

**Nebraska Children's Commission**  
Forty-Eighth Meeting  
July 31, 2018  
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
Southeast Community College, Room U-104 & 106  
8800 O Street, Lincoln, NE 68520

**1. Call to Order**

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Dave Newell called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

**2. Roll Call**

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***Commission Members present (13)***

Jim Blue	Terri Knutson (9:20)	Janine Ucchino (11:16)
Holly Brandt	Felicia Nelsen	Kelli Wacker
Vernon Davis	David Newell	Bill Williams
Misty Frazier	Deb O'Brien	
Kim Hawekotte	Susan Thomas	

***Commission Members absent (3)***

Teresa Anderson	Beth Baxter	Lisa Story
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***Ex Officio Members present (4)***

Senator Kate Bolz	Julie Rogers
Judge Linda Porter	Matthew Wallen

***Ex Officio Members absent (6)***

Michele Borg	Senator Patty Pansing Brooks	Senator Merv Riepe
Jeanne Brandner	Courtney Phillips	Deb VanDyke-Ries

A quorum was established.

***Guests in Attendance (7)***

Amanda Felton.....	Nebraska Children's Commission
Peg Harriott.....	Child Saving Institute
Chris Jones.....	Nebraska Children's Commission
Sharon Kruse.....	DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
Mary Jo Pankoke.....	Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Tami Soper.....	Office of Sen. Kate Bolz
Kristen Stiffler.....	Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature

***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.

**3. Approval of Agenda**

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It was moved by Vernon Davis and seconded by Holly Brandt to approve the [agenda](#) with the following amendments: removal of the April 3, 2018 meeting minutes and the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee membership nominations from the Consent Agenda for purposes of discussion. No further discussion ensued. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (11):**

Jim Blue	Kim Hawekotte	Susan Thomas
Holly Brandt	Felicia Nelsen	Kelli Wacker
Vernon Davis	David Newell	Bill Williams
Misty Frazier	Deb O'Brien	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (5):**

Teresa Anderson	Terri Knutson	Janine Ucchino
Beth Baxter	Lisa Story	

**ABSTAINED (0):**

## MOTION CARRIED

### 4. Consent Agenda

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- a. [Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee Membership Nominations](#)
- **Representative from The Division of Children and Family Services from The Southeastern Service Area:**
    - Rochelle Dotson (Non-Voting) – Foster Care Resource Developer Supervisor, DHHC-DCFS
  - **Program Specialist Representative:**
    - Olivia Biggs (Non-Voting) – Program Specialist, DHHS-DCFS
  - **Designee of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Health and Human Services**
    - Michael Keays (Non-Voting) – Chief Financial Officer, DHHS, DCFS
- b. [Juvenile Services Committee Membership Nomination](#)
- **Group Home/Shelter Representative:**
    - Vicky Thompson Smith (Voting) – Associate Director, CEDARS Youth Services
- c. [Psychotropic Medication Committee Co-Chair Nomination](#)
- **Co-Chair Representative from the Nebraska Children's Commission:**
    - Beth Baxter – Administrator, Behavioral Health Region 3
- d. [Strengthening Families Act Committee Membership Nominations](#)
- **Current or former foster parent:**
    - Lisa Story (Voting)- Foster Parent
  - **Guardian Ad Litem who practices in juvenile court**
    - Heather Colton (Voting) – Associate Attorney/Guardian Ad Litem, Pollak & Ball, LLC
  - **Representative of the Department of Education**
    - Patricia Frost (Voting) – Education Specialist, Nebraska Department of Education
  - **Parent who has experience in the foster care system**
    - Terri Knutson (Voting) – Certified Peer Support Provider, Nebraska Family Support Network
  - **Professional who has relevant practical experience**
    - Simone Armstead (Voting) – Childcare Director, Marion's Quality Services, INC
    - Sarah Riffel (Voting) – Associate Vice President - Connected Youth Initiative, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
  - **Representative from a child welfare advocacy organization**
    - Stephanie Gardella (Voting) – Program Coordinator, CASA for Douglas County
    - Sarah Helvey (Voting) – Program Director / Staff Attorney – Child Welfare Program, Nebraska Appleseed
    - Rochelle Juilfs (Non-Voting) – Advocate Supervisor, CASA for Douglas County
  - **Representative from a child welfare service agency**
    - Ashley Brown (Voting) – Program Director, Nebraska KVC
    - Deb Shuck (Voting) – Central Service Coordinator, Community Action Health Center
  - **Representative from an agency providing independent living services**
    - Brandy Gustoff (Voting) – Innovative Growth Leader, Omaha Home for Boys
    - Bailey Perry (Non-Voting) – Transitional Living Manager, Omaha Home for Boys, Jacob's Place
  - **Representative from the Juvenile Probation System**
    - Jim Bennett (Non-Voting) – Director of Supervision Services, AOP, Juvenile Services Division
  - **Representative of a child care institution**
    - Ron Giesselmann (Voting) – Executive Director, Masonic-Eastern Star Home for Children
    - Amara Madsen (Voting) – Service Director, CEDARS Youth Services
  - **Representative of the Executive branch of government**
    - Deanna Brakhage (Voting) – Program Specialist, DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
  - **Young adult currently or previously in foster care**
    - Payne Ackerman (Voting) – Young Adult Previously in Foster Care, N/A
    - Nathan Collier (Voting) – Student/Law Clerk, UNL/Nebraska Appleseed
    - Rebecca Daugherty (Voting) – Young Adult Previously in Foster Care, N/A
    - Vernon Davis (Voting) – Young Adult Previously in Foster Care, N/A

