

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

September 30, 2019  
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Lincoln Community Foundation Building, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room  
215 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, NE 68508

**I. Call to Order and Welcome**

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Co-Chair, Jeanne Brandner, called the meeting of the Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee to order at 9:05 a.m.

**II. Roll Call and Introductions**

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***Committee Members present (11):***

Whitney Beck	Christina Lloyd	Camas Steuter
Mary Fraser Meints	Amanda McGill Johnson	Susan Thomas
Sarah Helvey	Bailey Perry	Lana Verbrigghe
Doug Lenz	Sarah Riffel	

***Committee members absent (3):***

Vernon Davis  
Misty Frazier  
Juliet Summers

***Ex-Officio Members present (3):***

Jeanne Brandner  
Brandy Gustoff  
Deb Vandyke Reis

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

Candi Marcantel	Jennifer Skala	Senator Kate Bolz
Katie McLeese Stephenson	Kim Thomas	Senator Anna Wishart

**A quorum was established.**

***Guests in Attendance (10):***

Adam Anderson.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Dr. Katie Bass.....	Foster Care Review Office
Deanna Brakhage.....	DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services
Alaina Flannigan (via WebEx).....	Child Trends
Mary Ann Harvey.....	Nebraska Court Improvement Project
Jessica Hilderbrand.....	Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Chris Jones.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Tina Nocita.....	CASA for Douglas County
Sara Quiroz.....	Administrative Office of the Courts & Probation, Juvenile Division
Kristin Sepulveda (via WebEx).....	Child Trends

*a. Notice of Publication*

Recorder for the meeting, Adam Anderson, indicated that the notice of publication for this meeting was posted on the Nebraska Public Meeting 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 Mary Fraser Meints and seconded by Lana Verbrigghe to approve the [agenda](#) as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

**FOR (11):**

Whitney Beck  
Mary Fraser Meints  
Sarah Helvey  
Doug Lenz

Christina Lloyd  
Amanda McGill Johnson  
Bailey Perry  
Sarah Riffel

Camas Steuter  
Susan Thomas  
Lana Verbrigghe

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**ABSENT (3):**

Vernon Davis  
Misty Frazier  
Juliet Summers

**MOTION CARRIED**

**IV. Approval of Minutes**

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It was moved by Mary Fraser Meints to approve the [June 4, 2019 minutes](#) as presented. The motion was seconded by Lana Verbrigghe. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (11):**

Whitney Beck  
Mary Fraser Meints  
Sarah Helvey  
Doug Lenz

Christina Lloyd  
Amanda McGill Johnson  
Bailey Perry  
Sarah Riffel

Camas Steuter  
Susan Thomas  
Lana Verbrigghe

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**ABSENT (3):**

Vernon Davis  
Misty Frazier  
Juliet Summers

**MOTION CARRIED**

**V. Co-Chair Report**

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*a. Commission Update*

Co-Chair Brandner updated the Committee about the status of the Nebraska Children's Commission. The Governor's office has provided a list of appointees to the Commission. The Commission will be meeting this month. Some Committee members might change among the statutory groups as members are appointed or fall off the Commission. At the first Commission meeting, some decisions will be made regarding the governance and approving new members to the statutory Committees. Commission Staff will post and send out a member list in the week of October 7, 2019.

*b. Court Order Access*

Co-Chair Brandner raised the issue of court order access for DHHS Independence Coordinators to the Committee. This issue of court order access stems from the confidentiality statute, and the way it is written as to who has access to information and who does not. It is the understanding of this Committee that DHHS workers are receiving the court orders in hard copy form but no longer have access to NDEN to retrieve court orders electronically. This Committee discussed the background of the statute and potential workarounds for hard copy delivery. It was speculated amongst members that this is an issue with NDEN access enforcement rather than an issue with the

statute interpretation. This issue should remain on the radar of the Committee to determine if any legislative changes need to be made to allow DHHS workers access to NDEN.

