

Strengthening Families Act Committee Meeting

July 19, 2018

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Southeast Community College, Rooms U-102 & 104
8800 O Street, Lincoln, NE 68520

1. 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 1:02pm.

2. Roll Call and Introductions

Committee Members present (12):

Ashley Brown	Patricia Frost (1:05)	Stacy Scholten
Nathan Collier	Kim Hawekotte	Nicole Seymour
Heather Colton	Sarah Helvey	Lisa Story
Vernon Davis	Nikki Novak (1:10)	Juliet Summers

Committee Members absent (2):

Payne Ackerman	Deb Shuck
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Ex Officio and Resource Members present (1):

Jim Bennett

Ex Officio and Resource Members absent (1):

Deb VanDyke-Ries

A quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (9):

Crystal Aldmeyer.....	PromiseShip
Nedhal Al-Kazahy.....	Project Everlast/Nebraska Appleseed
Sebastian Coolidge.....	Project Everlast
Amanda Felton.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Sarah Forrest.....	Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers
Chris Jones.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Felicia Nelsen.....	Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association
Sara Riffel.....	Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Traci Webber.....	Nebraska Court Improvement Project

a. Notice of Publication

Recorder, Amanda Felton, 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.

3. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Kim Hawekotte to approve the [agenda](#) as presented. Stacy Scholten seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (10):

Ashley Brown	Vernon Davis	Sarah Helvey
Nathan Collier	Kim Hawekotte	Stacy Scholten
Heather Colton		Nicole Seymour

Lisa Story

Juliet Summers

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (4):

Payne Ackerman
Patricia Frost

Nikki Novak
Deb Shuck

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

4. Approval of Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Nathan Collier and seconded by Lisa Story to approve the [minutes of the April 12, 2018 meeting](#) as presented.

FOR (11):

Ashley Brown
Nathan Collier
Heather Colton
Vernon Davis

Patricia Frost
Kim Hawekotte
Sarah Helvey
Stacy Scholten

Nicole Seymour
Lisa Story
Juliet Summers

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (3):

Payne Ackerman

Nikki Novak

Deb Shuck

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

5. Co-Chair Report

The Co-Chairs thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

6. Department of Health and Human Services Update

Stacy Scholten, Service Delivery Administrator 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. Scholten informed members that all agencies had submitted their normalcy plans and reports to DHHS. Work was in progress to create a template for report submissions to encourage consistency of information provided.

Scholten also discussed the status of the Youth Bill of Rights. The struggle DHHS was attempting to navigate was the 72-hour timeframe for reviewing the document with youth. Given the trauma of being removed from home, most youth were not in a state to take in information about their rights while in care. Members agreed that providing the information initially was important, but more so was the continual implementation and review of the document through the youth's time in care. Suggestions offered included having a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) review the document with youth and pulling in a former ward to discuss the document with youth.

7. Court Improvement Project – “Now What” Guide

Traci Webber, Design and Communications Coordinator with the Court Improvement Project (CIP), shared copies of the current versions of the “What Now?” guides for youth involved in either the [child welfare](#) and [juvenile justice](#) systems. She also shared a [brochure](#) for distribution that would direct interested individuals to digital copies of the guides.

8. 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 they would be going across the state and offering training to various court professionals on the efforts of probation and supporting youth development. There was also discussion of the service gaps in the greater Nebraska areas and efforts so increase the use of foster care placements.

9. 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 directed members to SFA Advisor Tip Sheet included as [attachment B](#) of the SFA Committee annual report. She explained that there were two versions of the sheet, one intended to be used as a conversation guide to aid the youth in identifying a potential advisor, and the second as a resource to the Advisor on their role once selected. These tip sheets would be linked within the DHHS memo on family team meetings that includes mention of the SFA Advisor.

