candy Kennedy-Goergen
Sara Goscha
Norman Langemach
Carla Lasley
Jen Nelson
Kayla Pope
Gary Rihanek
Blaine Shaffer
Kristi Weber
Vicky Weisz
Gregg Wright

Nebraska Children's Commission Committee Lists

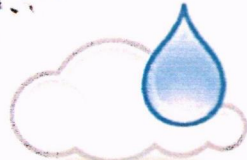
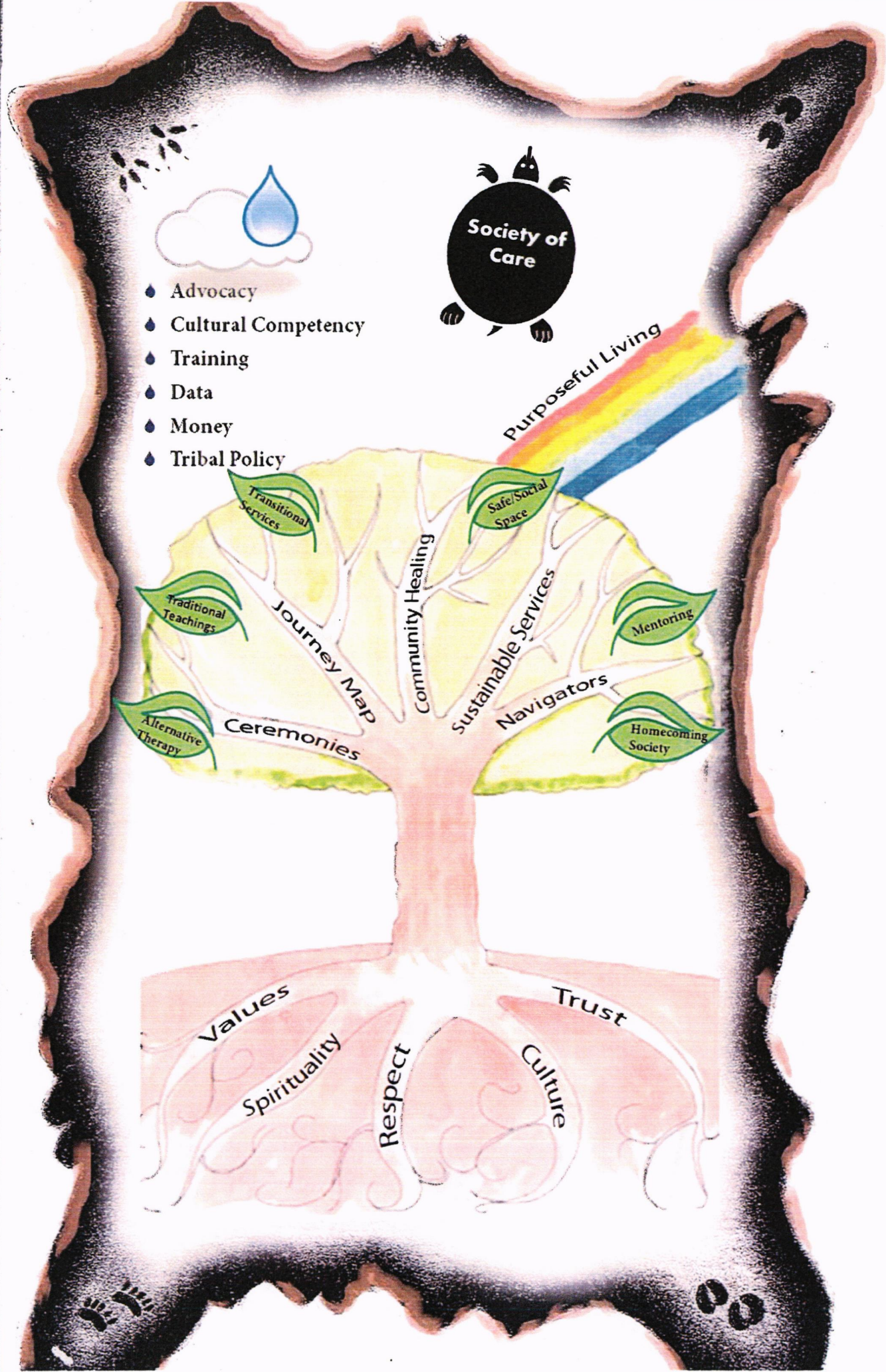
Last Revised: September 16, 2013

Juvenile Services (OJS) Committee
Voting
Martin Klein
Ellen Brokofsky
Kim Culp
Barb Fitzgerald
Sarah Forrest
Cindy Gans
Judge Larry Gendler
Kim Hawekotte
Anne Hobbs
Ron Johns
Nick Juliano
Tina Marroquin
Mark Mason
Jana Peterson
Pastor Tony Sanders
Corey Steel
Monica Miles Steffens
Dalene Walker
Dr. Ken Zoucha
Resources to Committee
Senator Kathy Campbell
Senator Colby Coash
Jim Bennett
Tony Green
Liz Hruska
Doug Koebernick
Jerall Moreland
Dr. Liz Neeley
Jenn Piatt
Hank Robinson
Julie Rogers
Dan Scarborough
Amy Williams

Young Adult Services and Support Advisory Committee
Voting
Mary Jo Pankoke
Jodie Austin
Corrie Edwards
Jan Fitts
Brandy Gustoff
Sarah Helvey
Janteice Holston
Augusta Kamara
Doug Lenz
Sararose Luichinger
Richard Mazikani
Mary Fraser Meints
Amy Peters
Jill Schubauer
Jennifer Skala
Lana Verbrigghe
Resources to Committee
Senator Kate Bolz
Nathan Busch
Judge Douglas F. Johnson
Vicky Weisz
Amy Williams
Workgroup Members
Sue Adams
Crystal Aldmeyer
Pam Allen
Mindi Alley
Stephanie Beran
James Bowers
James Bowers
Neleigh Boyer
Deanna Brakhage
Greg Brockmeier
Shannon Brower
Phillip Burrell
Moh Yin Chang
Linda Cox
Judy Dierkhising
Manuel Escimilla
Jason Feldhaus
Mary Furnas
Cindy Goodin
Loretta Goracke
Sara Goscha
Mary Kate Gulick
Shannon-Jo Hamilton
Bernis Hascall
Liz Hruska

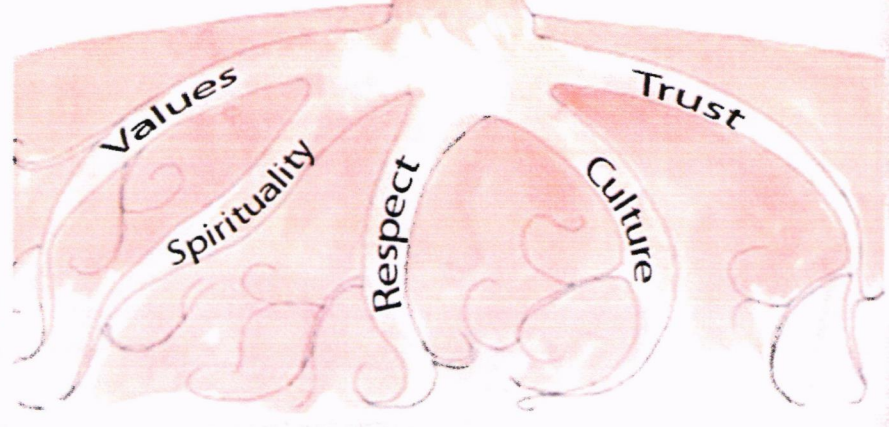
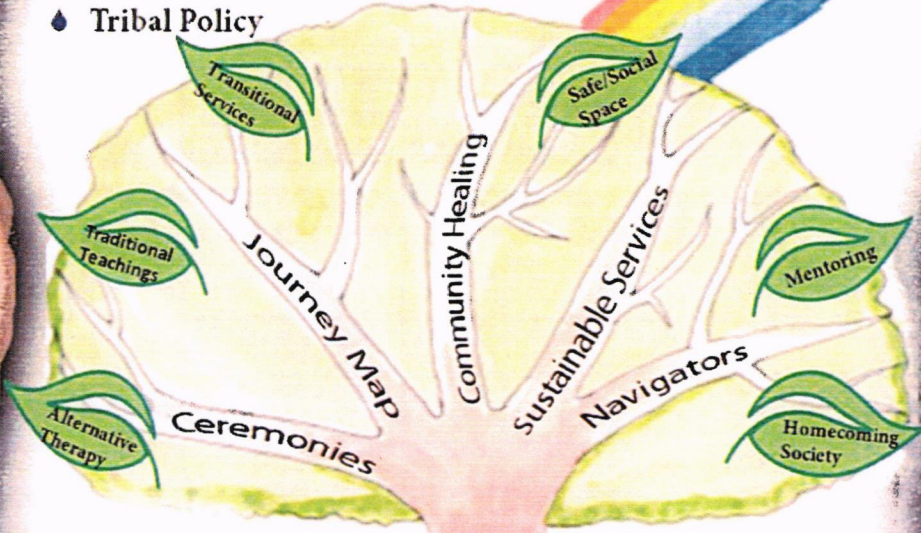
Workgroup Members (continued)
Elisabeth Hurst
S.K. Jensen
Jennifer Johnson
Shelly Johnson
Wendy Kemp
Corrie Kielty
Ronda Newman
Tracy Poppe
Russ Reno
Sara Riffel
Judge Randin Roland
Shaun Satterfield
Meagann Schweitzer
Nanette Simmons
Sarah Sujith
Chessie Vessley
Schalisha Walker
Amy West
Brenda Weyers
Cristen White
Jodi Wilke

