

**Nebraska Children's Commission**  
 Forty-Fourth Meeting  
 July 18, 2017  
 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
 Southeast Community College, Rooms V103 & 104  
 8800 O Street, Lincoln, NE 68520

**I. Call to Order**

Chairperson of the Nebraska Children's Commission (Commission), Beth Baxter, called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m.

**II. Roll Call**

***Commission Members present (15):***

|               |                |                       |
|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Karen Authier | Kim Hawekotte  | Susan Thomas          |
| Beth Baxter   | Felicia Nelsen | Janine Ucchino (1:07) |
| Holly Brandt  | David Newell   | Kelli Wacker          |
| Vernon Davis  | Deb O'Brien    | Paula Wells           |
| Misty Frazier | Lisa Story     | Bill Williams         |

***Commission Members absent (2):***

|                 |                         |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Teresa Anderson | Jennifer Chrystal-Clark |
|-----------------|-------------------------|

***Ex Officio Members present (6):***

|                     |                    |                  |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Sen. Kate Bolz      | Jeanne Brandner    | Julie Rogers     |
| Michele Borg (9:25) | Judge Linda Porter | Deb VanDyke-Ries |

***Ex Officio Members absent (4):***

|                           |                  |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Sen. Patty Pansing-Brooks | Sen. Merve Riepe |
| Courtney Phillips         | Doug Weinberg    |

A quorum was established.

***Guests in Attendance (13):***

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Bethany Connor Allen | Nebraska Children's Commission  |
| Amanda Felton        | Nebraska Children's Commission  |
| Peg Harriott         | Child Saving Institute  |
| Judge Everett Inbody | Supreme Court Commission on Children in the Courts/<br>Nebraska Court of Appeals        |
| Gene Klein           | Commission for the Protection of Children/Project Harmony                               |
| Jane Martin-Hoffman  | Nebraska Mediation Group  |
| Tom McBride          | Nebraska Juvenile Justice Association   |
| Mary Jo Pankoke      | Commission for the Protection of Children/<br>Nebraska Children and Families Foundation |
| Kari Rumbaugh        | Administrative Office of Probation, Division of Juvenile Services                       |
| Kristen Stiffler     | Nebraska Legislative Council  |
| Ivy Svoboda          | Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers   |
| Cindy Tierney        | Concord Mediation Group   |
| Chris Triebsch       | Nebraska Legislative Council  |
| Matt Wallen          | DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services  |

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 websites 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 near the entrance of the room.

**III. Approval of Agenda**

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**It was moved by Paula Wells and seconded by Felicia Nelsen to approve the agenda as presented.**

There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (14):**

Karen Authier  
Beth Baxter  
Holly Brandt  
Vernon Davis  
Kim Hawekotte

Felicia Nelsen  
David Newell  
Deb O'Brien  
Lisa Story  
Susan Thomas

Janine Uchino  
Kelli Wacker  
Paula Wells  
Bill Williams

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (2):**

Teresa Anderson

Jennifer Chrystal-Clark

**ABSTAINED (1)**

Misty Frazier

**MOTION CARRIED**

**IV. Consent Agenda**

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a. [Minutes of the April 18, 2017 Nebraska Children's Commission Meeting](#)

b. [Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee Member Nominations](#)

- A foster parent who contracts with a child welfare agency:
  - Jessica Kroeker, Foster Parent with Nebraska Children's Home Society, Omaha, NE
  - Bobby Loud, Foster Parent with Boys Town, Omaha, NE
- Representative of a child welfare agency that contracts directly with foster parents from the Central service area:
  - Joan E Schwan, Executive Director, St. Francis Community Services
- Representative of a child welfare agency that contracts directly with foster parents from the Eastern service area:
  - Peg Harriott, CEO, Child Saving Institute
- Representative of a child welfare agency that contracts directly with foster parents from the Northern service area:
  - Jackie Meyer, Executive Director, Building Blocks Agency Supported Foster Care
- Representative of a child welfare agency that contracts directly with foster parents from the Southeastern service area:
  - Cindy Rudolph, CFO/Treasurer, CEDARS
- Representative of a child welfare agency that contracts directly with foster parents from the Western service area:
  - Susan Henrie, CEO/LCSW, South Central Behavioral Services
- Representative from an advocacy organization which deals with legal and policy issues that include child welfare:

