

Strengthening Families Act Committee Meeting

April 12, 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

The Strengthening Families Act (SFA) Committee of the Nebraska Children’s Commission was called to order by Co-Chairs Vernon Davis and Sarah Helvey at 1:01pm.

II. Roll Call and Introductions

Committee Members present (10):

Erin Bader	Vernon Davis	Lisa Story (1:16)
Deanna Brakhage*	Sarah Helvey	Juliet Summers
Nathan Collier	Nikki Novak	
Heather Colton	Nicole Seymour	

Committee Members absent (5):

Payne Ackerman	Patricia Frost	Deb Shuck
Ashley Brown	Kim Hawekotte	

Ex Officio and Resource Members present (2):

Jim Bennett	Deb VanDyke-Ries
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A quorum was established.

*Let it be noted for the record that Deanna Brakhage was temporary proxy designated by Stacy Scholten.

Guests in Attendance (11):

Crystal Aldmeyer.....	Nebraska Families Collaborative
Amalia Cabrera.....	Fremont Connected Youth Initiative (CYI)
Tessa Hardin.....	The Hope/Fremont CYI
Mary Ann Harvey.....	Nebraska Court Improvement Project
Terri Knutson.....	Nebraska Family Support Network, Omaha
Tom McBride.....	Nebraska Juvenile Justice Association
Felicia Nelson.....	Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association
Cindy Reed.....	The Hope/Fremont CYI
Sara Riffel.....	Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Lana Verbrigghe.....	Child Saving Institute
Traci Webber.....	Nebraska Court Improvement Project

a. Notice of Publication

Chair Helvey indicated that the notice of publication for this meeting was posted on the Nebraska Public Meetings and Nebraska Children’s Commission websites in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. The publication was to 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

It was moved by Juliet Summers to approve the agenda as with three amendments:

- Agenda Item II should reflect Sarah Helvey and Vernon Davis,
- Agenda Item IV should read February 8, 2018 minutes

- **Agenda Item IX-c should reflect only Nikki Novak.**

Nikki Novak seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Erin Bader	Heather Colton	Nikki Novak
Deanna Brakhage*	Vernon Davis	Nicole Seymour
Nathan Collier	Sarah Helvey	Juliet Summers

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (6):

Payne Ackerman	Patricia Frost	Deb Shuck
Ashley Brown	Kim Hawekotte	Lisa Story

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Erin Bader and seconded by Nikki Novak to approve the minutes of the February 8, 2018 meeting as presented.

FOR (9):

Erin Bader	Heather Colton	Nikki Novak
Deanna Brakhage*	Vernon Davis	Nicole Seymour
Nathan Collier	Sarah Helvey	Juliet Summers

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (6):

Payne Ackerman	Patricia Frost	Deb Shuck
Ashley Brown	Kim Hawekotte	Lisa Story

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

V. Co-Chair Report

Co-Chair Davis informed members of two recent member resignations of Jude Dean and Anna Brummer, both of whom represented the position of foster parent on the Committee. Information on the open positions could be found on the Commission [website](#).

VI. Department of Health and Human Services Update

Deanna Brakhage, Program Specialist with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), provided the Committee with an update on the Department's implementation of the SFA. Ms. Brakhage informed members that all agencies had submitted their normalcy plans to DHHS. Reports of plan implementation from the agencies will be due April 30, 2018. Brakhage also noted that over 850 foster parents had undergone training on human trafficking. In addition, a web link training opportunity on the subject had been made available for group homes and shelters to utilize.

VII. Court Improvement Project – “Now What” Guide

Traci Webber, Design and Communications Coordinator with the Court Improvement Project (CIP), introduced herself and provided information on the progress of the “Now What” guide for system involved youth. Updates to the document included a draft of the pending DHHS bill of rights and additional information on available resources youth can contact with questions. Ms. Webber noted that final edits and discussion of distribution would occur in yet that month.

Ms. Brakhage also voice the hope to include a link to the guide within the DHHS bill of rights memo as a resource for both staff and youth. She also mentioned the Project Everlast initiative to have young adults formerly in foster care create YouTube videos to accompany the “Now What” guide and the hope to utilize that as a resource as the DHHS memo is finalized.

IX. Probation Update

An update on Juvenile Probation’s implementation of the SFA was given by Jim Bennett, Director of Supervision Services. Bennett informed members that their out-of-home protocol had recently been updated. Quality assurance procedures were being initiated to ensure that training and protocol were being appropriately utilized across the communities when responding to missing youth cases.

Mr. Bennett directed folks to several reports that had recently been completed. They included the recent study looking at the predictive validity of the YLS/CMI, a report on the recidivism rates for Nebraska juvenile probationers: 2010 to 2015, and juvenile services division’s detailed analysis for fiscal year 2016-2017. He touched on how normalcy was an important tool in preventing recidivism and helping youth to succeed.

X. Subcommittee Updates

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 and the pregnant and parenting population. Ms. Aldmeyer noted that current data on pregnant and parenting you may not be accurate, and that the group was looking at how to improve the system for data collection on this population. The subcommittee planned to outline next steps, but would most likely not have concrete recommendations for the upcoming annual report.

She went on to discuss the group’s other priority of the SFA Advisor. The group had drafted tip sheets to assist in the selection of the Advisor and to help explain the role to the Advisor when taking on the role. Outside of current foster parents or case workers, which are not allowed per legislation, the group agreed that the position of Advisor should not be limited, but should be determined on a case by case basis. DHHS should assist the youth in the selection, and provide documented explanations for denials based on the best interest of the youth. The group planned to have a final version of the tip sheet to share prior to the next SFA Committee meeting.

b. *Court Implementation Subcommittee Update*

Heather Colten, Chairperson of the Court Implementation Subcommittee, gave a brief summary on the work of the group. The group had identified areas of work including training on SFA for court professionals, updating the youth court forms, increasing avenues for judges to ascertain if youth are experiencing normalcy, updating DHHS court forms to include details on SFA requirements, identifying ways to promote independence hearings for APPLA youth, and examining how the court and help to ensure that youth receive the required documentation prior to aging out of the system.

Deb VanDyke-Ries let the group know that there was a subgroup of the Governor’s Commission for the Protection of Children that was looking issues relating to kids in the court. They were currently working on recommendations to increase the number of children and youth attending court hearings and would be sharing information for feedback with the Nebraska Children’s Commission.

Other items of discussion included how to ensure youth were receiving the court forms, how best to provide youth with opportunities for private discussion with their court supports, and training opportunities for court professionals that would be available in the coming months.

c. *Trafficking Subcommittee*

An update on the work of the Trafficking Subcommittee was provided by Subcommittee Co-Chair, Nikki Novak. She noted that Erin Aliano had accepted a new position and would no longer be Co-Chairing the

Subcommittee. The main identified area of focus for the year was to increase communication between all stakeholders regarding trafficked youth or youth at high risk of being trafficked. She also noted the efforts to use formats similar to 1184 teams to work on cases for youth who go missing.

XI. New Business

There was no new business.

XII. Public Comment

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

XIII. Next Steps

a. Upcoming Meeting Planning

The Co-Chairs reminded members that the July meeting was when the annual report would be reviewed and voted on.

b. Meeting Dates

July 19, 2018 from 1:00 – 3:00pm

October 11, 2018 from 1:00 – 3:00pm

XIV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:52 p.m.

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