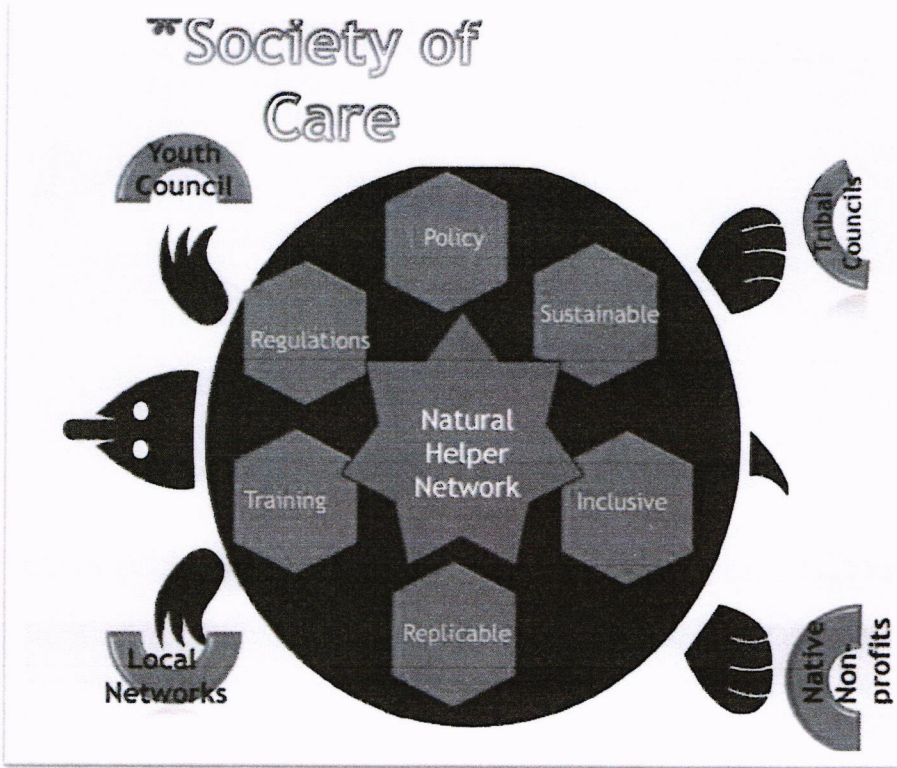
Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee
Voting
Peg Harriott
Jena Davenport
Corrie Edwards
Leigh Esau
Shannon-Jo Hamilton
Susan Henrie
Bobby Loud
Jackie Meyer
Sherry Moore
David Newell
Barb Nissen
Alana Pearson
Katie McLeese Stephenson
Bev Stutzman
Ryan Suhr
Lana Temple-Plotz
Ex Officio
Richard Pope
Michele Anderson
Lindy Bryceson
Sara Goscha
Karen Knapp
Thomas Pristow
Debbie Silverman



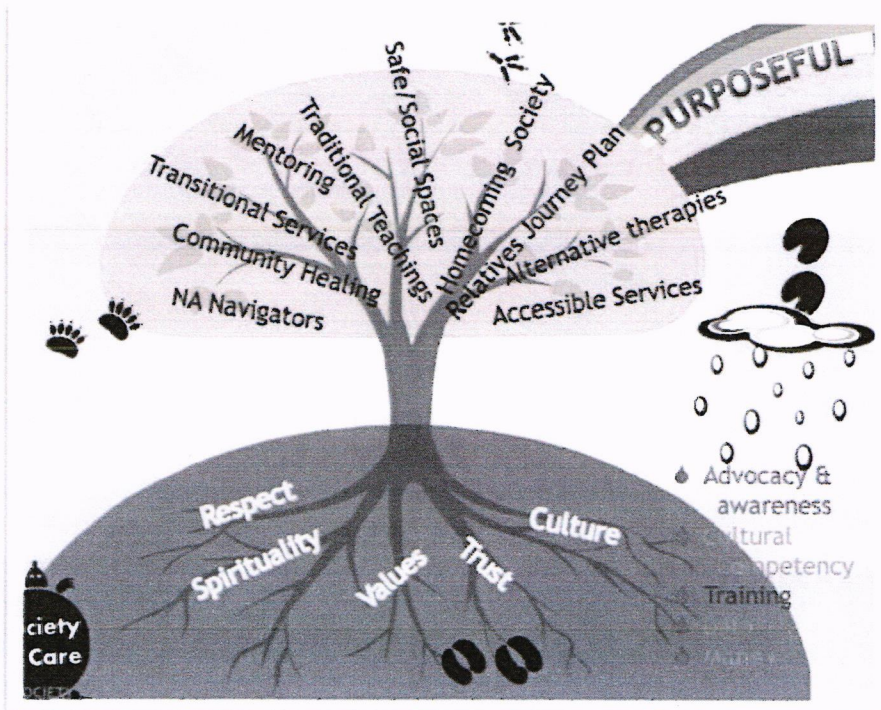
- ◆ Advocacy
- ◆ Cultural Competency
- ◆ Training
- ◆ Data
- ◆ Money
- ◆ Tribal Policy

Purposeful Living

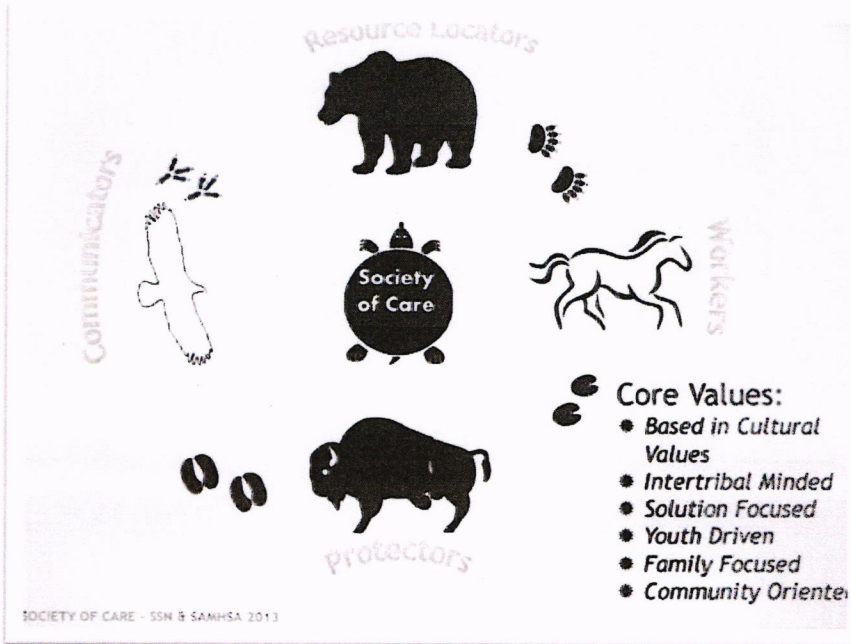




Notes



Notes



Notes

“SOCIETY” OF CARE

SOC FINAL EVENT:
 SHARE-A-MONY
 AUGUST 23, 2013
 OHIYA CASINO RESORT
 NIOBRARA, NE

SSN SOC CONTACT:
 -Teresa Remick,
ziziyawin11@gmail.com

CO-PROJECT DIRECTORS:
 -Teresa “Teri” Dameron,
teridameron@gmail.com
 -Darlene Lee,
navajo.darlene@gmail.com

RESEARCH SPECIALIST:
 -Juan “JP” Ramirez, PhD,
jprmaps@gmail.com

Asst. Project Coordinator:
 Lucinda Mesteth,
lumesteth@gmail.com

Project Coordinator: Frank BearKiller,
frankbearkiller@gmail.com

Notes

**LB 530 Pilot – Level of Care Assessments
Commission Meeting
9-16-2013**

June, 2013

- The urban site selected for the pilot was Lincoln. The rural sites are Lincoln County-North Platte, Adams County-Hastings and Platte County-Columbus which represent the three service areas generally known as rural Nebraska. These sites were determined through discussion with QA and in order to reach statistical significance, a minimum of 350 assessments will be completed.

