

Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee

March 10, 2017

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Lincoln Community Foundation, 5th Floor Conference Room

215 Centennial Mall S, Lincoln, NE 68508

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Co-Chair, Mary Jo Pankoke, called the meeting of the Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee to order at 10:10 a.m. She welcomed guests and announced the appointment of Jeanne Brandner as Co-Chair to the Committee.

II. Roll Call and Introductions

Committee Members present (8):

Jodie Austin	Brandy Gustoff	Susan Thomas
Lindy Bryceson	Sarah Helvey	Lana Verbrigghe
Vernon Davis	Mary Jo Pankoke	

Committee Members absent (7):

Mary Fraser Meints	Jill Schubauer	Juliet Summers
Doug Lenz	Deb Shuck	
Amy Peters	Jennifer Skala	

Ex-Officio Members present (1):

Jeanne Brandner

Ex-Officio Members absent (4):

Senator Kate Bolz	Timoree Klingler
Judge Douglas Johnson	Katie McLeese Stephenson

A quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (7):

Dr. Katie Bass	Foster Care Review Office
Cassy Blakely	Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Deanna Brakhage	DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
Bethany Connor Allen	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Amanda Felton	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Mary Furnas	Foster Care Review Office
Deb VanDyke-Ries	Court Improvement Project

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 and Nebraska Children’s Commission website in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. The publication would be kept as a permanent attachment with the meeting minutes.

b. Announcement of the placement of Open Meetings Act information

A copy of the Open Meetings Act was available for public inspection and was located on the sign-in table at the entrance of the meeting room.

III. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Vernon Davis and seconded by Jodie Austin to approve the agenda as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (8):

Jodie Austin	Brandy Gustoff	Susan Thomas
Lindy Bryceson	Sarah Helvey	Lana Verbrigghe
Vernon Davis	Mary Jo Pankoke	

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (7):

Mary Fraser Meints	Jill Schubauer	Juliet Summers
Doug Lenz	Deb Shuck	
Amy Peters	Jennifer Skala	

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

IV. Approval of November 3, 2016 Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Susan Thomas to approve the minutes of the November 3, 2016 minutes as presented. It was seconded by Lana Verbrigghe. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (8):

Jodie Austin	Brandy Gustoff	Susan Thomas
Lindy Bryceson	Sarah Helvey	Lana Verbrigghe
Vernon Davis	Mary Jo Pankoke	

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (7):

Mary Fraser Meints	Jill Schubauer	Juliet Summers
Doug Lenz	Deb Shuck	
Amy Peters	Jennifer Skala	

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

V. Discussion of LB179

Cassy Blakely, Assistant Vice President of Youth Policy with Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, provided an update on the progress of LB179. Blakely thanked Nebraska Appleseed, Juvenile Division of Probation, and Voices for Children for their involvement and support of the proposed legislation. The bill, meant to change provisions relating to transition of young adults to independence from the juvenile justice system, had its hearing several weeks prior. She noted that the cost of implementation was the programs biggest hurdle. While senators were interested in the idea of expanding the B2i program, given the budget deficit, it was unlikely that the bill would pass this session.

VI. Foster Care Review Office Update

Both Mary Furnas, Training Specialist, and Dr. Katie Bass, Director of Research, from the Foster Care Review Office (FCRO) were in attendance. Bass remarked that a majority of the reports would be completed over the next month and that substantive data would be available about 4-6 weeks after all reports had been completed. It was requested that a redacted example of the final report given to the courts be provided for review by the members.

The presenters went on to discuss the method for gathering information included in the reports. Work was in progress to refine the questionnaire provided to participants to better capture the “gray areas” where there may not be a definitive yes or no answer from the young adult. Furnas brought up the need to better connect with higher education in order to provide the necessary supports for the B2i population. She went on to discuss how the Norfolk community hosted weekly meetings targeting the 16-24 year old populations. At those meetings, various organizations gather to address areas of need or concern with the young adults.

VII. Department of Health and Human Services Update

Deanna Brakhage, Program Specialist with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), informed members that draft policy was in progress to update and clarify language regarding the B2i program. Alyson Goedken, DHHS Administrator, noted that the Jim Casey and Annie E. Casey foundations had reached out with an offer to help navigate a potential evaluation of the program.