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

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### *a. Child Trends Evaluation Update*

Kristin Sepulveda and Alaina Flannigan from Child Trends joined the Committee via WebEx. Sepulveda directed the Committee's attention to a [PowerPoint presentation](#) as an overview of [Nebraska Bridge to Independence Extended Foster Care Evaluation](#). Sepulveda highlighted data sources, key findings, and recommendation to the Committee. Alaina Flannigan discussed some of the non-traditional ways the evaluation measured success of the Bridge to Independence program, such as participants reporting a positive relationship with their DHHS Independence Coordinator, having hope, setting goals and working towards those goals. Recommendations to the Committee regarding the b2i program include: agencies working to ensure young people are prepared for b2i, better preparing participants for exiting the program, incorporating participants' definition of success in the program, and collection of data on participants' outcomes at different stages of the program.

Child Trends answered questions regarding data sources, b2i notification procedures, and data regarding time constraints with the DHHS Independence Coordinators. Dr. Katie Bass, Chair of the Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup, clarified that data regarding b2i-only participants is difficult to gather, as there is no current standalone survey given to b2i participants. Alaina Flannigan responded regarding notification procedures, in that it is recommended to have the appropriate conversations with youth at the appropriate times. Flannigan also answered that although one issue was raised by a youth regarding time spent with their DHHS Independence Coordinator, there were no overall concerns regarding time constraints with the youth's Independence Coordinators. Savings accounts, stipend phase out procedure, financial coaching, and preparation for program exit was discussed.

The Committee discussed dissemination of the report. It is currently available via the [Commission website](#). B2i Committee has time scheduled in front of the Children's Commission, at which time the Committee can discuss the evaluation. This discussion will continue during the Action Planning agenda item.

Evaluation and Data Collection Chair, Dr. Bass, updated the Committee on the recent work of the workgroup. She directed the attention of the Committee to a [handout](#) containing an overview and recommendations from the workgroup. Bass opened up discussion regarding the next steps for the Evaluation and Data Collection Chair. Workgroup will meet again once the technical assistance document is available.

Sarah Helvey discussed the option of reconvening the Juvenile Justice Extension Task Force to look at previous recommendations regarding program expansion to probation youth.

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## **VII. Break**

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## **VIII. Update from Meeting with Director Wallen**

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Mary Fraser Meints updated the Committee on a meeting had with Committee Members Mary Fraser Meints, Brandy Gustoff and Lana Verbrigghe with Director Matthew Wallen and Deputy Director Lori Harder from Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, on July 23, 2019. This meeting was called to discuss recommendation number four, on page three made from the [annual report](#) regarding specialized caseload size. The members brought information regarding DHHS Independence Coordinator positions that had not been refilled following a vacancy. The meeting dialogue turned to a philosophical discussion regarding the case management approach with Adult Protective Services and the b2i population.

Camas Steuter updated the Committee about ongoing discussions regarding combining APS and b2i, explained the role of an APS worker, and caseload sizes. Currently, caseload sizes are being exceeded by five or six, but Steuter noted that case sizes have remained steady for the last year. As caseload sizes for CFS workers were increasing, it was required to repurpose the vacated b2i position to cover overages in Eastern Service Area CFS caseloads.

The previous recommended caseload sizes were discussed. It was recommended by the Committee that Steuter and Brakhage will bring current caseload data to future meetings to present to the Committee.

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## **IX. B2i Program Update**

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Committee members Camas Steuter and Deanna Brakhage updated the Committee regarding a discrepancy with [LB600](#), allowing for a youth experiencing a disrupted extended adoption could be eligible for the subsidy equal to their previous foster care amount, up to \$1250 per month, whereas exiting foster care, b2i participants only receive \$720 per month. This subsidy amount is based on the final Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility tool complete prior to the youth exiting foster care. Further discussion revolved around ideas how to have a payment determination when entering the b2i program. An additional discrepancy contained in LB600, regarding youth that are no longer eligible for b2i due to being on a waitlist for Developmental Disability funding was discussed. Further investigation is needed into these discrepancies.

