

**Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee**

December 15, 2017

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Nebraska State Office Building, Lower Level Conference Room A  
301 Centennial Mall S, Lincoln, NE 68508

**Video Conference Satellite Location:**

CAPWN, 3350 10th Street, Gering, NE 69341

**I. Call to Order and Welcome**

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Co-Chairs, Jeanne Brandner and Mary Jo Pankoke, called the meeting of the Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee to order at 9:10 a.m. They welcomed everyone and the group did formal introductions.

**II. Roll Call and Introductions**

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**Committee Members present (11):**

Mary Fraser Meints	Doug Lenz	Juliet Summers (arrived 9:14)
Alyson Goedken	Mary Jo Pankoke	Susan Thomas
Brandy Gustoff	Deb Shuck*	Lana Verbrigghe
Sarah Helvey	Jennifer Skala	

**Committee Members absent (4):**

Jodie Austin	Vernon Davis
Sebastian Coolidge	Jill Schubauer

**Ex-Officio Members present (2):**

Jeanne Brandner	Kim Thomas
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**Ex-Officio Members absent (6):**

Senator Kate Bolz	Timoree Klingler	Deb VanDyke-Ries
Judge Douglas Johnson	Katie McLeese Stephenson	

A quorum was established.

**Guests in Attendance (10):**

Dr. Katie Bass.....	Foster Care Review Office
Kayla Bailey*.....	Project Everlast
Whitney Beck.....	Former B2i Participant
Cassy Blakely.....	Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Deanna Brakhage.....	DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
David Bruno.....	DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
Natalie Conant.....	DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
Bethany Connor Allen.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Amanda Felton.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Mary Ann Harvey.....	Nebraska Court Improvement Project
Jessica Hilderbrand.....	Project Everlast
Felipe Longoria.....	Central Plains Center for Service
Chris Mendoza.....	DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
Amy Peters.....	Nebraska Appleseed
Tami Soper.....	Office Senator Kate Bolz, District #29
Jesse Spangler.....	DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
Terrance Williams.....	DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services

\*Indicates a member or guest speaker attending via video conference

*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 near the entrance of the meeting room.

### **III. Approval of Agenda**

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**It was moved by Susan Thomas and seconded by Doug Lenz to approve the agenda as presented.** There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

**FOR (10):**

Mary Fraser Meints  
Alyson Goedken  
Brandy Gustoff  
Sarah Helvey

Doug Lenz  
Mary Jo Pankoke  
Deb Shuck\*  
Jennifer Skala

Susan Thomas  
Lana Verbrigghe

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**ABSENT (5):**

Jodie Austin  
Sebastian Coolidge

Vernon Davis  
Jill Schubauer

Juliet Summers

**MOTION CARRIED**

### **IV. Approval of Minutes**

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**It was moved by Mary Fraser Meints to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2017 minutes as presented. It was seconded by Lana Verbrigghe.** There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (10):**

Mary Fraser Meints  
Alyson Goedken  
Brandy Gustoff  
Sarah Helvey

Doug Lenz  
Mary Jo Pankoke  
Deb Shuck\*  
Jennifer Skala

Susan Thomas  
Lana Verbrigghe

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**ABSENT (5):**

Jodie Austin  
Sebastian Coolidge

Vernon Davis  
Jill Schubauer

Juliet Summers

**MOTION CARRIED**

### **V. Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup Update**

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Dr. Katie Bass, Chair of the Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup and Research Director with the Foster Care Review Office (FCRO), provided a [report of recommendations](#) from the workgroup to the members. She explained that the workgroup had begun receiving and reviewing Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and other data from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The goal of the group would be to establish a system of information review that would allow them to identify critical information to pass on to the larger group.

Dr. Bass went on to briefly review each recommendation contained within the report. Discussion was spurred from recommendation number five relating to dependent stipend rates for B2i participants. The workgroup members voiced concern about the potential negative effects of the shift in stipend payment from the current \$620 to around \$308, which was the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) standard. They felt that the Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee, given their knowledge and experience with rate methodology. Alyson Goedken, DHHS Administrator clarified that the B2i participants would continue to receive their \$760 monthly stipend amount, but that those participants with children would see a decrease in the additional stipend for any dependent they have

while enrolled in the program. She also noted that program participants with children would most likely not be eligible to claim both the B2i dependent stipend funds and TANF funds at the same time. DHHS was currently seeking federal guidance on Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) regulations to get clarification on this issue.

