

**Nebraska Children's Commission  
Juvenile Services Committee**

Thirty-First Meeting  
August 11, 2015  
9:00 AM – 3:00 PM  
Country Inn & Suites  
5353 N. 27<sup>th</sup> Street  
Lincoln, NE 68512

**I. Call to Order**

Kim Hawekotte, Co-Chair of the Juvenile Services Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m.

**II. Roll Call**

***Committee Members present (14):***

Nicole Brundo	Dr. Anne Hobbs	Cassy Rockwell
Kim Culp	Ron Johns	Juliet Summers
Barb Fitzgerald	Nick Juliano	Dr. Richard Wiener
Tony Green	Tom McBride	Dr. Ken Zoucha
Kim Hawekotte	Jana Peterson	

***Committee Members absent (3):***

Jeanne Brander	Judge Larry Gendler	Cynthia Kennedy
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***Committee Resource Members present (10):***

Jim Bennett	Mark Mason	Judge Linda Porter
Dannie Elwood	Katie McLeese Stephenson	Adam Proctor (10:02)
Christine Henningsen	Monica Miles-Steffens	
Liz Hruska	Jerall Moreland (9:57)	

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

Senator Kathy Campbell	Catherine Gekas Steeby	Julie Rogers
Senator Colby Coash	Hank Robinson	Dan Scarborough

A quorum was established.

***Guests in Attendance (23):***

Katie Bass.....	Nebraska Court Improvement Project
Beth Baxter.....	Behavioral Health Region 3
Phyllis Becker.....	Missouri Division of Youth Services
Raevin Bigelow.....	Project Everlast
Courtney Collier.....	Missouri Division of Youth Services
Bethany Connor Allen.....	Nebraska Children's Commission
Monica DeMent.....	DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
Jeff DeWispelare.....	Omaha Home for Boys
Michael Fargen.....	Foster Care Review Office

Amanda Felton.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Sarah Forrest.....	Office of the Inspector General
Mary Ann Harvey.....	Court Improvement Project
Josh Henningsen.....	Nebraska Legislative Council
Kylie Homan.....	Heartland Family Service
Richard Johnston.....	Nebraska Total Care
Timoree Klinger.....	Nebraska Legislative Council
Joselyn Luedtke.....	Nebraska Legislative Council
Steve Milliken.....	Nebraska Department of Education
Deb O’Brien.....	Foster Care Review Board Member
Senator Patty Pansing-Brooks.....	Nebraska Legislative Council
Dale Shotkoski.....	City of Fremont
Deb VanDyke-Ries.....	Court Improvement Project
Rico Zavala.....	CEDARS

a. *Notice of Publication*

Co-Chair Hawekotte, indicated that the notice of publication for this meeting was posted on the Nebraska Public Meetings Calendar website in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act.

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 on the sign in table near the entrance of the meeting room.

**III. Approval of Agenda**

Co-Chair Hawekotte entertained a motion to approve the Agenda. A motion was made by Tony Green to approve the agenda as written. The motion was seconded by Ron Johns. No further discussion ensued. Roll Call vote as follows:

**FOR (14):**

Nicole Brundo	Dr. Anne Hobbs	Cassy Rockwell
Kim Culp	Ron Johns	Juliet Summers
Barb Fitzgerald	Nick Juliano	Dr. Richard Wiener
Tony Green	Tom McBride	Dr. Ken Zoucha
Kim Hawekotte	Jana Peterson	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAINED (0)**

**ABSENT (3):**

Jeanne Brander	Judge Larry Gendler	Cynthia Kennedy
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**MOTION CARRIED**

**IV. Approval of the Minutes**

Cassy Rockwell moved to approve the minutes of the August 11, 2015 minutes as presented. Ron Johns seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

**FOR (14):**

Nicole Brundo  
Kim Culp  
Barb Fitzgerald  
Tony Green  
Kim Hawekotte

Dr. Anne Hobbs  
Ron Johns  
Nick Juliano  
Tom McBride  
Jana Peterson

Cassy Rockwell  
Juliet Summers  
Dr. Richard Wiener  
Dr. Ken Zoucha

**AGAINST (0):****ABSTAINED (0)****ABSENT (3):**

Jeanne Brander

Judge Larry Gendler

Cynthia Kennedy

**MOTION CARRIED****V. Co-Chair Report**

Co-Chairs, Nicole Brundo and Kim Hawekotte, indicated that they had no report to present and gave the floor to the guest presenters, Phyllis Becker and Courtney Collier, from the Missouri Division of Youth Services (DYS).