## **X. Action Planning**

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**It was moved by Sarah Helvey to reinstate the Finance and Policy Subcommittee to look at eligibility issues including, but not limited to tribal youth eligibility, Developmental Disability eligibility, and stipend. The motion was seconded by Mary Fraser Meints.** There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

### **FOR (10):**

Mary Fraser Meints  
Sarah Helvey  
Doug Lenz  
Christina Lloyd

Amanda McGill Johnson  
Bailey Perry  
Sarah Riffel  
Camas Steuter

Susan Thomas  
Lana Verbrighhe

### **AGAINST (0):**

### **ABSTAINED (0):**

### **ABSENT (4):**

Whitney Beck  
Vernon Davis

Misty Frazier  
Juliet Summers

### **MOTION CARRIED**

Commission Staff Anderson and Jones will coordinate a first meeting with existing members of the Finance and Policy Subcommittee in the upcoming weeks.

Co-Chair Brandner raised the next action item regarding reconvening the Subcommittee previously looking at the expansion of the b2i to juvenile justice youth.

**It was moved by Mary Fraser Meints to reconvene the subgroup to work on the juvenile justice population eligibility. The motion was seconded by Sarah Helvey.** There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

### **FOR (9):**

Mary Fraser Meints  
Sarah Helvey  
Doug Lenz

Christina Lloyd  
Amanda McGill Johnson  
Bailey Perry

Sarah Riffel  
Susan Thomas  
Lana Verbrighhe

### **AGAINST (0):**

### **ABSTAINED (0):**

Camas Steuter

### **ABSENT (4):**

Whitney Beck  
Vernon Davis  
Misty Frazier  
Juliet Summers

### **MOTION CARRIED**

Co-Chair Brandner reminded the Committee of the previously discussed item relating to the report received on the evaluation today, to look at adding requirements to the stipend, such as requiring savings on the stipend. Previous suggestions need to be looked at to determine whether a legislation change is necessary.

**It was moved by Mary Fraser Meints to reinstate the case management workgroup to review the first two recommendations from the [evaluation report](#). The motion was seconded by Lana Verbrigghe.** There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

**FOR (10):**

Mary Fraser Meints  
Sarah Helvey  
Doug Lenz

Christina Lloyd  
Amanda McGill Johnson  
Bailey Perry

Sarah Riffel  
Camas Steuter  
Susan Thomas  
Lana Verbrigghe

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**ABSENT (4):**

Whitney Beck  
Vernon Davis  
Misty Frazier  
Juliet Summers

**MOTION CARRIED**

Co-Chair Brandner discussed final action item regarding the dissemination plan for the Evaluation Report.

**It was moved by Mary Fraser Meints to bring forward the Evaluation to the Commission, State Senators, Members of Congress, DHHS CEO Dannette Smith, listserv of CIP, with the assistance of a one page summary from Nebraska Children, in addition to the executive summary that is included. The motion was seconded by Susan Thomas.** There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

**FOR (9):**

Mary Fraser Meints  
Sarah Helvey  
Doug Lenz

Christina Lloyd  
Bailey Perry  
Sarah Riffel

Camas Steuter  
Susan Thomas  
Lana Verbrigghe

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**ABSENT (5):**

Whitney Beck  
Vernon Davis  
Misty Frazier

Amanda McGill Johnson  
Juliet Summers

**MOTION CARRIED**

**XI. Public Comment**

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The Co-Chairs welcomed public comment. Jason Feldhaus, from Connected Youth Initiative discussed the financial cliff effect of the stipend and reduction. Feldhaus recommended that with youth, a process of trial and error with safety nets in place is used most frequently. Auditory reminders with youth will not work with youth in their stage of brain-development. Feldhaus recommended that there needs to be agreement on what the state system is that kids aged 14-18 need to be prepared,

and how that competency is measured, in order to show that we are providing youth with quality care, regardless if that youth is in a rural or urban community. Lastly, Feldhaus would like Opportunity Passport come to the table for further discussion if the b2i program will lean more heavily on leveraging Opportunity Passport.

## **XII. New Business**

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Co-chairs opened up the floor for new business. All new business has been previously discussed.

## **XIII. Upcoming Meeting Planning**

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The Co-Chairs noted that a meeting would be scheduled in early December of 2019 to be able to get any legislative recommendation in from of the Commission.

## **XIV. Adjourn**

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The meeting adjourned at 12:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Adam Anderson

DRAFT