It was moved by Susan Thomas and seconded by Deb O'Brien to approve the Consent agenda as presented. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (11):**  
Jim Blue

Holly Brandt

Vernon Davis

Misty Frazier  
Kim Hawekotte  
Felicia Nelsen  
**AGAINST (0):**

David Newell  
Deb O'Brien

Susan Thomas  
Kelli Wacker  
Bill Williams

**ABSENT (5):**

Teresa Anderson  
Beth Baxter

Terri Knutson  
Lisa Story

Janine Ucchino

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**5. Minutes of the April 3, 2018 Meeting**

Members discussed necessary changes to the minutes. **Jim Blue motioned and Holly Brandt seconded to approve the [minutes of the April 3, 2018 meeting with the alterations to correct Felicia Nelsen's name and to correct the percentage number in the probation recidivism update.](#)** There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (11):**

Jim Blue  
Holly Brandt  
Vernon Davis  
Misty Frazier

Kim Hawekotte  
Felicia Nelsen  
David Newell  
Deb O'Brien

Susan Thomas  
Kelli Wacker  
Bill Williams

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (5):**

Teresa Anderson  
Beth Baxter

Terri Knutson  
Lisa Story

Janine Ucchino

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**6. Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee Membership Nominations**

Chair Newell noted that Senator Kate Bolz had requested to be added to the [member nominations for the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee](#). **It was moved by Holly Brandt and seconded by Bill Williams to approve the following members:**

- **A representative of a child welfare advocacy organization**
  - Sarah Helvey (Voting) – Program Director / Staff Attorney – Child Welfare Program, Nebraska Appleseed
  - Candi Marcantel (Non-Voting) – Supervisor, Sarpy County CASA
  - Susan Thomas (Voting) – CASA Volunteer, Nebraska CASA Association
- **A representative of a child welfare service agency**
  - Christina Lloyd (Voting) - Program Director, Bridges Transitional Living and Street Outreach Services, CEDARS Youth Services
  - Amanda McGill Johnson (Voting) – Community Impact Director, Nebraska Children's Home Society
  - Katie McLeese Stephenson (Voting) – Director, Child Guidance Center
  - Sara Riffel (Voting) – Associate Vice President - Connected Youth Initiative, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
  - Cristen White (Voting) – Operations Program Manager, PromiseShip
- **A representative of an Independent Living Services Agency**
  - Mary Fraser Meints (Voting) – Executive Director, Youth Emergency Services (YES)
  - Brandy Gustoff (Non-Voting) – Innovative Growth Leader, Omaha Home for Boys
  - Doug Lenz (Voting) – Director, Central Plains Center for Services
  - Bailey Perry (Voting) – Transitional Living Manager, Omaha Home for Boys, Jacob's Place
  - Jennifer Skala (Non-Voting) – Senior Vice President, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
  - Lana Verbrigghe (Voting) – Director of Child Welfare Services, Child Saving Institute
- **A representative of the Legislative Branch of Government**
  - Kate Bolz (Non-Voting) – Senator, Nebraska Legislative Council
  - Kristen Stiffler (Non-Voting) – Legal Counsel, Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature
  - Anna Wishart (Non-Voting) – Senator, Nebraska Legislative Council
- **A young adult currently or previously in foster care**
  - Whitney Beck (Voting) – Young Adult Previously in Foster Care
  - Vernon Davis (Voting) – Young Adult Previously in Foster Care

