

**Nebraska Children’s Commission**  
Thirty-Fourth Meeting  
September 15, 2015  
9:00 AM – 3:00 PM  
Country Inn & Suites, Lighthouse Room  
5353 N. 27th Street  
Lincoln, NE 68512

**I. Call to Order**

The Nebraska Children’s Commission Chair, Beth Baxter, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

**II. Roll Call**

*Commission Members present (14):*

Karen Authier	Candy Kennedy-Goergen	Mary Jo Pankoke
Beth Baxter	Gene Klein	Dale Shotkoski
Holly Brandt	Andrea Miller	Susan Staab
Jennifer Chrystal-Clark	David Newell	Paula Wells
Kim Hawekotte	Deb O’Brien	

*Commission Members absent (3):*

Teresa Anderson	Norman Langemach	Diana Tedrow
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*Ex Officio Members present (8):*

Senator Kate Bolz (9:12)	Katie McLeese Stephenson	Julie Rogers (11:45)
Ellen Brokofsky	Courtney Phillips (9:06)	Doug Weinberg
Senator Kathy Campbell	Hon. Linda Porter	

*Ex Officio Members absent (1):*

Senator Patty Pansing-Brooks

A quorum was established.

*Guests in Attendance (9):*

Dr. Lynn Castrianno .....	Nebraska Families Collaborative
Bethany Connor Allen.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Jeanne Brandner.....	Office of Probation Administration
Anna Eickholdt.....	Nebraska State Legislature
Amanda Felton.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Peg Harriott.....	Child Saving Institute
Richard Johnston.....	Nebraska Total Care
Kari Rumbaugh.....	Office of Probation Administration
Julia Tse.....	Voices for Children

*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 24, 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**

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Chair Baxter presented the agenda to the Commission. Ellen Brokofsky noted that she would like to move Agenda item XVI. Probation Report, to an earlier time slot since she would not be in attendance after the lunch hour. A motion was made by Paula Wells to approve the agenda with the Probation Report moved after Agenda Item VI. Nebraska Children’s Commission Logo Selection. The motion was seconded by Mary Jo Pankoke. No further discussion ensued. Roll Call vote as follows:

**FOR (14):**

Karen Authier  
Beth Baxter  
Holly Brandt  
Jennifer Chrystal-Clark  
Kim Hawekotte

Candy Kennedy-Goergen  
Gene Klein  
Andrea Miller  
David Newell  
Deb O’Brien

Mary Jo Pankoke  
Dale Shotkoski  
Susan Staab  
Paula Wells

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (3):**

Teresa Anderson

Norman Langemach

Diana Tedrow

**ABSTAINED (0)**

**MOTION CARRIED**

For the purpose of the minutes, all items will be written in the order of the original agenda.

**IV. Consent Agenda**

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*a. Minutes of the July 21, 2015 Nebraska Children’s Commission Meeting*

Chair Baxter brought the minutes from the previous July 21, 2015 meeting to the Commission’s attention. She inquired as to if there were any corrections. No corrections were provided.

*b. Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee Nomination Report*

The Nominating Committee recommended the following individuals for appointment to membership on the Foster Care Rate Committee (FCRRC):

- **A foster parent who contracts directly with the Department of Health and Human Services:**
  - Vanessa Humaran – Lincoln, NE
- **A foster parent who contracts with a child welfare agency:**
  - Jude Dean – Lincoln, NE
  - Dr. Anne Hobbs – Denton, NE

*c. Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee Nomination Report*

The Nominating Committee recommended the following individuals for appointment to membership of the Bridge to Independence Advisory (B2I) Committee:

- **A representative of the Legislative Branch of government:**
  - Timoree Klingler – Legislative Aide to Senator Sara Howard

Kim Hawekotte moved to approve the items of the Consent Agenda as presented. Candy Kennedy-Goergen seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

**FOR (13):**

Karen Authier	Candy Kennedy-Goergen	Dale Shotkoski
Beth Baxter	Gene Klein	Susan Staab
Holly Brandt	Andrea Miller	Paula Wells
Jennifer Chrystal-Clark	Deb O'Brien	
Kim Hawekotte	Mary Jo Pankoke	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (3):**

Teresa Anderson	Norman Langemach	Diana Tedrow
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**ABSTAINED (1)**

David Newell

**MOTION CARRIED**

**V. Chairperson's Report**

Beth Baxter gave her report to the Commission members. She discussed her opportunity to meet with new Director of Children and Family Services (CFS), Doug Weinberg, and her excitement in working together. She also commented on the importance of training the workforce across the whole spectrum of child welfare needs including trauma and behavioral health. Chair Baxter emphasized the need for agencies to partner together in order to address behavioral health issues, family engagement, and prioritizing where efforts need to be focused to best utilize our resources.