July, 2013

- John Lyons, PhD and author of the CANS completed an overview of the tool for CFS specialists, supervisors, administrators and quality assurance staff.
- CFS staff (comprised of Specialists, resource development staff, supervisors, administrators, central office staff) completed “train the trainer” certification.
- Cohort lists of children placed in foster homes for at least 90 days prior to July 15 were sent to the four sites.

August 2013

- Three webinar trainings were held to train staff in the Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility Tool. This webinar was recorded and is available to staff on an ongoing basis.

September 2013

- 75 CANS and NCRs have been completed in the four pilot areas.
- A QA tool has been developed to review the assessments completed, and a review of 100 assessments will be completed by November 10th.
- Additional lists sent to the sites of children placed in foster homes prior to July 2013, not on the original cohort list.

Pilot till June 30th 14

Currently the four areas are continuing to complete the assessment tools.

Juvenile Services (OJS) Committee

Report to the Nebraska Children's Commission September 17, 2013

Co-Chairperson: Ellen Brokofsky, Nebraska Children's Commission, State Probation Administrator
– Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation

Co-Chairperson: Martin Klein, Nebraska Children's Commission, Deputy Hall County Attorney

Committee members:

- Kim Culp, Director -Douglas County Juvenile Assessment Center
- Barbara Fitzgerald, Coordinator - Yankee Hill Programs – Lincoln Public Schools
- Sarah Forrest, Policy Coordinator – Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice – Voices for Children
- Cindy Gans, Director of Community-Based Juvenile Services Aid – Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice
- Judge Larry Gendler, Separate Juvenile Court Judge for Sarpy County, NE
- Kim Hawekotte, Director – Foster Care Review Office (former CEO – KVC Nebraska)
- Dr. Anne Hobbs, Director – Juvenile Justice Institute, University of Nebraska, Omaha
- Ron Johns, Administrator – Scotts Bluff County Detention Center
- Nick Juliano, Senior Director of Business Development – Boys Town
- Tina Marroquin, Lancaster County Attorney
- Mark Mason, Program Director - Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation
- Jana Peterson, Facility Administrator – YRTC, Kearney
- Corey Steel, Assistant Deputy Administrator for Juvenile Services, Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation
- Monica Miles-Steffens, Executive Director – Nebraska Juvenile Justice association & Nebraska JDAI Statewide Coordinator
- Pastor Tony Sanders, CEO – Family First: A Call to Action
- Dalene Walker, Parent
- Dr. Ken Zoucha, Program Medical Director - Hastings Juvenile Chemical Dependency

Resources to the Committee:

- Sen. Kathy Campbell
- Sen. Colby Coash
- Doug Koebernick, Legislative Assistant for Senator Steve Lathrop
- Jerall Moreland, Assistant Ombudsman - Nebraska Ombudsman's Office
- Dr. Liz Neeley, Nebraska Bar Association, Supreme Court Minority Justice Committee
- Dr. Hank Robinson, Director of Research, Nebraska Department of Corrections
- Dan Scarborough, Facility Administrator – YRTC, Geneva
- Amy Williams, Legislative Assistant for Senator Amanda McGill

Meeting Dates:

January 9, 2013
February 12, 2013
March 12, 2013
April 9, 2013

May 14, 2013
June 11, 2013
August 13, 2013
September 10, 2013

Activities:

Technical Consultant/Facilitator/Writer:

The Juvenile Services (OJS) committee received 3 proposals for the Technical Consultant/Facilitator/Writer position. On September 5, 2013, Schmeeckle Research Inc. was selected as the contractor for this project.

The Juvenile Services (OJS) Committee met on September 10, 2013. Joan Frances facilitated the discussion with assistance from Joyce Schmeeckle and Will Schmeeckle. The committee created draft framework recommendations to add to the strategic planning efforts. The committee will meet again for facilitated discussion on October 8, 2013. It is the intention of the committee that the finalized draft Juvenile Services (OJS) committee report will be delivered to the Nebraska Children's Commission for consideration at its November 19, 2013 meeting.

Young Adult Voluntary Services and Support Advisory Committee
Report on Initial Implementation of the Voluntary Services & Support Act
September 17, 2013

The Young Adult Voluntary Services and Support Advisory Committee (YAVSSAC) was appointed by the Nebraska Children's Commission to make recommendations to the Dept. of Health and Human Services and the Nebraska Children's Commission for a statewide implementation plan meeting the extended services program requirements of the Young Adult Voluntary Services and Support Act. Six workgroups comprised of Advisory Committee members and other stakeholders were established to cover the following key areas of implementation:

- Policy, Eligibility, and Transition into the Program
- Outreach, Marketing and Communications
- Case Management, Supportive Services and Housing
- Case Oversight
- Evaluation and Data Collection
- Fiscal Monitoring Issues and State-Funded Guardianship

The workgroups generated recommendations with input from a wide variety of stakeholders from throughout Nebraska and in close partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services. The Advisory Committee voted to approve the recommendations from each of the workgroups at their meeting on September 3, 2013. The recommendations are intended to provide thoughtful initial guidance for effective implementation of the Young Adult Voluntary Services and Support Act. The work groups will continue to address issues in their respective areas and will present additional recommendations to the YAVSSAC at their October meeting. Those recommendations will form the basis for the YAVSSAC's next report, which is due December 15, 2013.

Following are the recommendations approved by the YAVSSAC on September 3, 2013.

Policy, Eligibility, and Transition into the Program

Note: Additional details on outreach materials and ongoing communication with young adults about the program are included in Section II, Outreach, Marketing and Communications. Section II also recommends that DHHS pursue a public-private partnership to support development of new communication materials and outreach activities to ensure young adults have a smooth transition into the program).

I. Initial Communication and Transition into the Program for Young Adults in the Former Ward Program.

- A. All current and past recipients of the Former Ward Program who have not yet turned 21 (and will not turn 21 prior to implementation of the extended program) should be sent a clear, written notice about the extended program prior to December 1, 2013, informing them of:
1. The rights of eligible young adults to receive extended services and support;
 2. Information about eligibility and program requirements;
 3. The types of services and support young adults may receive in the program;

4. How young adults can access the program;
 5. Other requirements of written notice per Sec. 17 (6);
 6. An outline of differences between the Voluntary Services and Support Program and the Former Ward Program; and
 7. What will happen with the Former Ward Program (e.g. when services through the Former Ward program will cease to exit).
- B. By December 1, 2013, a representative of the Department (or current Former Ward staff member) will make contact - or attempt to make contact - with all current and past recipients of Former Ward who have not yet turned 21 to provide information verbally and via all available and appropriate channels (e.g. text, Facebook, social media, etc.) about the program and how young adults can sign up, review differences from the Former Ward Program, and ask the young adult if he/she would like to participate in the extended program.
- C. If the young adult indicates that he/she would like to participate, the department will assess eligibility and, if the young adult is eligible and consents, arrange for the voluntary services and support agreement to be signed and filed with the court in the timeframe necessary to prevent a lapse in services between the transition from the Former Ward Program to the extended program, if applicable.
- D. Communication with these young adults about the program will include referral to YAVSS orientation class. This is discussed in more detail in the Outreach, Marketing and Communications section. DHHS should explore a public-private partnership to implement this orientation class to help off-set administrative costs to DHHS without compromising the communications experience for critical audience segments.

It is important to ensure that specific changes are clearly communicated to young adults and efforts are made to avoid service interruption as young adults transition from one program to another and/or as the department implements the extended program. For instance, room and board fees are currently covered under the Former Ward program, and these funds are distributed directly to the college once per semester. Under the extended program, the funds may be distributed on a monthly basis.

II. Communication and Transition Into the Program for All Young People in Foster Care (age 16 – 19).

- A. The foster care caseworker will provide an annual overview of the extended program including a brochure overviewing service benefits and responsibilities*
- B. As required in LB216 (Sec. 17(6)) 90 days prior to the final court hearing, young adults should be sent a clear, written notice about the extended program, informing them of:
1. The rights of eligible young adults to receive extended services and support;
 2. Information about eligibility and program requirements;
 3. The types of services and support young adults may receive in the program;
 4. How young adults can access the program; and
 5. Other requirements of written notice per Sec. 17 (6).