Dr. Bass noted that an alteration would be necessary for recommendation number to since ChildTrend had agreed to alter the evaluation to reflect the recommendation. The recommendation would then be to approve moving forward with the evaluation as presented. **Mary Fraser Meints moved to approve the Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup report of recommendations with an alteration to recommendation number two to reflect approval to move forward with the evaluation. Juliet Summers seconded the motion.** There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (9):**

Mary Fraser Meints  
Brandy Gustoff  
Sarah Helvey

Doug Lenz  
Mary Jo Pankoke  
Deb Shuck\*

Jennifer Skala  
Susan Thomas  
Lana Verbrigghe

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAINED (1):**

Alyson Goedken

**ABSENT (5):**

Jodie Austin  
Sebastian Coolidge

Vernon Davis  
Jill Schubauer

Juliet Summers

**MOTION CARRIED**

**VI. Finance and Policy Workgroup Update**

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Workgroup Co-Chairs, Alyson Goedken and Jennifer Skala, provided an [update](#) on the work of the group. The group had examined the population of B2i participants who were also currently receiving Developmental Disability (DD) services to identify any overlap in funding. The Committee discussed recommendation two at length, debating the need for two separate individuals offering services. Members of the workgroup highlighted that an assessment would need to be performed to identify the needs of the participants.

Other issues that the members reviewed included assistance navigating other public benefit programs, incentivizing savings, participant dependent stipend rates, and how best to support and hold accountable participants with barriers to employment. **It was moved by Doug Lenz and seconded by Susan Thomas to approve the Finance and Policy Workgroup report of recommendation with an alteration to recommendation seven to also gather feedback from Independence Coordinators, supervisors, and other supports to better garner information.** There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (9):**

Mary Fraser Meints  
Brandy Gustoff  
Sarah Helvey

Doug Lenz  
Mary Jo Pankoke  
Deb Shuck\*

Jennifer Skala  
Susan Thomas  
Lana Verbrigghe

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAINED (1):**

Alyson Goedken

**ABSENT (5):**

Jodie Austin  
Sebastian Coolidge

Vernon Davis  
Jill Schubauer

Juliet Summers

**MOTION CARRIED**

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

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Alyson Goedken distributed a [packet](#) of CQI data to that group. Highlights covered included the increase from 7 to 61 participants receiving IV-E funds since the amendment to the state plan, increased communication between B2i staff and Income Maintenance Foster Care workers, and the number of participants served by the program. There was lengthy discussion of how the B2i stipend may affect eligibility for other benefit programs. There was also concern around the reasoning for the steady increase in participants over the years. The hope was that the program had become more efficient in targeting qualifying youth and not that more youth were aging out of the system. Members requested information on the number of youth aging out of the system without permanency.

## **VIII. Foster Care Review Office Update**

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Dr. Bass, shared that most of the relevant FCRO information had been discussed in the two workgroup reports. She indicated that Mary Furnas with the FCRO was continuing to complete the 6 month reviews. Efforts were in progress to better coordinate with DHHS to receive data to better streamline the review process.

## **IX. Public Comment**

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The Co-Chairs welcomed public comment from the many guests in attendance. Whitney Beck, a former B2i participant, inquired as to if Job Corps had been examined as another potential program of service or funding overlap. The members agreed it may be a good area to research further.

David Bruno, a B2i Independence Coordinator, thanked the Committee for inviting him. He asked if there would be an opportunity for an Independence Coordinator to join the Committee. With their direct knowledge and experience they could provide valuable insight to the group. Members agreed that this would be a good addition to the Committees membership and the Co-Chairs agreed to bring it to the attention of the Children's Commission at their next meeting.

Chris Mendoza, another B2i Independence Coordinator, inquired on the previous recommendation of the group to look at a public/private partnership for case management services. Co-Chair Brandner explained that work had focused mostly on duplication of funding and program services, and that research had not happened regarding a public/private partnership. Discussion ensued regarding the normalcy services provided by Independence Coordinators that are not part of the scope of a DD worker.

Terrance Williams, a B2i Supervisor, asked if the Committee would be looking into what an appropriate caseload looks like for Independence Coordinators. Members recalled their previous recommendation from report years 2013 and 2014 that caseload size should range from 15 in the rural areas up to 20 in urban areas.

## **X. New Business**

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There was no new business.

## **XI. Upcoming Meeting Planning**

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The Co-Chairs agreed that there needed to be time for the workgroups to continue research on their outlined next steps. It was agreed that a date in early March may work best to allow sufficient time for work to happen. A doodle poll would be sent out to find the best date for members.

## **XII. Adjourn**

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**It was moved by Mary Frasier Meints and seconded by Doug Lenz to adjourn the meeting.** No further discussion ensued. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 11:29 a.m.