

Nebraska Children’s Commission
Third Annual Retreat
October 19, 2017
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Wilderness Ridge Lodge
1800 Wilderness Woods Place, Lincoln, NE 68512

I. Call to Order

Chairperson of the Nebraska Children’s Commission (Commission), Dave Newell, called the meeting to order at 9:14 a.m.

II. Roll Call

Commission Members present (12):

| | | |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Teresa Anderson | Misty Frazier | Lisa Story |
| Beth Baxter | Kim Hawekotte | Susan Thomas |
| Holly Brandt | Felicia Nelsen | Kelli Wacker |
| Vernon Davis | David Newell | Bill Williams |

Commission Members absent (5):

| | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Jim Blue | Deb O’Brien | Paula Wells |
| Jennifer Chrystal-Clark | Janine Uchino | |

Ex Officio Members present (8):

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| Sen. Kate Bolz | Courtney Phillips (10:20) | Deb VanDyke-Ries |
| Jeanne Brandner | Judge Linda Porter | Matthew Wallen |
| Sen. Patty Pansing-Brooks (9:25) | Sen. Merve Riepe | |

Ex Officio Members absent (2):

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| Michele Borg | Julie Rogers |
|--------------|--------------|

A quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (10):

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|---------------------------|--|
| Dr. Katherine Bass..... | Foster Care Review Office |
| Doug Beran..... | DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services |
| Dr. Lynn Castrianno..... | Nebraska Families Collaborative |
| Bethany Connor Allen..... | Nebraska Children’s Commission |
| Mike Fargen..... | Nebraska Crime Commission |
| Amanda Felton..... | Nebraska Children’s Commission |
| Bill Stanton..... | Casey Family Programs |
| Kristen Stiffler..... | Nebraska Legislative Council |
| Chris Triebsch..... | Nebraska Legislative Council |
| Dr. Daniel Webster..... | U.C. Berkeley, School of Social Welfare, Center for Social Services Research |
| Dr. Richard Wiener..... | UNL, Charles Bessey Professor of Law and Psychology |

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

It was moved by Beth Baxter and seconded by Susan Thomas to approve the agenda as presented.

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

FOR (12):

Teresa Anderson
Beth Baxter
Holly Brandt
Vernon Davis

Misty Frazier
Kim Hawekotte
Felicia Nelsen
David Newell

Lisa Story
Susan Thomas
Kelli Wacker
Bill Williams

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (5):

Jim Blue
Jennifer Chrystal-Clark

Deb O'Brien
Janine Ucchino

Paula Wells

ABSTAINED (0):

MOTION CARRIED

IV. Consent Agenda

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

b. [Strengthening Families Act Committee Member Nominations](#)

- Representative from a child welfare service agency (Voting):
 - Nicole Seymour – Special Projects Manager, Nebraska Families Collaborative
- Representative of the Judicial Branch of Government (Non-Voting):
 - Deb VanDyke-Ries – Director of the Nebraska Court Improvement Project

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

- Representative of the Division of Children and Family Services from the central service area:
 - Kathleen Stolz – Central Service Area Administrator
- Representative of the Division of Children and Family Services from the northern service area:
 - Mike Puls – Northern Service Area Administrator

It was moved by Kim Hawekotte and seconded by Holly Brandt to approve the consent agenda as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (12):

Teresa Anderson
Beth Baxter
Holly Brandt
Vernon Davis

Misty Frazier
Kim Hawekotte
Felicia Nelsen
David Newell

Lisa Story
Susan Thomas
Kelli Wacker
Bill Williams

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (5):

Jim Blue
Jennifer Chrystal-Clark

Deb O'Brien
Janine Ucchino

Paula Wells

ABSTAINED (0):

MOTION CARRIED

V. Group Discussion of Commission Data Survey

Prior to beginning discussion, Chair Newell introduced the guest speaker for the day. Dr. Daniel Webster, was a senior research specialist at the Center for Social Services Research (CSSR) in the School of Social Welfare at U.C. Berkeley where he served as Principal Investigator of the California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP). Dr. Webster would be assisting the Commission take a closer look at their priorities and how to use data to better enhance their efforts towards achieving their goals.

Dr. Richard Wiener, Charles Bessey Professor of Law and Psychology at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, was introduced. Dr. Wiener led a discussion on the survey information that had been distributed for members to complete in the weeks prior to the meeting. A [presentation](#) was shared with members, which would be made available online with comments removed to protect respondent anonymity.