In addition to this required written notice, 90 days prior to the final court hearing, the foster care caseworker will meet with the young adults, determine if they would like to participate in the program, and refer them to an extended program orientation class. This is discussed in more detail in the Outreach, Marketing and Communications section. DHHS should explore a public-private partnership to implement this orientation class to help off-set administrative costs to DHHS without compromising the communications experience for critical audience segments.

III. Communication to Young Adults Ineligible for the Program.

- A. Young adults determined ineligible for the program will be provided with a clear, written notice similar to that discussed in Sec. 7 (2) of LB 216 informing them of:
1. The explanation for why they were determined to be ineligible (in a clear and developmentally appropriate way);
 2. The process for appealing the decision;
 3. Information about the option to sign up for the program once the young adult establishes eligibility; and
 4. Information about and contact information for community resources that may benefit the young adult, specifically including information regarding state programs established pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 677.

This written notice should also include information about eligibility and program requirements. Additionally, a representative of the department (or current Former Ward staff member) will make contact - or attempt to make contact - with each of these young adults to provide information verbally and through all available and appropriate channels (e.g. text, Facebook, social media, etc.) about the determination that the young adult is not eligible. The verbal communication should include an explanation of those items bulleted above. These young adults will be referred to a workshop on becoming eligible for the program. This is discussed in more detail in the Outreach, Marketing and Communications section. DHHS should explore a public-private partnership to implement this orientation class to help off-set administrative costs to DHHS without compromising the communications experience for critical audience segments.

IV. Communication to Young Adults Who Opt Out of the Program.

- A. Young adults are provided an information packet that includes the process for re-enrolling if they change their mind, an eligibility checklist, a resource directory (as per Sec. 7(1)) and an exit survey. DHHS should explore a public-private partnership to develop these items to help off-set administrative costs to DHHS without compromising the communications experience for critical audience segments.
- B. Young adults receive quarterly check-in messages via Facebook, text or email from YAVSS worker. DHHS should explore a public-private partnership to help off-set administrative costs.

V. Communication to Young Adults Who Become Ineligible for the Program After Participating.

- A. The extended program caseworker provides young adults with the required ineligibility notification (per Sec. 7(2)) 30 days before services cease. In addition to the required written notice, this communication should be delivered through every available communication channel (email/call/text/Facebook).
- B. There should be an in-person exit meeting with an extended program caseworker 30 days before services cease with an exit packet that includes an appeal information sheet, an eligibility checklist, and resource directory. These young adults should also be referred to a workshop on becoming eligible for the program. This is discussed in more detail in the Outreach, Marketing, and Communications section. DHHS should explore a public-private partnership to implement this workshop and develop these items to help off-set administrative costs to DHHS without compromising the communications experience for critical audience segments.
- C. YAVSS worker makes 90-day eligibility check ins (by all available communication channels).

Note: An option under consideration by the Advisory Committee is the automatic triggering of a court hearing if a young adult in the program is determined to be ineligible, so this section may be subject to further change pending the outcome of that decision.

Outreach, Marketing and Communications

Note: see attachment A, which presents the more detailed communications plan developed by the work plan; details on these recommendations.

I. Program Name Recognition.

- A. Bridge to Independence (preferred choice of Young Adults surveyed)
- B. LEAP (Launching Emerging Adults to Permanence)

DHHS in partnership with private agencies should implement a communications plan targeting young adults, case workers, services providers, and media/public/policy makers. Any underlined tactics are materials or experiences that must be newly created. DHHS should explore a public-private partnership to develop these items to help off-set administrative costs to DHHS without compromising the communications experience for critical audience segments. Items with asterisks represent priority recommendations.

II. Audience Segments Who Should Be Targeted with Communication and Outreach.

- A. Young adults
 - 1. Minors, 16-18, in foster care (YAVSS prep)
 - 2. Young adults 18-19, eligible for and opting into the extended program (YAVSS orientation)
 - 3. Young adults 18-19 who are NOT eligible to enter the extended program (YAVSS ineligibles)

4. Young adults, 19-21, eligible and participating in the extended program (YAVSS retention)
 5. Young adults, 19-20, who become ineligible after participation and are dropped from the program (YAVSS drops)
 6. Young adults, 19-21, who opt out of the program, either at the time of initial eligibility or after a period of participation (YAVSS opt-outs)
 7. 21-year-old graduates of the extended program (YAVSS Grads)
 8. Young adults who are currently in Former Ward who need to transition to the extended program (Former Wards)
 9. Young adults, 19-20, who have been dropped from the Former Ward program, but may be eligible for the extended program (Former Ward drops)
- B. Case Workers and Supervisors
1. Foster care caseworkers and supervisors
 2. Extended program caseworkers
- C. Service Providers
- D. Media/Public/Policy Makers
1. Communications will be designed to reach the public and policy makers via the media. Policy-maker specific communications will be in the form of periodic program performance reporting.

III. Communication Strategies that Should Be Implemented by Segment.

Note: Strategies specific to informing young adults of eligibility, determining eligibility, and informing of ineligibility are included in Section I (the Policy, Eligibility, and Transition into the Program Section).

- A. All young adults: information about the extended program will be provided on its own web presence. While likely housed on the DHHS site, we recommend a friendly URL and information architecture that's independent from the rest of the DHHS site so that it aligns with web usability best practices.*
- B. YAVSS Orientation (See Section I for eligibility outreach):
1. Program Orientation, including overview of eligibility, available services and how to navigate the program.* This is ideally facilitated by a private agency to save DHHS dollars and is put on once a month.
 2. "My Life" binder (given at orientation) including:*
 - Orientation materials
 - Resource directory
 - YAVSS required materials (signed agreement, etc.)
 - Tabs for all the other areas of life (health care, housing, finances, education, etc.) so even transient young adults will have one place to keep their materials.
- C. YAVSS Ineligibles (See Section I for ineligibility outreach)
1. Get Eligible Now Workshop - individual or small group sessions facilitated by a private agency focusing intensively on getting young adults enrolled in school, job training or employed immediately

- D. YAVSS Retention
 - 1. Quarterly eNews sharing resources and events that might be interesting and valuable to them (career nights, college fairs, budgeting classes, etc.) and that provide success stories from other young adults.
 - 2. Closed Facebook group where updates are shared and young adults can network with each other and ask questions.
 - 3. Text reminders from the extended program caseworker of meetings, events, etc.
- E. YAVSS Drops (See Section I)
- F. YAVSS Opt – outs (See Section I)
- G. YAVSS Grads
 - 1. Exit packet including resource directory and exit survey
- H. Former Wards (See Section I)
- I. Former Wards Drops (See Section I)
- J. Foster Care Caseworkers and Supervisors
 - 1. YAVSS training session* that includes visits from young adults who have benefited (or would have benefited) from the extended program. These young adults will share the struggles of aging out.
 - 2. YAVSS reference guide*
 - 3. YAVSS checklist that will enable foster care caseworkers to make sure they're hitting every mandatory point with every young person they work with.
 - 4. YAVSS overview brochures to be distributed to YAVSS Prep young adults
 - 5. YAVSS exit packets for ineligible and opt-out young adults
 - 6. A minimum of once-yearly visits by young adults who have benefited (or would have benefited) from the extended program at a caseworker staff meeting
 - 7. Stories on the extended program's successes in any regular department communications (eNews, newsletter, etc.)
 - 8. Monthly conference calls for caseworkers and supervisors to share experiences and learn from one another and inclusion in existing operations meetings
- K. YAVSS Caseworkers and Supervisors
 - 1. An extended program caseworker website, housing all forms and brochures to be printed or ordered on demand, a peer-to-peer caseworker forum, success stories, training event schedule. This will be housed on the DHHS website, but likely created by a private agency and given a friendly URL to adhere to usability best practices.
 - 2. Monthly or quarterly eNews
 - 3. Extended program caseworker conference calls
- L. Service Providers
 - 1. Fact sheets to communicate the needs and potential negative outcomes of young adults who have aged out of care, as well as the counteracting benefits provided by the extended program
 - 2. Brochures overviewing the benefits of the extended program

3. Program launch trainings in all service areas providing detailed, program specific information and materials to service providers
 4. Quarterly lunch & learns (rotate service area) to train service providers on the extended program, provide materials and let them meet their extended program contact
- M. Media/Public/Policy makers (non-regulatory communications that will filter through the media to public and policy makers)
1. Program launch press conference*
 2. Press kit including*
 - New program vs. Former Ward comparison sheet
 - Costs expected to be avoided by making a better transition to adulthood
 - Goals of the program/purpose
 3. Three months post-launch of intensive pitching around:
 - New training geared toward young adults
 - Increases in enrollment/employment among young adults
 - New program workers and how they differ from traditional caseworkers
 - Interviews with promising young adults
 4. Monthly or bimonthly media pitches by private agencies or other partners thereafter featuring young adult stories
 5. Annual outcomes stories/program review pitches

Case Management, Supportive Services, and Housing

- I. **Culture Change.** DHHS must recognize providing services through the Young Adult Voluntary Services (this program) will be a big culture change, not only for DHHS' Children and Family Services but also the Legal System.
 - A. DHHS is coming from a position of an adversary in the minds of these young adults. Young adults are apprehensive about DHHS being in this role. If DHHS doesn't do well at the beginning, trust will be lost.
 - B. DHHS will switch from a compliance role to being a partner with the young adults. Young adults driven. Give up the power. Strength-based. Guide the young adult to help them make decisions.
 - C. The role of the people who work with the young adult is hands-on with connections to community services. Relationships are key.
 - D. The system must be able to tolerate risk. When scrutinized, the system has to continue to remain true to its principle of Youth-driven.
 1. Media and political scrutiny sometimes result in more rules and DHHS must be able to resist that to benefit the young adult.
- II. **Recruitment, Selection, Training and Support of Staff and Supervisors.**
 - A. Staff who work with the young adults should be titled "Independence Coordinators". The title was created and voted upon by members of Project Everlast.

