

**Strengthening Families Act Committee Meeting**

January 10, 2019

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

CEDARS Northbridge, 1533 N 27th St, Lincoln, NE 68503

**1. Call to Order**

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The Strengthening Families Act (SFA) Committee of the Nebraska Children’s Commission (Commission) was called to order by Co-Chairs Vernon Davis and Sarah Helvey at 1:02pm.

**2. Roll Call and Introductions**

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***Committee Members present (12):***

Ashley Brown	Stephanie Gardella (1:07)	Sarah Helvey
Heather Colton	Ron Giesselmann	Terri Knutson
Vernon Davis	Bailey Perry*	Amara Madsen
Patricia Frost	Mary Furnas*	Lisa Story

***Committee Members absent (8):***

Payne Ackerman	Nathan Collier	Nicole Seymour
Simone Armstead	Rebecca Daugherty	Deb Shuck
Deanna Brakhage	Sara Riffel	

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

Rochelle Juilfs	Deb VanDyke-Ries
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**A quorum was established.**

\*Let it be noted for the record that the following individuals were designated as temporary voting proxies: Bailey Perry by Brandy Gustoff and Mary Furnas by Kim Hawekotte.

***Guests in Attendance (7):***

Crystal Aldmeyer.....	Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Amanda Felton.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Angela Gebhardt.....	UNL, Center for Children, Families, and the Law
Chris Jones.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Tom McBride.....	Nebraska Juvenile Justice Association
Felicia Nelsen.....	Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association
Julie Smith.....	Administrative Office of Probation, Juvenile Services Division

*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.

*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**

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

**FOR (11):**

Ashley Brown  
Heather Colton  
Vernon Davis  
Patricia Frost

Ron Giesselmann  
Bailey Perry\*  
Mary Furnas\*  
Sarah Helvey

Terri Knutson  
Amara Madsen  
Lisa Story

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (9):**

Payne Ackerman  
Simone Armstead  
Deanna Brakhage

Nathan Collier  
Rebecca Daugherty  
Stephanie Gardella

Sara Riffel  
Nicole Seymour  
Deb Shuck

**ABSTAINED (0)**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**4. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

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It was moved by Heather Colton and seconded by List Story to approve the [minutes of the October 11, 2018 meeting as presented](#).

**FOR (11):**

Ashley Brown  
Heather Colton  
Vernon Davis  
Patricia Frost

Ron Giesselmann  
Bailey Perry\*  
Mary Furnas\*  
Sarah Helvey

Terri Knutson  
Amara Madsen  
Lisa Story

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (9):**

Payne Ackerman  
Simone Armstead  
Deanna Brakhage

Nathan Collier  
Rebecca Daugherty  
Stephanie Gardella

Sara Riffel  
Nicole Seymour  
Deb Shuck

**ABSTAINED (0)**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**5. Co-Chair Report**

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The Co-Chairs reminded members of the potential Commission and Committee sunset of June 30, 2019, urging members to be mindful when selecting priorities. Chris Jones, Commission Policy Analyst, informed members that Senator Kate Bolz intended to introduce legislation to extend the Commission and all current statutory committees. A copy of the legislation would be distributed to members once available. In the meantime, members were encouraged to share the Commission [fact sheet](#) and contact their senators.

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

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Staff from the Department were unable to attend the meeting. This update was postponed until the next meeting.

**7. Probation Update**

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Julie Smith, Juvenile Justice Program Specialist, provided a quick update on the work of the Probation Juvenile Services division. Smith noted the recent all staff training on Advanced Coaching through the Academy for Coaching Excellence (ACE). This training assisted staff to look past the behavior and recognize what the drivers of said behavior. Other topics included the roll-out of the graduated response tool, the reduction in youth being sent out-of-state, and the release of the [2017-2018 Detailed Analysis](#). The last item discussed was the work happening to establish a probation youth

council. Smith informed members that recruitment would begin in the coming months and would include youth currently or formerly involved with the juvenile justice system.

## 8. 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 Co-Chairs, Crystal Aldmeyer and Cristen White. The group had previously split their focus between education efforts on the SFA Advisor and identifying a new independent living assessment tool better suited to Nebraska youth. Stephanie Gardella, Program Coordinator with CASA for Douglas County, indicated that she could share information on the Daniel Memorial Institute (DMI) Independent Living Assessment with the group.

### *b. Court Implementation Subcommittee Update*

Heather Colten, Chairperson of the Court Implementation Subcommittee, gave a brief summary on the work of the group. Two court forms were submitted for review including the [Caregiver Information Court Form](#) and the [Older Youth Court Questionnaire](#). Colten explained that once a final draft of the forms were completed, the Subcommittee would shift focus on a communication plan to ensure all impacted stakeholders were made aware of the updated forms.

Heather Colten and Chris Jones provided a summary of the changes proposed. Alterations to the youth court form included adding definitions for the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standards (RPPS) and the SFA Advisor, and adding an option for youth to indicate they would like to speak to someone in private. The Caregiver form updates were alteration to the language around involvement of the Caregiver with the youth's family, removal of the question asking if contact with the biological family was made within 24 hours of a child's placement, and adding options to help caregivers clarify their permanency intentions for a youth.

Members discussed updates to the caregiver form and that question on the status of the child's education should include a section to indicate other concerns or comments. They also touched on the requirement for foster parents to establish contact with the family from which the child was removed within 24 hours. It was verified that this was a contractual requirement for foster care providers to enforce, but that it may not be happening consistently. Providers present noted that DHHS had begun requesting data on the rates which was leading to increased efforts towards compliance.

Dialogue regarding the youth form included the suggestion for broadening language to include juvenile justice terminology, correcting the section regarding the independent living plan to read ages 14 and older, reworking the language throughout the document to be more youth friendly.

It was agreed that further work was required on the forms. They would be updated with the suggested changes and reviewed by the subcommittee prior to submission to the full SFA Committee at their April meeting.

### *c. Normalcy Subcommittee*

Co-chairs, Tom McBride and Felicia Nelsen, were invited to provide an update on the work of the Normalcy Subcommittee. They informed the Committee that work was in progress to recreate a survey similar to the one [completed by Nebraska Appleseed in 2015](#). They also highlighted the collaborative work happening in the creation of a normalcy plan template. This led into discussion on the current normalcy plan requirements, highlighting that only congregate care facilities are required to complete them. Members debated the necessity of expansion given that child-placing agencies create individualized plans for each youth. Additional discussion on the issue would continue at the subcommittee level and an update provided at the next Committee meeting.

### *d. Trafficking Subcommittee*

Subcommittee Chair, Sarah Forrest, was unavailable to attend the meeting, but provided members with a [written update](#) for their review.

## **9. New Business**

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### *a. Communication Plan for Past Work/Resources*

Members were directed to the [Committee dashboard handout](#) outlining important timelines. Members agreed that the April meeting would be a good time to assess the need for an additional meeting prior to the scheduled July meeting. Members also agreed that given the number of helpful resources that had been created since the group's inception, a page on the Commission website specifically to host the documents would be helpful in dissemination.

## **9. Public Comment**

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Co-Chair Helvey invited any public forward who wished to make comment. No comment was offered.

## **10. Next Steps**

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Members were directed to the proposed meeting dates on the agenda remarking that unless there were objections, invitations for the listed times would be sent out following the meeting. Meeting times consisted of the following dates from 1:00 – 3:00 pm:

- April 11, 2019
- July 11, 2019
- October 10, 2019

## **11. Adjournment**

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The meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

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