

Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee

A STATUTORY COMMITTEE §43-4513





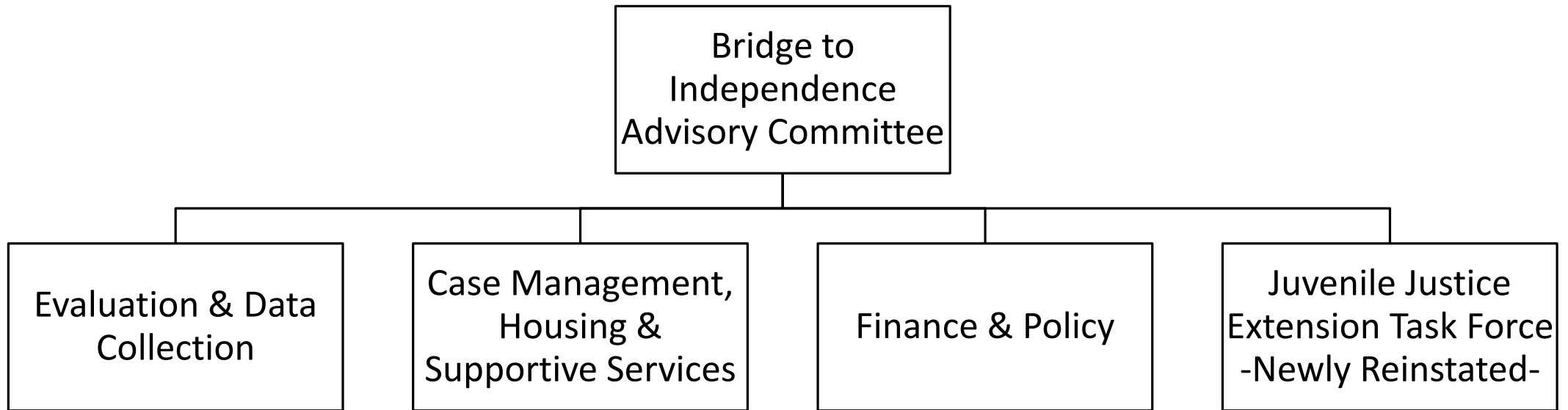
Background

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- The Bridge to Independence Program provides voluntary services to young adults ages 19 to 21, who have aged out of foster care, or who have re-entered foster care following a dissolved adoption or guardianship at age 16 or older.
- Statutory Committee created in 2013.
 - Make recommendations to the Legislature and the Nebraska Children's Commission regarding the ongoing implementation of the B2i program, extended guardianship assistance and extended adoption assistance (§43-4513)
- Co-Chairs: Jeanne Brandner and Christina Lloyd



Workgroups





Priority Work

1. Monitor ongoing implementation of the current B2i Program;
2. Outcome evaluation of the current B2i Program;
3. Expand to or improve outcomes for similar groups of at-risk young adults



External Program Evaluation

Nebraska Bridge to Independence Extended Foster Care Evaluation

Kristin Sepulveda, Samuel Abbott, Sunny Sun,
Alaina Flannigan





Key Findings

- B2i participants are more likely than their non-b2i peers to:
 - Report having some post-secondary education experience
 - Have safe, stable, and affordable housing
 - Be able to cover monthly expenses
 - Have adults to turn to in a crisis or for a loan

- Young adults who are involved in both B2i and a Connected Youth Initiative (CYI) asset matching program (Opportunity Passport™) report higher levels of hope and self-regulation compared with young adults involved other components of CYI or b2i without any Opportunity Passport™ involvement.

- Young adults participating in a focus group expressed a definition of success that includes setting and working towards goals, having a positive attitude, self-advocating, being involved in the community, and feeling “normal” when spending time with peers without foster care experience, highlighting many outcome domains that have not been traditionally considered when understanding successful transitions to adulthood.



Recommendations from the Evaluation

Recommendations (page 23)

1. Staff and agencies should work to ensure that young adults are prepared for b2i prior to enrollment.
2. B2i participants need more support and guidance to prepare fro exiting the program
 - Require savings accounts
 - Leverage Opportunity Passport
 - Provide timely information
 - Taper off the stipend
3. Future examination of program success must reflect participant definitions of success in B2i.
4. Data on participants' knowledge, perceptions, and outcomes should be collected at different stages of the program.



Advisory Committee Legislative Recommendations

1. A statutory language change is recommended to extend eligibility for the Bridge to Independence program **to native youth aging out of Tribal Court proceedings at the age of majority** as defined by the Tribe, to mend the year gap in supports between ages 18 and 19 due to the State age of majority, when Bridge to Independence begins. (Approved in June 2019)
2. Establish a path for enrollment in the current DHHS-facilitated Bridge to Independence program for **youth involved in Nebraska's Juvenile Justice System** utilizing the following two criteria:
 - A young person must be in a court-ordered out of home placement as they age out of probation on their 19th birthday; and
 - Prior to aging out, the court must hold a hearing and make a finding that such placement is necessary because returning to the home would be contrary to the welfare of the child.
 - (Approved annually since 2016)



Legislative Recommendations (continued)

§43-4504(5) Background and Context

- The Advisory Committee sought to detangle and un-duplicate any stipends and services for young adults eligible for both B2i and the Home and Community Based Services Waiver through the Division of Developmental Disabilities by making legislative recommendations last year.
- This resulted in a policy discrepancy between the two Divisions: Children & Family Services and Developmental Disabilities.
- The Finance & Policy Workgroup will continue to work DHHS Division partners to determine how young adults can continue to receive B2i Services while on the waitlist for funding for services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities.

The Advisory Committee is seeking approval pursue a statutory change to §43-4504(5) to resolve any eligibility barriers for young adults in need of services and support.



Advisory Committee Legislative Recommendations (continued)

Seeking Commission Approval:

The Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee recommends an amendment to Nebraska Revised Statute 43-4504, subsection (5);

- With the intent to retain eligibility for the Bridge to Independence Program for:
 - young adults who meet the level of care for a nursing facility as defined in section 71-424, for a skilled nursing facility as defined in section 71-429, or for an intermediate care facility for persons with developmental disabilities as defined in section 71-421, and
 - who are not receiving funding for such services;

Following discussions by Members of the Finance & Policy Subcommittee, DHHS, Developmental Disabilities Community, and

In consultation and coordination with the Offices of Senators Bolz and Wishart.