

Nebraska Children's Commission
Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee

Eleventh Meeting
September 25, 2015
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Airport Country Inn & Suites
1301 West Bond Circle
Lincoln, NE 68521

I. Call to Order

The Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee (FCRRC) Chair, Peg Harriott, called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

II. Roll Call

Committee Members present (11):

Jodie Austin	Peg Harriott	Lana Temple-Plotz
Jude Dean (9:08)	Anne Hobbs	Julia Tse
Corrie Edwards	Felicia Nelsen (9:27)	Michaela Young
Leigh Esau	Dave Newell	

Committee Members absent (6):

Steven Bauer	Vanessa Humaran	Jackie Meyer
Susan Henrie	Bobby Loud	Sherry Moore

Ex Officio Members present (5):

Jeanne Brandner	Karen Knapp	Nanette Simmons
Jodi Hitchler	Stacy Scholten	

Ex Officio Members absent (4):

Michele Anderson	Sherrie Spilde
Jerrilyn Crankshaw	Doug Weinberg

A quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (4):

Bethany Connor Allen.....	Nebraska Children's Commission
Amanda Felton.....	Nebraska Children's Commission
Doug Kreifels.....	DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
Cindy Rudolph.....	CEDARS

a. Notice of Publication

Recorder for the meeting, Amanda Felton, indicated that the notice of publication for this meeting was posted on the Nebraska Public Meetings Calendar website on August 26, 2015 in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. The publication will 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 head table of the meeting room.

III. Approval of Agenda

Chair Harriott presented the agenda to the Committee. A motion was made by Jodie Austin to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Leigh Esau. No further discussion ensued. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (8):

Jodie Austin
Corrie Edwards
Leigh Esau

Peg Harriott
Dave Newell
Lana Temple-Plotz

Julia Tse
Michaela Young

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (1):

Anne Hobbs

ABSENT (8):

Steven Bauer
Jude Dean
Susan Henrie

Vanessa Humaran
Bobby Loud
Jackie Meyer

Sherry Moore
Felicia Nelsen

MOTION CARRIED

IV. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Chair Harriott brought the minutes from the previous July 7, 2015 meeting to the Committee's attention. She inquired as to if there were any corrections. No corrections were provided. Jodie Austin moved to approve the July 7, 2015 FCRRC meeting minutes as presented. Corrie Edwards seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (8):

Jodie Austin
Corrie Edwards
Leigh Esau

Peg Harriott
Dave Newell
Lana Temple-Plotz

Julia Tse
Michaela Young

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (1):

Anne Hobbs

ABSENT (8):

Steven Bauer
Jude Dean
Susan Henrie

Vanessa Humaran
Bobby Loud
Jackie Meyer

Sherry Moore
Felicia Nelsen

MOTION CARRIED

V. Chairperson's Report

Peg Harriott invited everyone in attendance to introduce themselves and mention the role they fill on the FCRRRC. The Chair let the members know that she had met with the new Director of the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Doug Weinberg. She summarized the purpose and history of the FCRRRC for Director Weinberg. He indicated that he had experience with a similar tool and was familiar with the topics that this Committee covers.

The Chair reminded the members that a legislative report is due in July 2016. The report must first go through the Nebraska Children's Commission for approval. Any recommendations that the FCRRRC wished to make would need to be submitted to the Commission by their March 2016 meeting to allow time for any necessary alterations.

Peg directed the Committee to the previous report that was submitted in May of 2014. She explained that the report would be the base for the recommendations that the group will be working on over the next several months. Several of the reoccurring terms and topics used by the Committee were reviewed to assist in guiding discussion.

VI. Public Comment

Chair Harriott invited any members of the public forward. No public comment was offered.

VII. Base Rate Workgroup Report

The Chair welcomed Dave Newell to report on the Base Rate Workgroup. Mr. Newell explained that the Workgroup looked at the current practices regarding the Foster Care Rate across the three agencies, Probation, DCFS, and Nebraska Families Collaborative (NFC). He mentioned that the agencies had not received any complaints or concerns regarding the current rates, but that empirical evidence of this had not been completed. He clarified that this information was purely anecdotal, and that something such as a foster parent survey would provide hard data.