**VI. Nebraska Children's Commission Logo Selection**

Chair Baxter drew attention to the issue of the Commission Logo. Bethany Connor Allen indicated that while logo options have been available, a formal decision has never been made on which logo should be used. Paula Wells moved and Mary Jo Pankoke seconded to approve the second logo with the white background. No further discussion ensued. Roll Call vote as follows:

**FOR (14):**

Karen Authier	Candy Kennedy-Goergen	Mary Jo Pankoke
Beth Baxter	Gene Klein	Dale Shotkoski
Holly Brandt	Andrea Miller	Susan Staab
Jennifer Chrystal-Clark	David Newell	Paula Wells
Kim Hawekotte	Deb O'Brien	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (3):**

Teresa Anderson

Norman Langemach

Diana Tedrow

**ABSTAINED (0)**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**VII. Department of Health and Human Services Update**

CEO of the Department of Health and Human Services, Courtney Phillips, was invited to give an update on the Department happenings. Some items covered included pediatric emergency trainings, recent funding for drug monitoring, a pilot project for developmentally disabled state wards, and a Request for Proposal for Behavioral Health Managed Care. Ms. Phillips mentioned that the Department is still working to complete their team of key administrators.

Ms. Phillips gave the floor to Doug Weinberg. Mr. Weinberg gave a brief update on the Alternative Response program. The planning has begun for the first expansion that will take the program from 5 to 39 counties, primarily in Western and Central Nebraska. Mr. Weinberg informed the Commission that out of all of the intakes, around seven percent, or 730 families, have been eligible for Alternative Response. Of those families half were randomly assigned to Alternative Response with the other half using traditional response. The data showed a slight decrease in subsequent accepted reports over 12 months and in the number of children being placed out of home. The number of substantiated reports, however, showed no difference between the two response types. Director Weinberg reminded the members that it is still very early in the program, less than a year into it, but that he was encouraged by the preliminary results.

Vice Chair, Gene Klein, mentioned that the Center on Children, Families, and the Law (CCFL) is performing an evaluation on Alternative Response that will be due to CFS in November. Vice Chair Klein asked if Mr. Weinberg would be willing to provide an update on the Division's reaction and plans regarding the CCFL evaluation report. The Vice Chair also inquired into the evidence based practices that were required by the IV-E waiver that was providing funds. Mr. Weinberg let the members know that he could present a more formal presentation covering both AR and evidence based practices at the November Commission meeting.

Senator Campbell commented that she and Director Weinberg had a conversation regarding a national conference that several Senators attended. A portion of the event focused on child welfare financing issues. A system was discussed at the conference that assists with the budgeting process as it deals with best practices. The Senator noted that New Mexico, who had implemented this system, found that Alternative Response was one of the top rated programs in terms of cost and benefit to the client, state, and tax payer.

This discussion prompted Susan Staab to inquire about the Child Welfare Financing Primer completed in April 2015. Ms. Staab expressed that it would be advantageous to revisit the topic of finances and see where progress was on the three key findings from the report. Senator Bolz let the Commission know that there were several partners working to establish a foundation to work with in relation to the recommendations contained in the Primer. Their goal is to find the cause of the issues in order

to provide the information to a larger audience. Senator Bolz stated that she would alert the Commission members once a hearing date is established.

The Commission took a short recess at 10:25 a.m.

The Commission resumed business at 10:43 a.m.

### **VIII. Child and Family Services Legislative Report**

Chair Baxter Invited Doug Weinberg to provide a summary of the four reports that DHHS had due to the Legislature. The four reports included:

- An annual report outlining child welfare and juvenile services caseloads (Neb. Rev. Stat. 68-1207.01)
- An annual report outlining the Department's monitoring of lead agencies/pilot project (Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-4408)
- An annual report outlining information regarding child welfare services with respect to children served by any lead agency or pilot project and children served by the Department (Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-4406)
- A summary of satisfaction surveys administered to children, foster parents, judges, guardians ad litem, attorneys representing parents, and service providers involved with the child welfare system (Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-4407)

Mr. Weinberg indicated that the reports had not been released for public inspection, but would be available later that week. He advised the members to review the documents once available and to come prepared to the next meeting with any questions. A two page summary of key points within the reports would also be emailed out to the commission.

Courtney Phillips noted that the report discussing caseloads would be especially relevant to the work that the Commission does. Vice Chair Klein inquired about the Child Family Services Review rate criteria. Doug verified that in 2017, there will be a new set of criteria. He indicated that it could be a helpful item for the Commission to review sometime in early 2016.

### **IX. Nebraska Families Collaborative Legislative Report**

Dave Newell with the Nebraska Families Collaborative (NFC) introduced Lynn Castrianno, their Director of Continuous Quality Improvement and Data Management. Ms. Castrianno provided the group with a two page summary of the information collected from their annual survey from youth, parents, foster parents, and community stakeholders.