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

**FOR (11):**

Jim Blue  
Holly Brandt  
Vernon Davis  
Misty Frazier

Kim Hawekotte  
Felicia Nelsen  
David Newell  
Deb O'Brien

Susan Thomas  
Kelli Wacker  
Bill Williams

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (5):**

Teresa Anderson  
Beth Baxter

Terri Knutson  
Lisa Story

Janine Ucchino

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**7. Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee Co-Chair Nominations**

Commission members were presented with a [list of nominees](#) for Co-Chair leadership of the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee. Members were asked to nominate one individual as a Co-Chair representative.

• **Co-Chair Nominees:**

- Christina Lloyd – Program Director of Bridges Transitional Living and Street Outreach Services, CEDARS Youth Services
- Sara Riffel – Associate Vice President of the Connected Youth Initiative, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
- Cristen White – Operations Program Manager, PromiseShip
- Senator Anna Wishart – Senator, Nebraska Legislative Council

**It was moved by Kim Hawekotte to appoint Christina Lloyd as Co-Chair of the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee. Vernon Davis seconded the motion.** There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (11):**

Jim Blue  
Holly Brandt  
Vernon Davis  
Misty Frazier

Kim Hawekotte  
Felicia Nelsen  
David Newell  
Deb O'Brien

Susan Thomas  
Kelli Wacker  
Bill Williams

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (5):**

Teresa Anderson  
Beth Baxter

Terri Knutson  
Lisa Story

Janine Ucchino

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**8. Legislative Discussion**

Chair Newell gave the floor to Senator Bolz to discuss any relevant legislative updates with the Commission. Bolz directed members to [LR451](#) highlighting the opportunity for the Commission to discuss potential updates to its structure. She noted three potential structures that were being entertained; Maintain and streamline, reform and strengthen, or innovation and capacity building. It was agreed that the Structure Taskforce should be reinstated to review potential models for the Commission moving forward. Recommendations from the group would be shared with the Commission at the next meeting for review. Volunteers for the Structure Taskforce included Jim Blue, Sen. Kate Bolz, Kim Hawekotte, Terri Knutson, Dave Newell, Julie Rogers, Tami Soper, Kristen Stiffler, and Matthew Wallen. Chair Newell also suggested Beth Baxter and Jeanne Brandner for the group.

Chair Newell then welcomed Kristen Stiffler, Legal Counsel to the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature, to share any significant legislative news. Ms. Stiffler commented on the Committee's work to review the various committees and commissions throughout the state in an effort to streamline and limit duplication. She also remarked on the Families First Preservation Services Act (FFPSA) and how it would aid in the reduction of "silos" between the Division of Medicaid and the Division of Children and Family Services within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Further elaboration on the FFPSA included informing members of the emphasis on the pregnant and parenting population. Several of the Commission's subgroups, including the APPLA Subcommittee and the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee, had been discussing how to ensure that this population was appropriately supported. Chris Jones, Policy Analyst with the Commission, cited the DHHS 5-year prevention plan and their intention of forming a workgroup to target vulnerable population, including pregnant and parenting youth. Matthew Wallen, Director of the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), noted that the workgroups were open to any interested individuals, and that information on the workgroups would be made available on the DHHS website.