Mr. Newell explained that transportation causes many challenges to foster parents. Each of the three agencies had differing methods for how to reimburse for travel that goes above what would be considered the norm. He also noted that a significant way in which Nebraska differs from other states is that it does not differentiate between kinship care and licensed foster care. As a result of this change, kinship care providers are receiving substantially more reimbursement than previously. Overall, Nebraska falls in the top tier of states for reimbursement rates amounts.

The group delved into the transportation aspect of the reimbursement process. Mr. Newell indicated that while the financial aspect seemed to be operating well for the caregivers, it was the logistical issues that were causing problems. Caregivers have voiced that there is a struggle to get youth, especially if there are multiple in a household, to all of their activities. Agencies continue to struggle with how to address this issue.

Chair Harriott voiced a question that Director Weinberg had asked in their meeting. He had asked if it had been considered to add another age range for youth age 17-18 to encourage foster parents to take on older teens. Conversation lead the group to discuss that the barriers to permanency for older youth falls less so on financial reimbursement than it does for support systems available. The group discussed what kinds of issues and challenges that can occur when deciding to adopt an older youth and ways to combat the stigma associated.

The timeline of when recommendations need to be submitted was reviewed. Lana Temple-Plotz agreed to continue work on a survey to foster parents regarding their opinions of the current reimbursement rates. She would partner with Dave Newell to gather information to present at the next FCRRRC meeting.

VIII. Level of Care Workgroup Report

Lana Temple-Plotz welcomed any of the FCRRRC members who were interested to join the Level of Care (LOC) Workgroup to contact her. She directed the Committee members to the packet of information that was provided. Items that were reevaluated by the LOC Workgroup included transportation issues, clarification of LOC 8 of the Nebraska Caregiver Responsibilities (NCR) tool, disparity between a child's level of need and placement, and the creation of an additional LOC. Ms. Temple-Plotz reminded the members that the NCR tool is made to focus on what the foster parent's responsibilities are and not the child's acuity or need.

Ms. Temple-Plotz reviewed the discussion of the LOC Workgroup members that led to their recommendations regarding transportation. The issue of logistics, once again, seemed to be a reoccurring problem voiced by foster parents. To ensure that the transportation needs of the child were addressed, the LOC Workgroup highlighted the issue in each relevant level of the tool.

Lengthy discussion occurred regarding the variations in travel reimbursement amongst the three agencies. It was addressed that a standardized method of reimbursement for travel that is above the norm could help eliminate confusion. Ms. Temple-Plotz clarified that the additional language of the NCR tool was made so that no matter the method used, the foster parent would be educated on the process.

LOC 8 within the NCR tool was the next item reviewed. Rather than separating LOC 8 into two categories, "Transition to Permanency" and "Transition to Independent Living," the Workgroup chose to further describe each area within the section. Ms. Temple-Plotz addressed the changes in age for performing the Ansel Casey Life Skills Assessment to reflect the agency standards. It was suggested to change the language from specifying the Ansel Casey assessment to a more generalized term to allow for flexibility assessments used across agencies.

Chair Harriott suggested looking into if the tool should include language from the Strengthening Families Act and the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards. Because of varying levels of mental and behavioral development, some of the common activities and experiences may not be appropriate for all involved youth. Using the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards would assist foster parents in assessing what activities would be suitable for the youth.

Jodi Austin cautioned the group on using the term "Independent Living." If language changed and this term was no longer used, then the NCR tool would lose relevancy. She agreed that shaping language around the Strengthening Families Act would ensure that the tool remains applicable regardless of terminology changes.

The next topic that the LOC Workgroup looked at was the discrepancy between a youth's level of need and their placement. When a child with a need higher than what the foster parent's level of care ability is, complications can arise. It can mean that the agency must compensate for any needs that the youth still needs, which increases the agency's cost of caring for the child. It also raises concern on determining what the aggregate levels are concerning the level of need vs. the level of care.

Ms. Temple-Plotz explained how the LOC Workgroup members debated on how to measure level of need in order to compare to the level of care. The Workgroup had looked into the field currently used to measure youth needs. The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool was no longer in use due to the duplication of information that was already gathered by the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA). No consensus was reached by the Workgroup on what the best option for measuring youth need.

Stacy Scholten stated that she had spoken with Doug Beran, Research, Planning and Evaluation Administrator with DCFS. He had determined that there was a way to score the FSNA and pull the data for comparison with the NCR tool. Jodi Austin voiced that a crosswalk would most likely be possible, but was concerned if the FSNA could determine the acuity of each youth. She did not believe the FSNA could do such, which would prevent the ability to engage in outcome based contracting.