- B. Independence Coordinators (IC) should be specially trained. They should have specialized caseloads, when feasible. Supervisors should be specialized and trained and may need to work across service areas. Peer support should be provided to the Independence Coordinators.
- C. Care needs to be taken to select the ICs because a different skill set is required than for those who manage child and family caseloads.
- D. Caseload size should range from 15 in the rural areas up to 20 in urban areas. If young adults need more intensive services, such as for mental health services, they may be referred to others, such as the Regional Behavioral Health system.

III. Coordination and Collaboration.

- A. Children and Family Services must ensure other divisions within DHHS, are involved and collaborating regarding this population to ensure their needs are met. Divisions which must be involved are: Medicaid, Adult Protective Services, Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, Access Nebraska. These divisions will have valuable knowledge of resources and programs these young adults may be eligible for. They may be able to streamline processes for the young adults. Coordination and collaboration with community services and partners is critical because many serve this population and a collaborative approach ensures the most effective use of resources.

IV. Training that Addresses and Helps Professionals to Understand the Developmental Needs of Young Adults.

- A. Intense, comprehensive and focused towards needs, strengths and goals of the young adult. (see list of training topics in attachment B)
- B. Bring in experts from the community.
- C. Use curriculums that are already developed.
- D. Train judges, system partners.

V. DHHS Case Management Practice for the YAVSS Program.

- A. Case management should follow an evidence-based model that is developmentally appropriate and respectful of young adults' autonomy.
- B. The terms used by DHHS and others are important. DHHS should refer to housing as housing options rather than placements and should not refer to young adults as being placed.

The workgroup learned at the beginning of our assignment that Thomas Pristow had decided that DHHS will do case management for this population. As the group answered the Guiding Questions, several key points surfaced. That information is in the longer document from the work group. The work group recognizes and appreciates the open and collaborative process of the Rules and Regulation Work Group. DHHS should continue to be collaborative and invite feedback throughout the development and implementation process. We will all be working outside of our comfort zone as we figure this out, but debate is productive and must continue. Everyone wants this to succeed for the young adults and the outcomes for the young adults are most important.

VI. Housing Options.

- A. Housing decisions should be directed by the young adult, with case managers being as flexible as possible. Case managers or other case professionals should not immediately decline the young adult's housing plan. Rather, if case professionals have concerns regarding safety, the case manager should first explore the option of developing a contingency plan with the young adult in an effort to allow the decision to be young adult-directed and respectful of the young adult's autonomy while still maintaining safety. It is important that young adults have the opportunity to make mistakes within the safety net offered by this program.
- B. Supervised Independent Living Setting options should include as many options as possible, such as single or shared apartment, house, college dormitory, other post-secondary educational or vocational housing (e.g. sorority/fraternity housing), parental home, scattered site housing, supportive housing, host homes, transitional living programs, halfway housing, three quarter way housing, sober living housing, etc. Mental health facilities and treatment facilities should also be included as housing options. A wide variety of housing options is necessary to provide for the variety of needs of young adults.
- C. Whenever possible, housing subsidies should be provided directly to young adults. If that is unable to happen, an informal contract should be developed between the young adult and the third party recipient to clarify how the subsidy will be used. IV-E requirements must be met in specific settings. The case manager should help facilitate this process in a way that is empowering to the young adult.

Case Oversight

I. Case Reviews.

- A. Recommend that a report or other documentation be completed at the 6-month case review. If an agreement is reached on the status and progress of the case, the report would be signed by the young adult and the Department and submitted to the court. This would give the court background on the 6-month case review for the 12-month permanency hearing or other hearing. If there is a lack of agreement, it would be documented in the report and the young adult can choose not to sign the report if they wish. Regardless of whether they agree or disagree, the young adult should be provided information about how to request a hearing and/or an attorney. There should be further discussion of what this report should look like and how it can be young adult-friendly.
- B. Recommend that the Mediation Centers conduct 6-month reviews in a structure similar to pre-hearing conferences based on recommendations and needs of the young adult. The justification is that the Mediation Centers have an existing process that feeds into court reviews, have statewide infrastructure and trained facilitators that are uniquely qualified to give people voice and could be very young adult-directed. Young adults would be invited and encouraged but not required to attend 6-month reviews. Young adults that do not attend the review would have the opportunity to provide input in writing.
 - 1. The workgroup also considered the Foster Care Review Office as an alternative. Benefits of the FCRO include that there is an existing process in place that could be modified to fit this need, the ability to track and disseminate data and that the FCRO is an independent state agency that does not receive DHHS funding.

II. Permanency Hearings.

- A. Recommend that legislation be introduced to require that permanency hearings and other requested hearings in these cases be expedited.
- B. Recommend that a hearing officer be appointed if the young adult makes a request, time necessitates it (i.e., a hearing before a judge would cause significant delay), the young adult does not want the judge to hear their case or the judge believes a hearing officer should be appointed.
- C. Recommend that the Nebraska Supreme Court promulgate a rule on hearing officers in juvenile courts pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 24-230 (5). The Case Oversight workgroup of Young Adult Voluntary Support and Services Advisory Committee will also request to propose recommendations for the rule to the Nebraska Supreme Court.

The workgroup agreed that there should be a young adult-friendly form created and approved to enable the young adult to request a hearing (i.e., a hearing request form).

III. Meaningful Participation of Young Adults.

- A. Recommend that reviews follow best practice recommendations from *the Jim Casey Young Adults Opportunities Initiative Issue Brief*¹ for ensuring young adults are full partners in the process, the venue of reviews are young adult-friendly, and that young adults are prepared for meaningful participation, including:
 - 1. Ensuring the venue is young adult-friendly should include that reviews take place in an informal setting/outside the courtroom whenever possible, that those responsible for reviews have training on how to ask questions to young adults, and that reviews are scheduled at times that allow for the participation of young adults (i.e., physical presence whenever possible and when young adults cannot be physically present or decline to attend, have an option to participate in reviews using technology or have their voice heard through an appropriate advocate).
 - 2. Preparing the young person for meaningful participation should start with notice of time, place and purpose of the review and the right to and role of an attorney, letting the young adult know how they can initiate a hearing to address problems or concerns that arise between reviews, identification of other people the young person may want to be present at reviews and help in making arrangements for their attendance, and helping the young person prepare for how they will respond to issues of concern that may arise in the hearing.
- B. There should be outreach to young adults and developmentally appropriate ways for young adults to be informed about this program and to access information about their rights and the hearing process, including a video and/or brochure, website, Facebook page, a phone number to call for assistance if there is a problem (perhaps associated with the helpline or Project Everlast) and notice and reminders sent via text message.
- C. Nebraska should further examine how to incorporate a model of peer advocates into this program.

¹ *Success Beyond 18: Re-Examining the Foster Care Review Process: Extended Foster Care as a Catalyst for Improved Practices and Better Outcomes*, Issue Brief, Jim Casey Young Adults Opportunities Initiative (August 2013).

The workgroup agreed that these are only initial recommendations in this area. There should be more discussion to flesh these out, including who are responsible to assist the young adult in the various aspects.

IV. Training.

- A. Recommend training for professionals involved in these cases, including attorneys, judges, CASAs and others. The training for attorneys should supplement the current guardian ad litem training, and should be offered as a webinar for ease of participation. Other training opportunities, such as a more advanced training or training required or incorporated into the GAL Guidelines, should be considered in the future.

The workgroup discussed that training should cover how a GAL should advise a potentially-eligible young adult about the program and the role of the attorney if appointed to represent a young adult in the extended program, and should offer CLE, GAL and ethics credits whenever possible. The workgroup agreed that the Court Improvement Project should provide and/or partner to provide this training. The workgroup also agreed that there should be templates, protocols and forms developed to assist young adults, judges, reviewers, attorneys and other professionals.