**VI. Presentation from the Missouri Youth Services Division**

Guest speakers, Phyllis Becker and Courtney Collier introduced themselves to the members. Both women gave a summary of their history with the division beginning as a front line staff members. Ms. Becker welcomed the members of the Committee to share what has brought them to work with youth and be a part of the Juvenile Services Committee. Several members talked about what had influenced them to work with youth in the juvenile justice system. Answers ranged from being involved in the system as youth to a desire to inspire positivity in the lives of the youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

Ms. Becker noted that while the philosophies of the Missouri systems would be shared, that every system will have different needs. A large number of rehabilitation models are emerging, making it an exciting time for juvenile justice.

DYS was described as the “deep end” of the system as there are 45 juvenile courts on the front line who make referrals to the DHS. The youth who are being referred have almost always exhausted all other options, leading courts to place youth in DHS facilities. Ms. Becker explained, however, that in rural communities where services are limited, traditionally low risk offenders are committed at a higher rate.

Ms. Becker shared some of the early steps the division took in its reform efforts. These included moving DHS from the umbrella of Corrections to the Department of Social Services, switching from two central institutions to smaller community based groups, and focusing on the culture of the system by addressing how the youth and their families were viewed by the staff.

The guest speakers went on to review the beliefs, practices, and philosophies of the DHS. Elements included making the youth and their families the center of the work done, ensuring that staff is engaged

and appreciated, and shifting focus from a correctional treatment perspective to a rehabilitative perspective.

The members of the Committee were asked to share some of the strengths and challenges currently facing Nebraska. One sentiment that was shared was that while we have the desire to change, it is always difficult to implement it. While the child welfare system can get caught up in the complications of financial responsibility, the community of the system is built of compassionate and committed individuals.

Ms. Collier described for the Committee the structure of the DYS. An important role in the process is played by the Service Coordinators. Often, they are the first and the final face that a committed youth and their families will see. They are responsible for performing risk assessments and providing any necessary services to the youth and their family. Once an assessment has been performed by the Service Coordinator, the youth is placed into one of four Levels of Care. These include Day Treatment, Community Based, Moderate, and Secure Levels of Care.

Discussion arose regarding the relationship of the DYS and the Missouri county courts. The counties serve as the frontline of the Juvenile Justice system. Once all other diversionary efforts have been exhausted, the courts often refer the youth to DYS. DYS is usually involved in the decision process of determining if a youth should be placed in their serves. They also provide grant funding to the county courts to establish juvenile diversion programs. Through this partnership, the two entities ensure that the youth receive the appropriate services.

Mark Mason inquired about the educator staff and the role that they play. Ms. Collier explained that while it depends on the program, a number of their educators will teach all subjects. Even when the programs are departmentalized, all of the teaching staff come to the students, as opposed to uprooting the students. She also explained that since the DYS is an accredited school district, they require all of their frontline staff to become certified substitute teachers. Once the youth complete their education, a graduation ceremony is held in which they receive their diploma from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Group discussion helped to realize that Nebraska is only in the beginning stages of finding a system that will work, and that it will take time to get to a place of similar success as Missouri. The guest speakers also noted the important roles that the Committees and Councils play in the success of DYS and their youth. The Missouri Advisory Committee has a similar makeup and role in decision making as Nebraska's Children's Commission. Missouri, however, has additional Liaison Councils in each region. These Councils consist of community members who advocate on behalf of the youth, provide needed items, host events, and assist in fundraising for the programs.

The Committee suspended business for lunch at 11:48 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 12:45 p.m.