It was expressed that if a needs assessment instrument was selected, there would need to be an agency-wide commitment to the method of use, the data gathered, and the way in which data is used. Staff using the tool would need to recognize that the instrument will not tell them what needs to be done, but rather serve as a resource to inform the staff members' decisions. Lana Temple-Plotz commented that confusion could arise from the use of the term "LOC" referencing Level of Care, when in actuality it is the Level of Responsibility being measured. The Workgroup would look into altering this language within the NCR tool.

Jude Dean, a foster parent, agreed that a way to measure acuity would be a helpful tool for foster parents and agencies alike. She also discussed the various ways of caring for youth that may not be exemplified in the tool. Consequently, the higher level of responsibility that the caregivers take on may not be recognized by the tool. Ms. Dean also suggested that additional education be given to caregivers to help them realize the alternative ways they can encourage their foster youth to prosper. An example she gave included foster parents becoming more involved in the coordination and facilitation of birth parent visitations and team meetings.

Ultimately, the members of the FCRRC agreed that the NCR tool is not a way to measure the acuity of the involved youth. The Committee established that there could be benefit to a tool that assesses the acuity and needs of youth, including a move towards outcome based contracting. Addressing this issue, however, was beyond the scope of the FCRRC.

Discussion circled back to how to handle discrepancies in level of need and what the caregiver can provide in their level of responsibilities. Ms. Temple-Plotz informed the Committee that the LOC Workgroup had struggled with determining if the agencies that compensate for the disparity need to be given a higher reimbursement rate. The Workgroup came to the conclusion that it was an issue to take to the Foster Family-based Treatment Association (FFTA) for review. Information should be gathered from the FFTA as to what services are being compensated for, how often this issue arises, and what the financial impact is to the agencies.

The last issue addressed by the LOC Workgroup was the creation of an additional Level of Care (LOC) within the NCR tool. The current procedure handles youth with needs that fall outside of the tool on a case by case basis. This method allows for administration to create specialized plans and allows for each case to be closely monitored. However, without a standardized method for determining the payment level, IV-E funds cannot be utilized. Ms. Temple-Plotz informed the

FCRRC that if need for another LOC level was established, that the Committee must determine if the LOC Workgroup will examine the issue or if another group will be tasked with doing such.

Dave Newell reminded the group the Medicaid plans will change next year. The current Medicaid plan structure is incompatible for the foster care system to take advantage. With the upcoming changes to the Medicaid structure, having a Medicaid funded Treatment Foster Care could be possible. It was suggested that a decision be put on hold until the details of the Medicaid changes were released.

The Committee members also discussed the possibility of having a Professional LOC. This could potentially involve a parent staying home and fostering full time. Another suggestion was to create an educational or certificate level that would target community professionals such as counselors, medical professionals, and educators with skills and knowledge to assist the youth with intensive needs. It was also discussed how professionals have increased vulnerability as foster parents. Individuals making false allegations could cause irreparable damage to their career or license.

The Committee recessed at 10:23 a.m.

The Committee resumed business at 10:36 a.m.

IX. Group Home Rate Sub-Committee Report

Chair Harriott invited Doug Kreifels and Cindy Rudolph, Co-Chairs of the Group Home Rate Sub-Committee, to present. Mr. Kreifels summarized the history and process of the sub-committee. Previously, the Sub-Committee had worked to find a methodology to unbundle the group home rates. The same method was used to calculate the actual cost of running the various types of group homes. Ms. Rudolph then went through the cost of each group home and how the totals were calculated.

The final numbers showed a significant difference between the actual costs of running a group home to what the current reimbursement rates are. Below is a breakdown of the compared totals.

	Current DHHS Contracted Payment Rate Per Day	Current Probation Payment Rate Per Day	Calculated Actual Costs Per Day
Emergency Shelter	\$ 146.00	\$ 180.00	\$ 276.48
Group Home A	\$ 116.00	\$ 135.00	\$ 268.75
Group Home B	\$ 89.50	\$ 100.00	\$ 254.41

Chair Harriott suggested that NFC be included in the current Payment Rates per Day chart to remain consistent with previous information. She then entertained any recommendations from the FCRRC members regarding the Group Home Rate Sub-Committee findings. Corrie Edwards let the Committee know that the Nebraska Association of Behavioral Health Organizations (NABHO) had not taken a position on the situation. Chair Harriott indicated that Children and Family Coalition of Nebraska (CAFCON) was waiting to see the results of the effort were before taking a position. She indicated that CAFCON was aware that it may be an issue that will need their attention.

