

**Strengthening Families Act Committee Meeting**

February 8, 2018

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Southeast Community College, Rooms U-104 & 106

8800 O Street, Lincoln, NE 68520

**I. Call to Order**

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The Strengthening Families Act (SFA) Committee of the Nebraska Children’s Commission was called to order at 1:11 p.m. by Co-Chair Vernon Davis.

**II. Roll Call and Introductions**

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**Committee Members present (11):**

Erin Bader	Vernon Davis	Stacy Scholten
Cassy Blakely	Jude Dean (arrived at 1:37)	Nicole Seymour
Ashley Brown	Patricia Frost	Lisa Story
Heather Colton	Nikki Novak	

**Committee Members absent (7):**

Payne Ackerman	Kim Hawekotte	Juliet Summers
Anna Brummer	Sarah Helvey	
Nathan Collier	Deb Shuck	

**Ex Officio and Resource Members present (2):**

Jim Bennett	Deb VanDyke-Ries
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**Ex Officio and Resource Members absent (1):**

A’Jamal Byndon

**A quorum was established.**

**Guests in Attendance (7):**

Crystal Aldmeyer.....	Nebraska Families Collaborative
Erin Aliano.....	Nebraska Alliance of CACs
Bethany Connor Allen.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Amanda Felton.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Traci Webber.....	Nebraska 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 website in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. The publication will 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 to the side of the meeting room.

**III. Approval of Agenda**

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**It was moved by Cassy Blakely to approve the [agenda](#) as presented. Ashley Brown seconded the motion.** There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

**FOR (10):**

Erin Bader	Vernon Davis	Nicole Seymour
Cassy Blakely	Patricia Frost	Lisa Story
Ashley Brown	Nikki Novak	
Heather Colton	Stacy Scholten	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (8):**

Payne Ackerman  
Anna Brummer  
Nathan Collier

Jude Dean  
Kim Hawekotte  
Sarah Helvey

Deb Shuck  
Juliet Summers

**ABSTAINED (0)**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**IV. Approval of November 1, 2017 Meeting Minutes**

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It was moved by Lisa Story and seconded by Nikki Novak to approve the [minutes of the November 1, 2017 meeting](#) as presented.

**FOR (10):**

Erin Bader  
Cassy Blakely  
Ashley Brown  
Heather Colton

Vernon Davis  
Patricia Frost  
Nikki Novak  
Stacy Scholten

Nicole Seymour  
Lisa Story

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (8):**

Payne Ackerman  
Anna Brummer  
Nathan Collier

Jude Dean  
Kim Hawekotte  
Sarah Helvey

Deb Shuck  
Juliet Summers

**ABSTAINED (0)**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**V. Co-Chair Report**

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Co-Chair Davis reminded members to help spread the word on the open positions currently on the Committee. They included the positions of a parent who has experience with the foster care system, a representative of a child care institution, and a representative of the Legislative Branch of Government.

**VI. Legislative Update**

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Bethany Connor Allen was invited to provide a legislative update to the group. She began by noting the two major bills that would impact the workload of the SFA Committee. They included [LB226](#), which would charge the Committee to pull in the key stakeholders to create a cost-benefit analysis of a program that would assist foster youth in obtaining their driver's licenses and automotive insurance. If passed, the report from that effort would be due September 15, 2019. The other bill of note was [LB732](#) which would move up the reporting date of the Committee and Children's Commission from December 1<sup>st</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup>.

Other bills discussed include [LB836](#), which would provide for minors' consent to certain mental health services as prescribed, [LB925](#) that would change provisions relating to certain sex crimes and crimes against children, and [LB1132](#) that would provide a procedure to set aside convictions of victims of sex trafficking and to expunge related records.

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

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Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Administrator of Service Array & ICPC, Stacy Scholten, was present to provide an update. Scholten remarked on the flowchart included in the Trafficking Report from 2017, noting that a meeting of system stakeholders had met to review potential policies and procedures around the issue. It was agreed that the hotline would serve as the hub for initial information making sure that it is kept together and given to the appropriate parties. All trafficking reports received would immediately be forwarded to local law enforcement and the Nebraska State Patrol. An investigative partnership between law enforcement and DHHS would take place in situations requiring a joint assessment.