- Lana Temple-Plotz, Chair of Chapter Chairs and Board/Executive Committee member, Family Focused Treatment Association
- Representative of a Lead Agency:
  - Robin Chadwell, Operations Support Director/Social Worker, Nebraska Families Collaborative
- Children’s Commission Co-Chair Representative:
  - Dave Newell, CEO/President, Nebraska Families Collaborative
- c. [Psychotropic Medication Committee Member Nomination](#)
  - Representative of the Division of Children and Family Services:
    - Sherri Haber – Administrator with DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
- d. [Normalcy Task Force Recommendations](#)

**It was moved by Karen Authier and seconded by Paula Wells to approve the consent agenda as presented.** There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (14):**

|               |                |                |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Karen Authier | Felicia Nelsen | Janine Ucchino |
| Beth Baxter   | David Newell   | Kelli Wacker   |
| Holly Brandt  | Deb O’Brien    | Paula Wells    |
| Vernon Davis  | Lisa Story     | Bill Williams  |
| Kim Hawekotte | Susan Thomas   |                |

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (2):**

|                 |                         |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Teresa Anderson | Jennifer Chrystal-Clark |
|-----------------|-------------------------|

**ABSTAINED (1)**

Misty Frazier

**MOTION CARRIED**

**V. Approval of Executive Committee Slate of Officers**

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The proposed [slate of officers](#) was presented to the Commission members.

- **Past Chairperson**
  - Beth Baxter, Administrator, Behavioral Health Region 3
- **Chairperson**
  - David Newell, President & CEO, Nebraska Families Collaborative
- **Vice Chairperson**
  - Jeanne Brandner, Deputy Administrator of the Division of Juvenile Services, Administrative Office of Probation

**It was moved by Karen Authier and seconded by Vernon Davis to approve the proposed slate of officers.** There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (14):**

|               |                |                |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Karen Authier | Felicia Nelsen | Janine Ucchino |
| Beth Baxter   | David Newell   | Kelli Wacker   |
| Holly Brandt  | Deb O’Brien    | Paula Wells    |
| Vernon Davis  | Lisa Story     | Bill Williams  |
| Kim Hawekotte | Susan Thomas   |                |

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (2):**

|                 |                         |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Teresa Anderson | Jennifer Chrystal-Clark |
|-----------------|-------------------------|

## **ABSTAINED (1)**

Misty Frazier

## **MOTION CARRIED**

### **VI. Panel of Commissions**

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The two facilitators for the day introduced themselves and welcomed the members and guests. Cindy Tierney, with Concord Mediation Group, and Jane Martin-Hoffman, with Nebraska Mediation Group would assist in leading the day's discussion.

a. *Supreme Court Commission on Children in the Courts*

Honorable Judge Everett Inbody introduced himself in his role as Co-Chair for the Supreme Court Commission on Children in the Courts. The group was created in 2005 by Chief Justice Hendry. The membership consisted of around 30 individuals from across the state that included representatives of Judiciary, attorneys, state Senators, advocacy organizations, and state agencies.

Judge Inbody discussed the recent successes of the group including the case progression and juvenile court defense standards currently pending Supreme Court approval. He also touched on the work done under the 6 active subcommittees: Children in District Court and Parenting Act, Education, Guardian ad Litem, Guardianship, State-Tribal Relations, and Unified Family Court.

b. *Commission for the Protection of Children*

Co-Chairs, Mary Jo Pankoke and Gene Klein, began their discussion of the Commission for the protection of Children by noting its creation via Executive Order by Governor Nelson in 1991. This Commission served as an advisory group to the Governor and to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The membership composition consisted of a broad base of individuals that included Judges, attorneys, educators, mental health professionals, law enforcement, and former foster wards who met on a quarterly basis.