The satisfaction survey was submitted anonymously and covered various areas of performance in relation to the organization, Family Permanency Specialists, and other staff. The participants were asked to use a rate scale of 1-5 with 5 equaling excellent. In total, the number of responses received nearly doubled from the previous year. This increase was attributed to an extended time frame and the outreach efforts of the NFC Staff. Average ratings were as follows:

- Parent Surveys: 4.1/5
- Stakeholder Surveys: 3.3/5
- Youth Surveys (Age 12 and up): 4.3/5
- Foster Parent Surveys: 4/5

Next steps in the report process included sharing the information with various advisory Boards and External parties, and to strategize on what needs to improve within the organization to increase satisfaction with the various groups surveyed.

**X. Lunch**

The Commission suspended business to take lunch at 11:22 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 12:13 p.m.

**XI. Legal Parties Taskforce Update**

Kim Hawekotte was invited to present an update on the Legal Parties Taskforce. She gave a brief history of the Taskforce, describing its original purpose of examining the role of Guardians ad Litem charged with representing the best interest of children within the child welfare system. In recent months their focus has expanded to encompass the professionalism of Juvenile Court as a whole. The taskforce has arranged to provide training and presentations to various groups that will cover topics such as the ramifications of what is filed in Juvenile Court, the recent changes to the central registry, and educating the legal community on the Structured Decision Making (SDM) tool.

Ms. Hawekotte noted that the Taskforce hoped to work with Judge Linda Porter to offer a similar training to the Judiciary members throughout the state. It was mentioned that the group also hoped to connect with Liz Neeley with the Nebraska Bar Association to work on training with the Guardians ad Litem and defense attorneys.

Susan Staab asked if the training programs that the Taskforce was offering would be helpful for caseworkers. Ms. Hawekotte expressed that she thought it could be beneficial training for caseworkers. She cited the Foster Care Review Office staff as an example of a workplace that benefited from knowing the information covered in the trainings. Kim indicated that she would update the Commission on the progress of the training sessions at the November meeting.

**XII. Data, Technology, Accountability, and Reporting (DTAR) Workgroup Update**

Dave Newell presented an update on the DTAR Workgroup. He began by expressing the complications that arise when defining what measures to address when dealing with the term child welfare. Some of the measurement perspectives that the Workgroup is focusing on are process, quality, capacity, and outcome. The areas of focus will be taken from the primary measures and focuses of the other Nebraska Children's Commission workgroups. Mr. Newell indicated that he will be reaching out to the various workgroups to gather information on key measures for each Workgroup to help determine how the DTAR Workgroup will advance in its recommendations.

**XIII. Legislative Overview and Legislative Resolution Discussion**

The Chair invited Senator Bolz and Senator Campbell to present on any Legislative information that may be pertinent to the Commission. Senator Bolz began by referring back to her previous mention of a workgroup focusing on issues relating to child welfare financing. Senator Bolz indicated that she would present more information on the progress of the group at the November Commission meeting. She also mentioned an interim study related to behavioral health in the criminal justice system. While the current study focuses on Adults, Senator Bolz let the Commission know that she was open to discussion about transitions and appropriate levels of support with the juvenile justice system as well.

Senator Campbell provided a brief summary of various Legislative Resolutions. LR248 examined the implementation of the federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act in Nebraska. This resolution will focus on creating normalcy for foster youth with a hearing scheduled for October 22, 2015. Senator Campbell welcomed any Commission member interested in LR304, regarding the

## **Agenda Item IV**

mental health for children in schools, to contact her to become involved. Several roundtables will continue in order to discuss ideas relating to this issue.

The Senator continued by mentioning LR185, which deals with the behavioral health workforce, and LR181 that is examining barriers to full time employment in high need areas. Both of these resolutions be heard on November 12, 2015. The last Legislative Resolution Senator Campbell discussed was LR186. This resolution looks to examine the victims of sex trafficking and the services available to them. Several groups are involved in this resolution including the State Taskforce, the Judiciary branch, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Attorney General's office. Interested parties can attend the hearing for this resolution on October 23, 2015.

Senator Campbell informed the Commission of the Intergenerational Poverty Taskforce in which she will Chair. This group will be a profile of poverty in Nebraska with a series of briefings modeled after Senator Bolz's briefings for the Aging Nebraskans Taskforce. Each month a different topic will be discussed at an open meeting beginning in October and lasting to the end of the year. There is potential for meetings to continue into 2016, and Senator Campbell will keep the Commission updated. Examples of topics to be covered are education, transportation, housing, public assistance, and workforce issues.