Aldmeyer informed the group that one of the goals of the subcommittee in the year ahead would be education on the SFA Advisor and the available resources to support the role. Members discussed potential ways to assist in training on the Advisor including utilizing the Youth Citizen Review Panels and creating YouTube educational videos.

b. *Court Implementation Subcommittee Update*

Heather Colten, Chairperson of the Court Implementation Subcommittee, gave a brief summary on the work of the group. She let the members know that three SFA trainings were currently scheduled for court professionals through the Court Improvement Project. Two out of the three were already full, but a recording of the session would be made available online. The group was also working to update the youth court forms and the caregiver court forms.

c. *Trafficking Subcommittee*

An update on the work of the Trafficking Subcommittee was provided by Subcommittee Co-Chairs, Nikki Novak and Sarah Forrest. They indicated that focus for the year ahead would be on examining staffing teams to address cases of trafficking or at risk of being trafficked as well as coordinating efforts with the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force.

d. *Other Subcommittees*

The Co-Chairs took a moment to review the work of the Committee and discuss if any of the areas of focus for the next year would require the reconvening or creation of any subcommittees. Members discussed and agreed that the Normalcy Subcommittee should be reactivated to review the normalcy plans and reports recently submitted to DHHS. Commission staff would send out information to all previous subcommittee members to find a time for a meeting. Any additional member interested in joining the group were directed to contact Amanda Felton or Chris Jones.

10. Strengthening Families Act Committee Annual Report

Members reviewed the draft annual report. It was agreed that much work had been accomplished, but that additional work was needed in ensuring that the work and resources created by the Committee and stakeholder partners. **It was moved by Ashley Brown and seconded by Juliet Summers to add to the following to the Summary and Recommendations section of the report:**

For 2019 state fiscal year, the NSFA Committee will pursue the dissemination and promotion of materials referenced herein to ensure everyone involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems has access, knowledge of their existence, and are actively implementing the Strengthening Families Act. Strategies will be specifically formulated to legal parties, out of placement providers, youth in care and the DHHS-DCFS and Probation workforce.

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

FOR (11):

Ashley Brown
Nathan Collier
Heather Colton
Vernon Davis

Patricia Frost
Kim Hawekotte
Sarah Helvey
Stacy Scholten

Nicole Seymour
Lisa Story
Juliet Summers

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (3):

Payne Ackerman

Nikki Novak

Deb Shuck

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

The members agreed that the rest of the report accurately captured the work of the Committee and its subgroups. It was moved by Heather Colton and seconded by Lisa Story to approve the report with the previous amendment. There further discussion ensued. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (11):

Ashley Brown

Nathan Collier

Heather Colton

Vernon Davis

Patricia Frost

Kim Hawekotte

Sarah Helvey

Stacy Scholten

Nicole Seymour

Lisa Story

Juliet Summers

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (3):

Payne Ackerman

Nikki Novak

Deb Shuck

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

XI. New Business

a. Pregnant and Parenting Population

Co-Chair Davis noted that the topic of the pregnant and parenting population had come up in several Commission subgroups, including the APPLA subgroup. He informed members that DHHS planned to implement a group looking at this population and encouraged collaboration from members on that workgroup.

Sara Riffel, Associate Vice President of the Connected Youth Initiative with Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFE), also talked about a recent grant received by DHHS with NCFE as a sub-grantee, looking at expectant and parenting youth and young adults. The grant will serve parenting young people ages 14 to 25 whose lives are affected by involvement in foster care, juvenile justice, homelessness, or sexual exploitation.

XII. Public Comment

The Co-Chairs invited any members of the public to speak. Jessica Hilderbrand, Project Everlast Special Projects Coordinator with NCFE, informed the members of a new group that had recently formed called the Nebraska Foster Care Alumni Association. The group was comprised of young adults previously involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems who wished to continue to advocate for system change. She noted that many of the group's goals would align with the work of the SFA Committee and encouraged future collaboration.

XIII. Next Steps

The Co-Chairs reminded members of the next meeting on October 11, 2018 from 1:00 – 3:00pm with a location to be determined.

XIV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:39 p.m.

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