**9. Kinship and Relative Care Workgroup Report**

Co-Chairs of the Kinship and Relative Care Workgroup, Peg Harriott and Bill Williams, provided a summary of the [recommendations](#) put together by the workgroup. The question was raised as to why physical and emotional abuse were not included as a core training requirement.

The workgroup Chairs explained that those issues would fall into both the Trauma Impact and Collaborating and navigating family relationships as they relate to the youth and caregivers respectively. It was also clarified that these recommendations were formed with the guideline of a budget neutral impact, and may not reflect the ideal vision of relative and kinship care of the group. Lastly, language was updated to reflect that the core training should be strengths based in nature.

**It was moved by Vernon Davis and seconded by Deb O'Brien to approve the report with updates based on the above discussion. No further discussion ensued.** Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (12):**

Jim Blue	Terri Knutson	Kelli Wacker
Holly Brandt	Felicia Nelsen	Bill Williams
Vernon Davis	David Newell	
Misty Frazier	Deb O'Brien	
Kim Hawekotte	Susan Thomas	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (4):**

Teresa Anderson	Lisa Story
Beth Baxter	Janine Ucchino

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**10. Approval of Annual Reports**

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*a. Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee Annual Report*

Mary Jo Pankoke, Co-Chair of the Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee, directed member attention to the draft of their [annual report](#). Highlights included the Committee's efforts around duplication of services, drawdown of IV-E funds, the independent evaluation being performed, and the recommendations for extension of services to similar populations.

Pankoke highlighted the need for timely permanency hearings and appropriate language within best interest court orders in order to ensure young adults can continue to be eligible for IV-E funds. She noted a recent number of youth who had lost their eligibility due to inadequate measures in these two areas.

Another area of interest the Commission discussed included work to continue to examine the discharge reasons for youth 16 and older exiting ward legal statuses and ensure that the program is accessed appropriately. They also touched on the need to look at the enrolment and outreach efforts for young adults with Tribal affiliation. Complications arise with this population since tribal youth reach the age of majority at age 18, but cannot enroll in the B2i program until age 19. Further exploration on how to address this population was suggested as an area of focus for the Committee.

**It was moved by Holly Brandt to approve the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee annual report as presented with leeway for grammatical corrections. Susan Thomas seconded the motion.**

**FOR (11):**

Jim Blue	Terri Knutson	Susan Thomas
Holly Brandt	Felicia Nelsen	Kelli Wacker
Vernon Davis	David Newell	Bill Williams
Kim Hawekotte	Deb O'Brien	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (5):**

Teresa Anderson	Misty Frazier	Janine Ucchino
Beth Baxter	Lisa Story	

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

*b. Juvenile Services Committee Annual Report*

Kim Hawekotte was invited forward to discuss the [Juvenile Services Committee \(JSC\) and Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice \(NCJJ\) joint annual report](#). She reminded the Commission of the collaboration with the NCJJ that had begun a year and a half previously. Key issues covered included the recent legislative changes with emphasis on LB670, the transition services for juvenile justice youth, the population of the highest utilizers of services, and youth and family engagement.

It was moved by Deb O'Brien and seconded by Vernon Davis to approve the **Juvenile Services Committee and Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice joint annual report with leeway for grammatical corrections**. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (12):**

Jim Blue	Terri Knutson	Kelli Wacker
Holly Brandt	Felicia Nelsen	Bill Williams
Vernon Davis	David Newell	
Misty Frazier	Deb O'Brien	
Kim Hawekotte	Susan Thomas	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (4):**

Teresa Anderson	Lisa Story
Beth Baxter	Janine Ucchino

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

c. *Strengthening Families Act Committee Annual Report*

Co-Chair, Vernon Davis, gave an update regarding the [Strengthening Families Act \(SFA\) Committee annual report](#). Items reviewed included collaboration on the Court Improvement Project's (CIP) "What Now?" guides for youth, review of child-care institution normalcy plans, efforts toward the prevention of trafficking, work to spread education and awareness regarding the SFA Advisor, and the work towards raising SFA awareness among court professionals.