Ms. Pankoke remarked that this Commission qualified the state to receive federal Children's Justice Act grant as well as served as one of three Citizen Review Panels throughout the state. Mr. Klein reviewed many of the group's accomplishments including a multi-year study on child abuse reports that were screened out. This Commission currently had two workgroups: Oversight of the 1184 multi-disciplinary teams and one that reviews the serious injury and near fatality cases.

c. *Nebraska Children's Commission*

Past Chairperson, Beth Baxter, took an opportunity to review the framework of the Nebraska Children's Commission. The group had been established in 2012 as a result of LR37. Membership to the Children's Commission was Governor appointed with representation from all three branches of government as well as state, local, community, public, and private stakeholders. This Commission had several statutory subgroups including: Psychotropic Medication, Juvenile Services, Strengthening Families Act, Foster Care Reimbursement Rate, and the Bridge to Independence Committees.

The Children's Commission had over 250 involved stakeholders between its 26 active subgroups. With sunset dates set every 2-3 years, the Children's Commission had been extended twice already and was set to close in 2019.

### **VII. Joint Public Policy Agenda**

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Ms. Tierney and Ms. Martin-Hoffman transitioned the group to a discussion of a Joint Public Policy Agenda. They prompted members to think of the pros and cons of what a joint policy could be between the three Commissions included in the panel. These included:

## **Pros**

- Having a shared voice on budget matters
- Limitation of duplicated efforts
- Joint efforts to establish best practices
- Increased ability to identify unintended consequences
- Diversity of viewpoints
- Would increase the “squeaky wheel” phenomenon on joint issues

## **Cons**

- Complications in coordination and ensured inclusiveness
- Difficulty reaching consensus
- Could dull the diversity of the recommendations and could unintentionally lead to “groupthink”
- Conflicts of interest between the branches each group served
- Difficulty in establishing responsibility of follow through efforts

The attendees discussed in depth the intricacies that would come with a joint public policy agenda. While it was argued that areas of consensus could carry great weight when being considered for implementation, it could also have a backlash for recommendations not supported by all three groups. While members agreed there was benefit in increased communication and coordination between the groups, they felt a joint public policy would not be the best route to take. It was agreed that leadership between the three main groups would arrange regular meetings once to twice annually to provide updates and ensure duplication of efforts was minimized and that each group was aware of the efforts of the others.

## **VIII. Ice Breaker Activity**

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Ms. Baxter took a moment prior to the ice breaker activity to introduce two new members to the group. She welcomed Misty Fraizer who had recently been appointed to the position of a representative of a federally recognized Indian tribe residing within the State of Nebraska. Also present was Matt Wallen, current Chief of Staff to Courtney Phillips, CEO of DHHS. Mr. Wallen would transition into the position of Director of the Department of Children and Family Services upon appointment in August.

Ms. Tierney and Ms. Martin-Hoffman led members through a fun and creative ice breaker. Members were encouraged to interact with individuals whom they were less familiar.

## **IX. Nebraska Child Welfare Blueprint Report**

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The facilitators then directed members’ attention to the timelines within the [Nebraska Child Welfare Blueprint Report](#). The questions were raised as to if milestones had been adequately addressed and if efforts had advanced far enough to transition efforts from intervention to prevention. Members felt that prevention efforts needed to be interweaved into the ongoing intervention efforts considering that many issues were so intricate and ever evolving. A point of stabilization was identified as a need for the current systems as too much upheaval could cause turmoil.

## **X. Lunch**

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The Committee recessed for lunch at 12:15 p.m.

The meeting resumed business at 12:40 p.m.