Other updates included policy updates requiring updated photos every six months for youth in care, progress on the normalcy plans and reports, collaboration with the Court Improvement Project on the Youth Bill of Rights, recent updates to the grievance process, and a research around a potential foster care with joint family support component.

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### **VIII. Court Improvement Project – Know Your Rights Guide**

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Traci Webber, Design and Communications Coordinator with the Court Improvement Project (CIP), introduced herself and provided information on the progress of the Youth Bill of Rights guide. She noted that the working title had been updated to, “Now What?” to better connect with its target audience. The initiative had pulled in many stakeholders for input and support to complete and distribute once completed.

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### **IX. Probation Update**

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An update on Juvenile Probation’s implementation of the SFA was given by Jim Bennett, Director of Supervision Services. Bennett informed members that training was set to begin in the spring that would on a shift in workforce culture when viewing missing youth. Steps had also been put in place to utilize “safe/cooling off spaces.” These would be locations identified in advance that youth could go to remove themselves from high anxiety situations without being filed as a youth missing from supervision.

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### **X. Subcommittee Updates**

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*a. Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) Subcommittee*

An update on the work of the APPLA Subcommittee was given by the group’s Chair, Crystal Aldmeyer. Aldmeyer noted that the group’s two main areas of focus for the year would be the SFA Advisor/Advocate and the pregnant and parenting population. Currently the group was still identifying specific issues they felt they could take on regarding the pregnant and parenting population, but had begun to track currently available resources.

She expanded on the topic of the SFA advisor/advocate stating that information gathered thus far showed that stakeholders were unfamiliar with the role as outlined in [Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-1311.03\(2\)](#). The group would be identifying ways to increase awareness, outline training, and clarify the responsibilities of the role. Deb VanDyke-Ries informed members that a recent CIP project focusing on kids in courts would include a question for stakeholders asking if the advisor/advocate was attending court hearings. Cassy Blakely also remarked that the Jim Casey Foundation had indicated that no other state has focused on this role and that Nebraska would be leading the way on this issue. Aldmeyer discussed a survey that was in progress that would be distributed to both system stakeholders and young adults to help gather input on what the advisor/advocate should look like in Nebraska. She asked that members of the Committee assist in distributing the survey once released.

*b. Court Implementation Subcommittee Update*

Heather Colten, Chairperson of the Court Implementation Subcommittee, gave a brief summary on the work of the group. The main issue of note was the lack of familiarity with SFA among court professionals. Partners from CIP and Nebraska Appleseed were discussing ways to provide additional educational opportunities for court stakeholders. The group planned to examine the youth court forms and provide suggestions on how the language could better reflect the requirements of the SFA. Other topics of focus for the group included finding ways to balance time for normalcy activities with other activities such as family visits and other obligations, finding balance between varying the economic statuses of foster and biological homes, and how to increase co-parenting partnerships in order to promote normalcy.

*c. Trafficking Subcommittee*

An update on the work of the Trafficking Subcommittee was provided by Subcommittee Co-Chairs, Nikki Novak and Erin Aliano. The focus for the year will be on information sharing between systems. Establishing collaborative communication between partners will both familiarity with the process and expedite the responses.

## **XI. New Business**

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Cassy Blakely informed members that she would be taking on a new role outside of the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. Deb VanDyke-Ries shared that CIP was in the process of finalizing their regional meetings that would take place in Lincoln, Norfolk, and Scottsbluff. These meetings would focus on adolescent behavior and mental health with assistance from the Nebraska System of Care Initiative.

## **XII. Public Comment**

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The Co-Chair invited any members of the public to speak. No public comment was given.

## **XIII. Next Steps**

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*a. Upcoming Meeting Planning*

The next meeting was currently scheduled for April 12, 2018 for the same time and location as the day's meeting. Members were asked to complete the doodle poll that was sent out with meeting materials to help find a time to reschedule the July meeting.

## **XIV. Adjournment**

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The meeting adjourned at 2:26 p.m.

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