**Holly Brandt motioned to approve the Strengthening Families Act Committee annual report with leeway for grammatical corrections. Deb O'Brien seconded the motion.** No further discussion ensued. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (12):**

Jim Blue	Terri Knutson	Susan Thomas
Holly Brandt	Felicia Nelsen	Janine Ucchino
Vernon Davis	David Newell	Kelli Wacker
Misty Frazier	Deb O'Brien	Bill Williams

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (4):**

Teresa Anderson	Kim Hawekotte
Beth Baxter	Lisa Story

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

d. *Nebraska Children's Commission Annual Report*

Chair Newell invited Chris Jones to provide an overview of the [Nebraska Children's Commission Annual Report and Strategic Plan](#). Jones Summarized the mission and goals for the Commission's strategic plan, discussed the work of the Commission subgroups not previously discussed, and shared documents and methods to streamline the operations of the Commission. **Holly Brand motioned and Susan Thomas seconded the approval of the Nebraska Children's Commission Annual Report & Strategic Plan with leeway for grammatical corrections.** No further discussion ensued. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (13):**

Jim Blue	Terri Knutson	Janine Ucchino
Holly Brandt	Felicia Nelsen	Kelli Wacker
Vernon Davis	David Newell	Bill Williams
Misty Frazier	Deb O'Brien	
Kim Hawekotte	Susan Thomas	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (3):**

Teresa Anderson	Beth Baxter	Lisa Story
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**ABSTAINED (0):**

**MOTION CARRIED**

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### **11. Lunch**

Members recessed for lunch from 12:05 – 12:25 p.m.

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### **12. Presentation on the Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development Grant**

Chair Newell welcomed Sharon Kruse, Capacity Planning & Workforce Planning Administrator with DHHS-DCFS. Ms. Kruse gave a [presentation](#) on the goals, background, and process of the Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development (QIC-WD) grant project. The project process consisted of four phases: exploration, installation, initial implementation, and full implementation. Kruse explained that the project was in the exploration phase which, combined with installation, would take most of the 2018 year. Initial implementation would happen in 2019 with full implementation occurring in 2020-2021.

Kruse continued to review the project exploration phase by discussing key findings from three surveys completed by Division of Children and Family Services Specialists. A root-cause analysis identified the four main areas for workforce turnover: feelings of disrespected from strained professional relationships with the courts, secondary traumatic stress, a lack of supervisory support, and depersonalization. Next steps of the DHHS were to assess and select a workforce strategy or intervention, assess implementation supports, and develop an implementation plan. Kruse indicated that their selected intervention would most focus on the issue of secondary traumatic stress.

It was also emphasized that even though the Nebraska site would only be implementing one intervention, there was a great opportunity to learn from the other seven site as they implement other interventions. Additionally, even though the project only allows the selection of one intervention, the data gathered will provide insight on how to implement positive changes to other problems that lead to high turnover.

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### **13. DHHS Update**

Matt Wallen provided an update on the work of the DHHS. He highlighted the work in progress to implement stratified specialist positions. He also discussed the DHHS Business Plan elements of utilizing economic assistance programs to target poverty and its influence on the intergenerational cycle of system involvement. Other topics covered included work happening with Family Focused Case Management, examination of caseload and workload levels for workers, and the availability of DCFS data on the website. Wallen noted that the Process Improvement Plan regarding the Round 3 Child and Family Services Review was in its third version after requests for updates from Federal partners.

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### **14. Public Comment**

Chair Newell provided an opportunity for public comment. No public comment was given.

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### **13. New Business**

New business centered on a discussion of the Commission's annual retreat. It was agreed that the retreat would focus on reviewing the work of the Structure Taskforce and discussing LR451. The group would work to identify a structure and any required statutory changes to assist in streamlining the group's efficiency and effectiveness. The group tentatively identified September 18, 2018 as the date of the retreat. Commission staff would secure a venue and send information to all members to verify the date could provide a quorum of members.

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### **14. Upcoming Meeting Planning**

- September 18, 2018 – Tentative Retreat Date
- November 14, 2018 (moved up a week to avoid conflicts with holiday travel)

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### **15. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 1:57 p.m.