Ms. Edwards stressed the importance of recognizing this disparity. With such high costs, it becomes difficult to establish much needed group homes, particularly in rural areas. She voiced that ratios of 1:7 for staff to clients cannot always guarantee a safe environment, making a ratio of 1:4 more realistic

for certain types of group homes. Conversely, requiring ratios of 1:4 for all group homes, as is being proposed under new licensing regulations, may be unnecessary and could force even greater costs on group homes. However a balance is to be found, the appropriateness of reimbursement rates should be evaluated.

Mr. Newell emphasized that quality group home care can do amazing things. One of the biggest hindrances to achieving quality care is inadequate funding. He recommended that there be dialog concerning actual costs incurred while providing quality care. After lengthy discussion, Dave Newell spoke on behalf of the FCRRRC and commended the work of the sub-committee. He moved to advance the findings of the Group Home Rate Sub-Committee with the inclusion of the NFC rates to the Nebraska Children's Commission, noting a need for the issue be looked at further through a legislative review in order to measure quality of care, cost of care, and performance outcomes. The motion was seconded by Corrie Edwards. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (11):

Jodie Austin
Jude Dean
Corrie Edwards
Leigh Esau

Peg Harriott
Anne Hobbs
Felicia Nelsen
Dave Newell

Lana Temple-Plotz
Julia Tse
Michaela Young

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (6):

Steven Bauer
Susan Henrie

Vanessa Humaran
Bobby Loud

Jackie Meyer
Sherry Moore

MOTION CARRIED

Jodi Austin addressed that the Group Home Rate Sub-Committee report may want to include general language cautioning that it does not take into account the acuity of the youth, and that to measure performance, those measures would need to be addressed. Ms. Austin moved to include cautionary language to the Group Home Rate Sub-Committee report regarding the importance of identifying the acuity of the child served when looking at outcome based performance. Leigh Esau seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (11):

Jodie Austin
Jude Dean
Corrie Edwards
Leigh Esau

Peg Harriott
Anne Hobbs
Felicia Nelsen
Dave Newell

Lana Temple-Plotz
Julia Tse
Michaela Young

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (6):

Steven Bauer
Susan Henrie

Vanessa Humaran
Bobby Loud

Jackie Meyer
Sherry Moore

MOTION CARRIED**X. Review of Timeline and Update on July 2016 Legislative Report**

All information regarding the timeline for the July 2016 Legislative Report was covered under previous Agenda Items.

XI. Review of Assignments/Action Plan

Chair Harriott reviewed the decisions and items to address when moving forward. Below is a list of the final assignments/action plans.

- The LOC Workgroup will address the following:
 - Anne Hobbs and Jodi Austin will be added as new members to the Workgroup.
 - A foster parent survey will be created to look at if the foster parents are completing the NCR tool with the agency staff, the consistency of responsibilities to what was outlined in the tool, and any concerns of foster parents regarding the current reimbursement rates. This survey will be completed, sent out, collected, and reviewed in time for a presentation at the next FCRRRC meeting.
 - The Workgroup will look into adding language from the Strengthening Families Act to the NCR tool.
 - The Workgroup will address the discrepancy of language in the NCR tool and change the LOC (Level of Care) to reflect LOR (Level of Responsibility).
 - Lana Temple-Plotz will engage the FFIA in a discussion regarding the Administrative Reimbursement Rate.
 - Each LOC/LOR will more specifically address caregiver responsibilities that fall off of the NCR tool such as extracurricular activities.
 - A date for the next LOC Workgroup meeting will be scheduled by attendance survey with the location being the Nebraska Children's Society in Lincoln.
- The Base Rate Workgroup will await results from the foster parent survey to determine if more information needs to be added to their report prior to making a recommendation to the Nebraska Children's Commission.
- The Group Home Rate Sub-Committee will conclude their work after submitting their updated report to the Nebraska Children's Commission.

XII. New Business

There was no New Business to discuss.

XIII. Upcoming Meeting Planning

The next FCRRRC meeting will be scheduled sometime in early December. A doodle poll will be sent out to determine a date.

XIV. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:21 a.m.

09/30/2015
AF