The meeting resumed with the guest speakers sharing a short clip that gave a glimpse into the DYS facilities. The group talked over the treatment process used by DYS. Questions were raised over consequences if an incident were to escalate past the group process. Ms. Baker and Ms. Collier explained that rather than punishment, they seek to implement natural consequences. Ideally, conflict would be caught at the first signs by using the group process to address and resolve any issues.

Looking at the individual and their circumstances was a big part in solving why a conflict occurred. They noted that situations of escalation may also become an opportunity to examine the staff and leadership as the youth behavior is often a reflection of their surroundings.

Treatment used by DYS is evaluated by asking four questions: Is it harmful? Is it legal? Is it appropriate? Is it optimal? Ms. Baker and Ms. Collier covered the importance of building a foundation of safety for the youth. This process included elements such as ensuring that basic needs of the youth were met, having an engaged supervision staff, having a staff that is both knowledgeable of and accountable for their work, and operating under unconditional positive regard for both youth and staff.

The speakers informed the members of the several components of their fully integrated treatment approach. They discussed the need for a comprehensive and trauma informed process. Another focus is the educational aspect of the DYS. This includes assisting youth in attaining their degrees, but also acts as a resource for family members in their education. The inclusion of the family is seen as very important in the rehabilitation process.

Risk assessment was another topic that Ms. Becker and Ms. Phillips reviewed for the Committee. The risk assessment used in Missouri was formulated specifically for their use by Paul Romero. The assessment uses a grid that uses the risk along with the needs of the youth to determine the level of care necessary.

The group offered several questions to the speakers. The issue of transportation was brought up. In Missouri, the farthest a youth and their family would have to travel to get to their DYS facility is around 2 hours. Through researching the population, the DYS has created programs and facilities that reflect the needs of the surrounding population, limiting the amount of travel necessary. When travel is needed by the families, DYS provides this for them to ensure they remain involved in the youth's rehabilitation process.

Discussion moved to treatment plans. Every staff member of the DYS received training on the elements of Comprehensive Strengths Based Assessment, treatment planning, and community transactions. The speakers educated the Committee on the Five Domains of Wellbeing. They included Social Connectedness, Stability, Safety, Mastery, and Meaningful Access to Relevant Resources. These domains are not always easy to establish for the youth. An example given was that the youth may get accepted to college, but after moving away to school, they may lose their social connections and resources which often undermines their success.

This led to talk about the importance of transitions for the youth. The emphasis to prepare the youth to reenter their community begins from their first day with DYS. The staff works to build knowledge of the community resources for when they are released from their care. Community partnerships are established with local mentors, businesses, and even local law enforcement. Just as important as preparing the youth for returning home, the DYS works to prepare the family for the youth to return home.

Ms. Baker and Ms. Collier opened the floor for any questions from the members and guests. Topics covered included partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation, staff recruiting and retention, the use of long-term data outcomes, mental health services, and substance abuse services. The speakers ended with noting that even with a successful model, there are always challenges. Ms. Collier mentioned that

it can be difficult to get all regions of a state to function consistently with one another. Ms. Baker noted that there is a constant need to ensure that the staff are the best healthy people they can be.

Co-Chair Hawekotte thanked the guest speakers for sharing their time with the Committee.

### **VII. Public Comment**

Co-Chair Hawekotte invited any members of the public forward. No public comment was offered.

### **VIII. New Business**

There was no New Business to present at this time.

### **IX. Upcoming Meeting Planning**

Co-Chair Hawekotte suggested that the next OJS Committee meeting on November 10, 2015 be used to review the information present. Recorder for the meeting, Amanda Felton, will send out meeting notes to the members summarizing the key points of the meeting along with the documents requested by member to review for the next meeting.

Another item that will need to be addressed at the November meeting is the report due to the Nebraska Children's Commission for their November 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. Discussion on that report will take place with Policy Analyst, Bethany Connor Allen, creating the final report for submission to the Commission.

### **X. Future Meeting Dates**

- November 10, 2015

### **XI. Adjourn**

Co-Chair Hawekotte entertained a motion to adjourn. Katie McLeese Stephenson moved to adjourn. Kim Culp seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 3:11 p.m.

11/02/2015

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