Evaluation and Data Collection Recommendations

I. Evaluation Tool.

- A. Currently, federal requirements mandate that all states implement a 22-question National Young Adults in Transition Database (NYTD) survey with all Young Adults in foster care at 17, and then again at 19 and 21. Nebraska implemented this survey with 17-year-olds in Oct. 2010 and will do so again in Oct. of this year (selection occurs every 3 years). States have the option of implementing two more comprehensive versions of NYTD instead of the basic 22-question survey, which are known as NYTD Plus Abbreviated (57 questions) and NYTD Plus Full (88 questions). In order to compare outcomes of young adults in the extended services and support program to those who are not in the program, we recommend that DHHS switch from the 22-question NYTD survey to a slightly altered version of NYTD Plus Abbreviated. We also recommend that all young adults in the extended program be surveyed at the time of entry and every 6 months after so progress can be tracked. Gathering data every 6 months will also allow for outcomes to be measured for young adults who participate in the program for a shorter period of time, such as 1 year. Surveys from young adults in the extended program can be collected either at two set times per year (similar to how Project Everlast/Opportunity Passport collect surveys) or at regular 6 month intervals, which the caseworker will be responsible for tracking. Surveys may be collected from young adults *not* in the extended program at 19 and 21, per federal guidelines. Caseworkers can enlist the support of providers in reaching and gathering data from young adults. If possible, we recommend that random ID numbers be assigned to maintain confidentiality.
- B. DHHS should explore the possibility of other providers and stakeholders adding to the data collected from young adults who are not in the extended program by collecting the same altered version of NYTD Plus Abbreviated from their populations served, or by otherwise supporting the collection of this data. For example, the Regions could add a question to their

Transition Age Young Adults (TAY) Referral Form asking if the young person has taken the NYTD survey. If it is not possible for data collected by providers and stakeholders to be stored with DHHS's data, we recommend that there be a way to easily and quickly consolidate data when needed for purposes of analysis.

- C. DHHS should look into private funding streams to explore the possibility of offering incentives to both groups of young adults to encourage participation in the survey.

II. Fiscal Accountability.

- A. DHHS should track all expenditures and provide quarterly reports detailing itemized program service costs and program administrative costs, including specifics about administrative costs, salaries, etc., to the Advisory Committee. This should also include itemized adoption/guardianship costs and the state-extended guardianship assistance program costs.
- B. The Advisory Committee should review these reports, provide recommendations to DHHS and the Children's Commission if necessary, and include the financial reports and any recommendations made as a part of their annual report to the Children's Commission, HHS Committee of the Legislature, DHHS, and the Governor of the state of Nebraska.

III. Tracking Supportive Services.

- A. To ensure young adults are receiving the supportive services they need to guide them to success, case managers should clearly document and track specific services provided in the young adult's transition plan and in reports for case reviews and permanency hearings.
- B. Judges or hearing officers or both should utilize a series of age-appropriate questions modeled after those in Through the Eyes' Transition Planning Guide (currently in progress) or in NRCYD's resource during hearings to asking young adults about their transition plan, services they're receiving, etc.
- C. An independent entity should review a sampling of case files for young adults in the extended program to track service provision.

IV. Young Adult Satisfaction.

- A. To assess young adults' experiences with case management, case reviews, attorneys, etc., one-page satisfaction surveys should be provided to young adults just before case reviews and permanency hearings. This would be distinct from, but could be combined with or otherwise accompany, the Young Adults Court Questionnaire.
 - 1. Judges or hearing officers should review these surveys before the hearing, speak one-on-one to the young adult if needed, and use this feedback in making orders regarding service provision. Likewise, the entity in charge of case reviews should review these surveys before the review, speak one-on-one to the young adult if needed, and use this feedback during the case review.
- B. A comprehensive exit survey should be collected from young adults leaving the program to assess the reason for leaving and overall satisfaction with the experience. We recommend that DHHS explore public/private partnerships to make this happen.

V. **Public/Private Partnership.**

- A. DHHS should seek private funding and explore public/private partnerships to support the implementation of these recommendations.

Fiscal Monitoring Issues and State Funded Guardianship

Note: Recommendations (all committee members strongly agreed or agreed with the following (listed in prioritized order) :

- A. DHHS will need to remove barriers to licensure (including educating potential guardians of the benefits of licensure and providing a list of long term care options, educating case workers, non-safety waivers) to ensure that more young adults can be served by the Federal Guardianship Assistance Program.
- B. Information regarding extended services should be provided to all relevant court stakeholders (judges, hearing officers, attorneys) to ensure that orders and petitions are IV-E compliant.
- C. DHHS should provide an easy-to-understand document (script?) to all caseworkers, judges, appointed attorneys, applicable young adults, providers, potential guardians and foster parents detailing the eligibility requirements for the Young Adult Voluntary Services and Support program.
- D. DHHS will provide financial support for state extended guardianships to the extent possible with the \$400,000 appropriation, after which the young adult should be transferred to NCCF (or other entity) for money distribution and education/work eligibility. DHHS should continue to maintain NFOCUS records.
 - 1. If the state general fund allocation of \$400,000 is the only funding source permitted to support the state extended guardianship program, extended subsidies should be provided to young adults at the assessed rate until the age of 20 (one year).
- E. An Income Maintenance Foster Care (IMFC) worker should review the financial needs and behavioral risks of the young adult prior to the age of 19 to determine the amount of subsidy to be provided by the state extended guardianship subsidy.
- F. No formal case management services will be provided under the state extended guardianship assistance program. Instead, an IMFC worker should conduct the initial eligibility assessment, with the young adult meeting with the IMFC once every 6 months to verify continued eligibility.
- G. State extended guardianship assistance subsidy payments should be paid directly to the young adult, or as developmentally appropriate, direct payments to the young adult could be phased in over time. A partnership agreement between the guardian and young adult should be considered and other staggering support system should be in place to learn how to budget appropriately.
 - 1. For any young adult whose guardian fails or is unable to distribute the supportive payment to the young adult, DHHS should set forth a grievance procedure.

CHAPTER 10
YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY SERVICES AND SUPPORT
BRIDGE TO INDEPENDENCE

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CHAPTER 10
YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY SERVICES AND SUPPORT:
BRIDGE TO INDEPENDENCE

10-001 GENERAL BACKGROUND

10-001.01 Legal Basis: These regulations are authorized by and implement the Young Adult Voluntary Services and Support Act (YAVSSA), Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 43-4501 to 43-4514. Applicable federal authority includes but is not limited to the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-351), which amended Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act.

10-001.02 Purpose and Scope: This chapter governs the administration of the Young Adult Voluntary Services and Support Act, also referred to as Bridge to Independence.

10-002 DEFINITIONS

Bridge to Independence means the program provided under Young Adult Voluntary Extended Services and Support Act described in this chapter. This term is used interchangeably with Young Adult Services and Support (YAVSS).

Case management means support provided by the Department to a young adult to complement his/her own efforts toward self-sufficiency.

Department means the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

Foster care maintenance payment means a financial payment made to or on behalf of a young adult to cover the cost the young adult's basic needs. Foster care maintenance payments under Bridge to Independence shall remain at least at the rate set immediately prior to the young adult's exit from foster care.

Host home means a setting in which a young adult resides in the home of an adult or family (who may or may not be related to the young adult), shares basic facilities, and agrees to basic expectations as established by the host home, young adult, and the Department.

Independence Coordinator means a Department employee who is responsible for providing case management to a young adult.

Part-time enrollment means enrollment in an education program for at least 6 credit hours.

Post-secondary education means education beyond secondary education including, but not limited to university, college, vocational or trade schools, and other settings of higher education.

Public benefits mean public assistance including, but not limited to, the following: aid to dependent children, supplemental security income, social security disability income, social security survivors benefits, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, developmentally disabled program, and low-income home energy assistance program.

Secondary education means high school or a program leading to an equivalent to a high school diploma (examples include, but are not limited to, a public or private high school, a college-preparatory school, a GED program, an independent study program, or home schooling).

Voluntary services and support agreement means a voluntary placement agreement as defined in 42 U.S.C. § 672(c) between the Department and a young adult as his or her own guardian.

Young adult means an individual who has attained nineteen years of age but who has not attained twenty-one years of age and who is an applicant for or participant in the Bridge to Independence program.

10-003 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: In order to participate in Bridge to Independence, the following elements of eligibility must be met:

1. Prior abuse/neglect juvenile adjudication (see section 10-003.01);
2. Citizenship/Lawful presence (see section 10-003.02);
3. Educational or employment conditions (see section 10-003.03);
4. Placement and living arrangement (see section 10-003.04); and
5. Voluntary services and support agreement (see section 10-003.05).