Members conversed on the complications that come with data, one being that there was so much information coming through that digesting and interpreting it could be overwhelming. Dr. Webster emphasized that the best way to approach the data, was to first identify the goals and priorities upon which data should be pulled. Given the scope of the Commission, many elements were in play, complicating the process of identifying priorities. Members commented that the survey responses were deceiving given the ranking options. Just because something was ranked lower, did not mean it was not important to members, but was not seen as in critical need as some of the higher ranking items.

Given the varied membership of the Commission, it was not a surprise that survey responses were wide in range. It was noted that the lack of consensus on the responses was a sign of not only the spectrum of member passions and focuses, but that the climate did not currently have a “hot topic” item to focus upon.

Dr. Wiener reviewed responses noting that the top ranked statutory mandate of the Commission was to identify priorities and goals to inform the legislature. With regards to the juvenile justice system, top areas of focus that were identified included the juvenile justice out-of-home continuum of care, mental health and suicide, and funding for programs and services. Top focus areas in the child welfare arena were placement stability and length of stay, availability of and funding for needed services, and licensing, training, and retention for foster parents and relative/kinship homes.

VI. University of California, Berkeley’s Social Services Research

Dr. Webster began his [presentation](#) by noting that Nebraska appeared to be doing well with the Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) metrics. He commented on the similar geographical diversity between Nebraska and California, and stressed the need for uniform data collection throughout the state to build confidence in the meaning of data despite location. Not only was uniform data important, but longitudinal data, or information collected over time, was imperative to understanding the larger picture.

Dr. Webster shared information on the [public data portal](#) hosted by the CCWIP. Both the benefits and downfalls of publicly available data were discussed. While sharing data publicly allowed for transparency and increased collaboration, there were also those with agendas who would abuse the data in order to skew how it was perceived. In order to combat data abuse, staff must be equipped to practice Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and be familiar with the data. Having data covering large spans of time also helped to limit the amount of manipulation possible.

VII. Lunch

The Committee recessed for lunch at 12:08 p.m.

The meeting resumed business at 12:38 p.m.

VIII. Panel Presentation on Data in Nebraska

Chair Newell welcomed panel presenters. Presenters included Doug Beran, Deputy Director of Research, Planning & Evaluation with DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services, Mike Fargen, Chief of

Information Services with the Nebraska Crime Commission, Dr. Webster, and Dr. Wiener. Each presenter gave a brief summary of the work that they do and the types of data that they use in their daily work.

After discussing several of the current DHHS tools and initiatives such as Structured Decision Making (SDM), Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA), Intensive Family Preservation, and Alternative Response, members inquired as to if the average number of intakes had ever been analyzed. While there was anecdotal information showing that there may be many intakes before a youth came into care, a detailed evaluation had not been performed. There were regular evaluations to monitor if intakes were appropriately responded to, but an evaluation of the number of intakes prior to removal may help identify a number that would signal red flags for more in depth intervention.

Panel guests also discussed the harm that can be caused by removing a child or youth from their home. They discussed the need to isolate the groups where the most false negatives and positives were occurring to ensure positive outcomes. Other issues that arose included overrides on SDM scores, the lack of in-depth data shared with court professionals, and the complications that come with varied term definitions across systems.

This raised the topic of challenges faced in the current system and how to address them. Presenters mentioned the negative effects of missing and inconsistent data. Complications arose when we continued to ask more of our data, leading to increased risk of input error for the workers. The best way to combat this was to identify where the most value lay with our data. They also highlighted that the more the data is viewed and distributed, the more likely it will be to place value on collecting the correct information. Eliminating unnecessary data that is no longer relevant and focusing on the data that is continually used, would ensure that the data was accurate.

IX. Review of Discussion – An In Depth Look At Data

The day's discussion was reviewed in the final [presentation](#) by Dr. Webster. He touched on important things to keep in mind when moving forward including clearly defining questions and the information desired. There may be benefit to cross walking the focus areas of the involved stakeholders to help streamline outcomes. He also returned to the need for both longitudinal data and the collection of data that is used on a regular basis. Many of the issues with data could be simplified with the sharing of data across systems. Having the systems each gather and share the data collected would ensure that information is coming from the experts.

Chair Newell remarked that many of the topics discussed throughout the day were issues the Commission continually struggled with at every meeting. Dr. Webster touched on foundational outcomes such as permanency, well-being, and safety, reminding members that addressing these issues required entire state and all stakeholder involvement.

X. New Business

There was no new business.

XI. Upcoming Meeting Planning

Mr. Newell reminded everyone of the upcoming meeting on November 14th, which is when annual reports would be reviewed and approved for submission to the Legislature, Governor, and DHHS.

XII. Adjourn

It was moved by Beth Baxter and seconded by Holly Brandt to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 2:53 p.m.

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