## **XI. Review of Statutory Requirements**

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Ms. Tierney brought the group back to order by discussing the [statutory requirements](#) of the Commission. She began by focusing on the workforce related statutes outlined in 43-4203(7).

### *a. Workforce Requirements*

Workforce issues had been a topic of discussion and focus for many years. Concern was raised as to if the Commission had the necessary resources and capacity to fulfill all of the statutory requirements around the issue. The group debated on the best path to take regarding this topic. It was agreed that the Commission may need to broaden the partnerships involved on the issue as well as do further research into the steps taken in other states who had made advancements with their workforce retention. A request was made to DHHS to see if exit interview data could be shared with the Workforce Workgroup to assist in their work.

b. *Other Incomplete Requirements*

The group also discussed the need to promote data sharing across systems. Mr. Newell informed members that the Retreat in October would be host to discussion around data and information sharing with guest speaker, Dr. Daniel Webster, from the University of California, Berkeley. Members agreed that data sharing and monitoring should be kept as an area of priority and that the retreat would assist in identifying specific data points to monitor.

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## **XII. Review of Five Statutory Committees**

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a. *Psychotropic Medication Committee Informed Consent Recommendations*

Co-Chair of the Psychotropic Medication Committee, Paula Wells, gave members an [update](#) on the work of the group. Current efforts were focused on the issue of informed consent for psychotropic medication. The Committee wanted to find a way to assist in informed consent for caseworkers, as they often could not attend the doctor appointment to gain important information on the medication.

The Committee proposed the use of an updated [informed consent form](#) which they had drafted. In addition to approving the form, the Committee was seeking approval to initiate a pilot implementation by a handful of practitioners on the Psychotropic Medication Committee. The hope was to gage the ease to which the form could be integrated into daily work with foster youth.

**It was moved by Karen Authier and seconded by Holly Brand to endorse the use of a psychotropic medication informed consent document and to initiate a pilot implementation of the document.** There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (14):**

Karen Authier  
Beth Baxter  
Holly Brandt  
Vernon Davis  
Misty Frazier

Kim Hawekotte  
Felicia Nelsen  
David Newell  
Deb O'Brien  
Lisa Story

Susan Thomas  
Janine Ucchino  
Kelli Wacker  
Paula Wells  
Bill Williams

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (2):**

Teresa Anderson

Jennifer Chrystal-Clark

**ABSTAINED (0)**

**MOTION CARRIED**

Discussion on the remaining statutory committees continued. The group agreed that a strong framework needed to be established for the subgroups of the Commission. It was also noted that the resources of the Commission needed to be kept in mind when taking on new projects. With a focused effort on a smaller number of areas, the Commission could ensure quality work was being done. Commission staff was charged with meeting with each subgroup to outline their goals, priorities, tasks, and timelines.

The issue of Disproportionate Minority Contact was raised briefly. Discussion was had on the efforts of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) towards addressing this issue. In addition to the NAACP, there were a handful of other organizations looking into the issue. With this in mind, the Commission would continue to ensure that communication and coordination among all stakeholders to ensure that this issue was a point of focus.

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## **XIII. New Business**

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Mr. Newell Thanked members for their time and input. He let members know that in his new position as Commission Chairperson, he would be meeting with each member personally over the next six months.

#### **XIV. Upcoming Meeting Planning**

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Mr. Newell reminded everyone of the upcoming retreat in October and encouraged everyone to attend. He reviewed upcoming meeting dates as follows:

- Thursday, October 19<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
  - Children’s Commission Annual Retreat with guest speaker, Dr. Daniel Webster
  - Wilderness Ridge Lodge, 1800 Wilderness Woods Place, Lincoln, NE 68512
- November 14<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
  - Quarterly meeting of the Commission – Annual reports to be approved at this time
  - Location TBD

#### **XV. Adjourn**

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It was moved by Paula Wells and seconded by Vernon Davis to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 2:42 p.m.

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