10-003.01 Eligible Individuals In order to be eligible for Bridge to Independence a young adult must have previously been adjudicated to be a juvenile described in subdivision (3) (a) of Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-247 and, upon attaining nineteen years of age, was in an out-home placement or had been discharged to independent living, provided that they meet the requirements below.

A young adult may apply or re-apply for Bridge to Independence at any time before his/ her 21st birthday.

10-003.02 Citizenship/Lawful presence requirements In order to participate in Bridge to Independence, a young adult must be a citizen of the United States or an alien lawfully admitted into the United States who is eligible to receive assistance under Section 472(a)(4) of the Social Security Act.

10-003.02A Exception If a young adult does not meet the citizenship/lawful presence requirement but may be eligible for special immigrant juvenile status as defined in 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(27)(J) or other immigration relief, the Department may assist the young adult in obtaining the necessary state court findings and then applying for special immigrant juvenile status or applying for other immigration relief that the young adult may be eligible for, subject to the following:

1. The Department cannot provide legal advice to a young adult;
2. A young adult is responsible for any filing fees, court costs, attorney's fees, other costs associated with such action; and
3. The Department will not pay for any associated costs to obtain residency status.

10-003.03 Educational or Employment Conditions: A young adult must meet at least one of the participation requirements described in 10-003.03A through 10-003.03D in order to be eligible for Bridge to Independence:

10-003.03A Education:

1. The young adult is enrolled at least part-time (6 credit hours) in a secondary education program.
 - a. A young adult who is on semester, summer, or other break, but was enrolled the previous semester and will be enrolled after the break, is considered to be enrolled in school.
 - b. A secondary education program that is equivalent to 6 credit hours may be accepted if agreed to by the Department and the young adult.
2. The young adult is enrolled at least part-time (6 credit hours) in a post-secondary education program.
 - a. A young adult who is on semester, summer, or other break, but was enrolled the previous semester and will be enrolled after the break, is considered enrolled in school.

- b. A post-secondary education program equivalent to 6 credit hours may be accepted if agreed to by the Department and the young adult.
3. A young adult enrolled in an education program less than part-time must participate in or attend another program or activity as described in 10-003.03C for a minimum of 20 hours per month.

10-003.03B Employment: Employed for at least eighty hours per month. The employment requirement may be satisfied through one or more places of employment, so long as the young adult meets the minimum of eighty hours per month.

10-003.03C Participating in programs or activities designed to promote employment or remove barriers to employment:

1. A young adult may participate in other programs or activities that improve enhance or teach job-related skills applicable to the workplace or careers. These types of programs and activities include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Activities and classroom instruction on career awareness, exploration, and preparation such as those provided through the local workforce centers;
 - b. Internships, job shadowing, on-the-job training positions and volunteer projects;
 - c. Supported employment;
 - d. Apprenticeship programs;
 - e. Programs such as Job Corps or other young adult initiatives that improve workplace knowledge and skills;
 - f. Job Search;
 - g. Other programs or activities as agreed to by the Department and the young adult.
2. A young adult must participate in a program or activity or a combination of programs or activities described in item 1, above, for a minimum of 40 hours a month.

10-003.03D Incapable of participation: A young adult who is incapable of doing any of the activities described in 10-003.03A through 10-003.03C due to a medical condition will be deemed to meet the educational or employment conditions.

10-003.03E Transitioning between participation activities If a young adult is no longer engaged in one of the educational, employment, or work-related program/activities necessary to meet participation requirements, the young adult has 30 days in which to begin participation in another education, employment or work-related program/activity.

10-003.04 Housing or living arrangement requirements In order to be eligible for the Bridge to Independence program, a young adult must agree to continued care and placement responsibility by the Department. Young adults participating in Bridge to Independence may reside in-state or out-of-state in one of the following housing or living arrangements that have been approved by The Department:

1. Licensed foster family home; or
2. Licensed foster care facility, including:
 - a. Licensed group home;
 - b. Licensed child-caring agency or residential child-caring agency; or
3. A supervised independent living setting, which may include but is not limited to:
 - a. Single or shared residence, such as an apartment or house;
 - b. Host home;
 - c. College dormitory or other post-secondary education housing;
 - d. Emergency shelter;
 - e. Parental home;
 - f. Transitional living program;
 - g. Institutions in which a young adult is living voluntarily, including:
 - i. Licensed mental health treatment facility
 - ii. Licensed substance abuse treatment facility
 - iii. Other Adult Treatment Facility
 - h. Other supervised independent living setting approved by the Department.

A young adult residing in an approved supervised independent living setting must be supervised or monitored by a Department employee a minimum of once every 30 days.

10-003.04A Changes in placement or living arrangement: Changes in living arrangements must be reported to and approved by the Department.

10-003.05 Voluntary services and support agreement: A young adult must sign a voluntary services and support agreement on a Department-approved form in order to participate in Bridge to Independence. The agreement is not final until it is signed by both the young adult and an authorized Department representative.

10-003.05A If a voluntary services and support agreement is initially signed when the young adult is under age 19, in order to continue participation in Bridge to Independence, the young adult must re-affirm the voluntary services and support agreement by re-signing it within 30 days after reaching age 19.

10-003.05B By signing a voluntary services and support agreement a young adult agrees to the following:

1. That the Department will have continued placement and care responsibility for the young adult;
2. That the young adult will meet the educational or employment conditions as described in section 10-003.03;
3. That the young adult will cooperate in maintaining regular contact with the Department.

10-003.05C The young adult will receive a copy of the voluntary services and support agreement, which will include:

1. Program eligibility requirements;
2. Educational or employment conditions;
3. Services and Supports the young adult will receive through the Bridge to Independence program;
4. The voluntary nature of the young adult participation in Bridge to Independence and the young adult's right to terminate the voluntary services support agreement at any time;
5. The conditions that may result in the termination of the voluntary services support agreement and the young adult's early discharge from the Young Bridge to Independence program;
6. The young adult's right to request an attorney;
7. The young adult's right to request a review hearing with the juvenile court having jurisdiction over the case; and
8. The responsibilities of the Department.

10-004 ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION AND VERIFICATION

10-004.01 Verification of educational or employment conditions: A young adult's educational or employment conditions, as required in section 10-003.03, must be verified by submission of one or more of the following acceptable documents:

1. For young adults participating in an education program:
 - a. Current post-secondary transcripts that include number of hours completed; or
 - b. Proof of enrollment in secondary or post-secondary education for the current semester that includes the number of hours enrolled; or
 - c. Current High School class schedule; or
 - d. GED class or testing schedules; or
 - e. Letters of acceptance to a college, vocational or technical school (including a start date), or other qualified program such as GED programs. Letters of acceptance are only considered acceptable documentation if the young adult has not yet enrolled but intends to enroll prior to the next semester or term; or
 - f. Current Individual Educational Plan (IEP); or
 - g. Proof of enrollment in on-line distance learning classes; or
 - h. An approved Education and Training Voucher (ETV) application; or
 - i. Other documentation as agreed by the Department and the young adult.
2. For young adults participating in employment:
 - a. Current pay stub(s); or
 - b. Other documentation as agreed to by the Department and the young adult.
3. For young adults participating in programs or activities to promote employment or remove barriers to employment:
 - a. Written acknowledgement from an instructor or other staff that the young adult has enrolled or participated in a program or activity (with dates included); or
 - b. Current classroom or testing schedules related to any of the programs or activities described in 10-003.03C; or
 - c. Schedules or logs demonstrating participation in an internship, job shadowing, on-the-job training, or volunteer projects, which are signed or acknowledged by an instructor or staff; or
 - d. Certification or other proof of attendance at job readiness programs; or
 - c. Other documentation as agreed to by the Department and the young adult.

4. For young adults who are incapable of meeting the educational or employment conditions:
 - a. A statement from one or more medical professionals that documents the young adult's condition; or
 - b. Determination of a disability from Social Security Administration; or
 - c. Determination of a developmental disability by the Department's Division of Developmental Disabilities; or
 - d. Other documentation as agreed to by the Department and the young adult

10-004.02 Ongoing Verification of Eligibility

10-004.02A Eligibility reviews: Eligibility for a young adult participating in Bridge to Independence will be reviewed every six months.

10-004.02B Acceptable documentation for eligibility reviews: Upon receipt of a verification request from the Department, the young adult will provide the same documentation that is required for initial eligibility.

10-004.02C Duty to respond to verification requests: A young adult will have 30 days after the verification request is mailed to provide verification for continued eligibility.