The last item addressed by Senator Campbell was the upcoming sunset date for the Nebraska Children's Commission on June 30, 2015. She distributed a letter and questionnaire for the members of the Commission to complete. The questionnaire provided a venue for the members to express their thoughts on and evaluate the Commissions past accomplishments and future goals. She asked that all questionnaires be returned to her attention no later than September 30, 2015.

### **XIV. Probation Report**

Ellen Brokofsky introduced Jeanne Brandner, Deputy Probation Administrator of the Division of Juvenile Services, who gave the report for the Office of Probation. Ms. Brandner reviewed the July Report of Probation Juvenile Justice Reform Efforts that provided a snapshot of several areas that the Department handles. Topics discussed included Intake and Detention Alternatives, Pre-adjudication and Investigations, Case Management and Services, and Reentry.

Ms. Brokofsky informed the members that future reports planned to separate the data for law violating youth from the status offense youth. She stated that while the youth with status offenses have low risk, they often have high needs. Senator Campbell inquired as to if future reports could also include information on probation workforce, such as the number of probation officers and the retention rates for them. Ms. Brandner indicated that she could provide this information at the next Commission meeting.

Mary Jo Pankoke commented that another addition to the report that would be helpful was information on how the Department is handling the issue of sex-trafficking and screening for potential victims. Ms. Brandner stated that she was involved in a statewide taskforce, along with Katie McLeese Stephenson of the Court Improvement Project, which will look specifically at how to address the issue of sex-trafficking victims within the Juvenile Justice system.

Senator Bolz stated that she had recently come across a few cases of youth in the juvenile justice system aging out of services. The Senator asked if Probation had a way of preparing these youth before they age out. Kari Rumbaugh, Assistant Deputy Administrator with the Administrative Office

of Probation, Juvenile Division, discussed how there is a strong push to assist families in preparing to take in the youth and help them become self-sufficient prior to aging out of the system. Mary Jo Pankoke also noted that the sub-committee of the Bridge to Independence was looking at the issue of extending supports to youth aging out of the juvenile justice system and would be presenting recommendations at the next Commission meeting.

### **XV. Nebraska Children's Commission Legislative Report Update**

The Chair directed the members to the draft of the annual Legislative Report that the Commission provides to the Health and Human Services Committee. She indicated that the report was an opportunity to educate the new legislative members on the work of the Nebraska Children's Commission and its history. The Chairpersons of each Committee, Workgroup, and Taskforce will be called upon to provide priority recommendations and goals of their respective groups. Chair Baxter issued a date of September 30, 2015 for any general comments to be submitted. November 1, 2015 was given as the date that priority recommendations would need to be submitted in order to be attached to the annual report. All items were to be submitted to Bethany Connor Allen, Policy Analyst with the Nebraska Children's Commission.

### **XVI. Public Comment**

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

### **XVII. New Business**

There was no New Business to present at this time.

### **XIII. Upcoming Meeting Planning**

The Chair discussed several items addressed during the meeting that would be included on the agenda for the November 17, 2015 meeting. Items to be covered at that meeting are as follows:

- Alternative Response reports from the Center on Children, Families, and the Law and the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Review and recommendations regarding the above mentioned reports by the Commission members.
- Discussion regarding evidence based practices from the Department of Health and Human Services.
- A presentation on child welfare financial information from Senator Bolz addressing the Financial Primer recommendations.
- A presentation on the four Legislative reports from Children & Family Services division.
- A report from the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee.
- An update from Probation.
- An update from the Legal Parties Taskforce
- A report from the Data, Technology, Accountability, and Reporting Workgroup.
- A presentation on the annual report from the Inspector General's Office.

The floor was opened to discussion for planning for future meetings. The Chair addressed that a new member orientation should be offered. A doodle poll will be sent to the new members to schedule a time in late October to meet. Karen Authier referred back to the Child Family Services Review rate criteria and indicated that it should be discussed sometime in spring of 2016. Senator Campbell alerted the Commission that a date for the briefing to discuss the future of the Nebraska Children's



## **Agenda Item IV**

Commission would be scheduled sometime during the first week of the Legislative Session that begins January 5, 2016.

Chair Baxter brought to the attention of the members the annual retreat of the Nebraska Children's Commission. The previous format was to hold the retreat on the first day with the Commission meeting following on the second day. Discussion occurred as to when would be the best time of year to hold the retreat. General agreement indicated that July may be a more convenient month than January for members. If the Commission is extended, the annual retreat could be an opportunity to address the Strategic Plan. It would also be good timing for a new member orientation as member terms will be expiring on June 30, 2016. Chair Baxter indicated that a recommendation would be made regarding the annual retreat at a later date.

### **XIX. Adjournment**

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It was moved by Mary Jo Pankoke and seconded by Susan Staab to adjourn the meeting. There was no discussion. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

09/23/2015

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