Brakhage discussed some of the complications that had come to the attention of the department since the inception of the B2i program. Examples included program participants who join the military and who move to Alaska, Hawaii, or overseas where Independence Coordinator (IC) visitations with the youth were either prohibited or too costly to maintain. There was also the issue of the populations in need of further examination which consisted of young adults with developmental delays and who fell under the 3c categorization – juveniles who are mentally ill and dangerous.

Conversation shifted to the topic of worker safety in the field. Currently, there was no caveat for removal of a young adult for the program if they put the safety of an IC in jeopardy. Members conversed on the various ways to ensure worker and participant safety such as specialized matching of young adults to ICs, instituting a way for ICs to rate their level of perceived safety in a case review, and coordinating with emergency community support organizations to look at training options.

Members also looked at the level of turnover for B2i staff. There had been a large amount of turnover in recent months due to various reasons. With the hiring freeze currently instituted, it had been difficult to fill positions as they became vacant. Caseloads of ICs averaged around 20-25 for the Lincoln area and greater Nebraska areas, with Omaha between 25-30 cases. The possibility of performing a time study to determine appropriate caseload for the B2i program was suggested. This would look at how the ICs are spending their time to get a better idea of the responsibilities that are most influential in the success of a young adult.

It was agreed that a discussion of the challenges faced by the B2i program should be discussed in depth at future meetings. Topics should be provided to members in advance and spread out over a series of meetings. This would assist in focusing the conversation and in determining if recommendations should be aimed at policy or legislative changes. Suggested areas of focus identified by members included the role of the IC, extension of services to the juvenile justice population, and policy and procedure changes that were in progress or recently completed. Members also noted that it would be beneficial to review the work of previous subgroups and past reports to identify areas still needing attention. DHHS representatives would coordinate with Committee members and staff to complete a list of discussion topics for future meetings.

VIII. IV-E Penetration Rate Discussion and Workgroup Formation

Co-Chair Pankoke provided an update on the work surrounding the IV-E penetration rate. She explained how the penetration rate for IV-E funds was much lower in Nebraska than other states. DHHS had recently agreed to work with the Jim Casey foundation to bring in a consultant to identify how the state could increase the IV-E eligibility of the young adults in the B2i program. Pankoke referred members to the handout discussing the items the consultant was looking into.

Meetings with the consultant were scheduled for the upcoming weeks. One of the challenges to updating the IV-E eligibility is that it would require a change in the State Plan. Currently the plan requires the eligibility is determined on a youth’s 18th birthday and by the income of the household. There was much work being done to determine the main factors preventing young adults from qualifying when they turn 18. A request for amendment to the IV-E plan had been submitted to have eligibility examined at age 19, allowing the individual’s income to be used in the determination vs. that of the household. An increase in IV-E eligibility would also allow more youth to access federal Medicaid dollars, ensuring their ability to maintain their health.

IX. Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup Update

An update on the work of the Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup was given by the group Chairperson, Dr. Bass. The group would be looking at youth-specific outcomes that would help identify what success looked like for the program participants. Bass also touched on the goal of the group to identify an appropriate comparison group and the steps in progress to gather data on similar populations to the B2i program participants.

Also discussed was the need to look at programmatic evaluations of outcomes. The potential for a time study would aid in completing this step and help to identify where the high needs population sits and how to best assist them. Other noted challenges were finding a way to track services being utilized by the program participants as well as measuring their satisfaction with the program. Moving forward, the workgroup would look into the potential for tracking data of youth prior to aging out to better prepare for services once enrolled in B2i as well as if data can be pulled regarding the required and requested court hearings.

X. Public Comment

Chair Pankoke opened the floor for public comment. There was no public comment given.

XI. New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

XII. Upcoming Meeting Planning

Chair Pankoke listed potential topics to discuss at future meetings:

- Host an in-depth discussion on the B2i program policy issues that the department would like input on.
- Revisit the progress of the Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup
- Will have an update on the work around IV-E penetration rate efforts

The Committee would look to schedule the next meeting sometime in May, with a Doodle poll sent out to members to determine a final meeting time.

XIII. Adjourn

It was moved by Jodie Austin and seconded by Vernon Davis to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 11:31 a.m.

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