10-004.03 Duty to Report Changes: A young adult has a duty to report any changes that may affect eligibility within 10 business days. Failure to timely report may affect eligibility.

10-005 SERVICES: Extended services and support provided under the Bridge to Independence program include:

10-005.01 Medical care under the medical assistance program

1. A young adult who is determined to be IV-E eligible will be provided Medicaid.
2. A young adult who is determined non IV-E is entitled to apply for medical assistance through the Medicaid program; mere application does not guarantee eligibility. In order to qualify for medical assistance benefits, a young adult must meet specific eligibility requirements.

10-005.02 Housing and support

1. Housing or living arrangements for a young adult will comply with section 10-003.04;
2. Financial support for a young adult will be in the form of continued foster care maintenance payments, as follows:
 - a. Foster care maintenance payments for a young adult residing in a foster home or foster care facility will be sent to the foster family home;
 - b. For a young adult residing in a supervised independent living setting, all or part of the foster care maintenance payments may be sent directly to the young adult or may be sent to an entity providing housing or services to the young adult or a third-party payee or other intermediary.

10-005.03 Case Management: Case Management includes assistance with the following:

1. Obtaining employment or other financial support;
 - a. The Department does not guarantee employment and does not provide direct financial support other than monthly maintenance payment or other funding through other Department programs in which the young adult qualifies for in his or her own right.
2. Obtaining a government-issued identification card;
 - a. If the Department has not previously provided the young adult with a certified birth certificate and/or social security card within the past 12 months, the Department shall do so one time for each document at no cost to the young adult.
 - b. If the Department has previously provided a certified birth certificate and/or social security card to the young adult within the past 12 months, the Department will assist the young adult to obtain a replacement certificate or card but the young adult is responsible for any associated fees.
 - c. The Department will assist the young adult in obtaining other government-issued identification cards, such as a driver's license or state identification card. The young adult is responsible for any associated fees.

3. Opening and maintaining a bank account;
 - a. The young adult is responsible for any associated fees.
4. Obtaining appropriate community resources, including health, mental health, developmental disability, and other disability services and support;
 - a. The young adult is responsible for any premiums, copayments, share of cost, or other costs related to accessing the above-listed services. The Department will assist the young adult in applying for and accessing the services described above.
5. When appropriate, satisfying any juvenile justice system requirements and assisting with sealing the young adult's juvenile court record if the young adult is eligible under Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-2,108.01;
 - a. The Department cannot provide legal advice to the young adult.
 - b. The young adult is responsible for any filing fees, court costs, attorney's fees, other costs associated with such action.
 - c. The young adult is responsible for any fines, restitution, or other penalties related to juvenile justice cases.
6. Completing secondary education;
 - a. The young adult is responsible for any associated costs.
7. Applying for admission and aid for postsecondary education or vocational courses;
 - a. The young adult is responsible for application fees, tuition, course fees, and other associated costs.
8. Obtaining the necessary state court findings and then applying for immigration relief that the young adult may be eligible for (See section 10-002.02A for special immigrant juvenile status);
 - a. The Department cannot provide legal advice to the young adult.
 - b. The young adult is responsible for any application or filing fees, court costs, attorney's fees, other costs associated with such action.
9. Creating a health care power of attorney in compliance with the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Public Law 111-148;
 - a. The Department cannot provide legal advice to the young adult.
 - b. The young adult is responsible for any attorney's fees or other costs associated with establishing a health care power of attorney.

10. Obtaining a copy of health and education records of the young adult;
- a. The young adult is responsible for any associated costs.
11. Applying for any public benefits or benefits that the young adult may be eligible for or may be due through his or her parents or relatives, including, but not limited to, aid to dependent children, supplemental security income, social security disability insurance, social security survivors benefits, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and low-income home energy assistance programs;
- a. The Department does not guarantee eligibility for any public benefits, including those administered by the Department. The Department will assist the young adult in applying for the public benefits as described above.
12. Maintaining relationships with individuals who are important to the young adult, including searching for individuals with whom the young adult has lost contact;
- a. The young adult is responsible for any associated costs.
13. Accessing information about maternal and paternal relatives, including any siblings;
- a. The Department may only disclose information as allowed under state and federal law. Participation in the Bridge to Independence program does not entitle the young adult to access information to which he or she would not be entitled if he or she were not enrolled in the Bridge to Independence program.
14. Accessing young adult empowerment opportunities and peer support groups; and
- a. The young adult is responsible for any associated costs.
15. Accessing pregnancy and parenting resources and services.
- a. The young adult is responsible for any premiums, copayments, share of cost, or other costs related to accessing pregnancy and parenting resources and services. The Department will assist the young adult in applying for and accessing the services described above.

10-005.04 Excluded Services: The Department will not:

1. Assume responsibility or liability for any losses or damages incurred by a young adult;
2. Sign releases of information or other forms requiring the young adult's consent on behalf of a young adult;
3. Assume responsibility for any contracts entered into by a young adult;
4. Co-sign leases or contracts with a young adult.

10-006 TERMINATION

10-006.01 Termination initiated by a young adult

1. A termination request initiated by a young adult must be submitted to the Department in writing.
2. If no effective date is specified, termination becomes effective at the end of the calendar month in which it is received by the Department.

10-006.02 Termination initiated by the Department

10-006.02A Grounds for termination: The Department may terminate a young adult from the Bridge to Independence program if any of the following occur:

1. The young adult fails to meet any of the eligibility requirements;
2. The young adult reaches his or her 21st birthday;
3. The young adult is incarcerated;
4. The young adult dies;
5. The young adult fails to make or respond to contact with the Independence Coordinator for at least 30 calendar days;
6. The young adult cannot be located for at least 30 calendar days;

10-006.02B Notice of Action. Prior to termination of Bridge to Independence Program, the Department will provide a clear and developmentally appropriate written notice of action to the young adult. This notice will include all information required by Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-4506. The notice will be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested.

10-006.02C Effective date of Department-initiated termination: A termination initiated by the Department will become effective 30 days after a written notice is mailed to the young adult, except in case of the death of the young adult, in which case the termination is effective immediately.

10-007 RE-ENTRY

10-007.01 Re-entry eligibility: Regardless of the reason for a prior termination of a young adult from the Bridge to Independence program, a young adult may re-enter the Bridge to Independence program at any time before his/her 21st birthday, provided he or she meets eligibility requirements at the time of re-entry.

10-007.02 Procedure for re-entry In order to re-enter the Bridge to Independence program, a young adult must:

1. Submit a written re-entry request or application to the Department;
2. Meet all eligibility requirements as described in section 10-003 and provide documentation on current educational or employment conditions as described in section 10-004;
3. Sign a new voluntary services and support agreement with the Department.

10-008 ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS

10-008.01 Notice of Action: Whenever the Department denies or terminates a young adult from the Bridge to Independence Program, the Department will provide a clear and developmentally appropriate written notice of action to the young adult. This notice will include all information required by Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-4506. The notice will be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested.

10-008.02 Right to Appeal: The young adult has the right to an administrative appeal if the Department:

1. Denies an application for the Bridge to Independence program;
2. Terminates a young adult from the Bridge to Independence program; or
3. Denies a young adult's request for re-entry into the Bridge to Independence program.

10-008.03 Procedure and deadline for appeal requests: In order to request an administrative appeal, the young adult must file a written request with the Department within 30 days of the date of the Notice of Action. If a timely appeal request is received by the Department, no change in the young adult's enrollment in the Bridge to Independence program will occur while the appeal is pending.

10-008.04 Appeal Process: All administrative appeals will be held in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-901 et seq., and 465 NAC 6.

10-009 CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

10-009.01 Confidentiality: Information pertaining to a young adult's participation in the Bridge to Independence program is confidential and will not be released to any person except as authorized by state law or when ordered by a court of competent jurisdiction.

10-009.02 Persons or organizations allowed access to information: The Department will only allow access to case information by persons or organizations legally authorized under Nebraska law.

10-009.03 Format of requests for information: A request for information pertaining to a young adult's participation in the Bridge to Independence program must be submitted in writing, on a Department approved form, must describe the information sought with sufficient detail, must identify the person's or organization's authority to receive the requested information, and must be dated, signed, and notarized.

10-010 OPERATIVE DATE

Pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-4514, the Bridge to Independence program shall not begin prior to January 1, 2014. This statute directs the Department to submit a state plan amendment to seek federal Title IV-E funding for this program. If the state plan amendment is approved, the Bridge to Independence program will become operative sixty days after the Department receives notice of approval of the state plan amendment.

If the state plan amendment is denied, the Bridge to Independence program will become operative as a state-only pilot program sixty days after the Department receives notice of the denial.

No individual may receive services under the Bridge to Independence program prior to the operative date specified in Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-4514 and this section.