

Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee

May 6, 2020

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Webex Online Video Conferencing System

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Co-Chair, Jeanne Brandner, called the meeting of the Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee to order at 1:06 p.m.

II. Roll Call and Introductions

Committee Members present (11):

Mary Fraser Meints
Misty Frazier
Sarah Helvey
Doug Lenz

Christina Lloyd
Bailey Perry
Sara Riffel
Camas Holder

Juliet Summers
Susan Thomas
Lana Verbrigghe

Committee members absent (2):

Whitney Beck

Vernon Davis

Ex-Officio Members present (5):

Jeanne Brandner
Brandy Gustoff

Katie McCleese Stephenson
Jennifer Skala

Deb VanDyke-Ries

Ex-Officio Members absent (4):

Candi Marcantel
Kim Thomas

Senator Kate Bolz
Senator Anna Wishart

A quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (10):

Adam Anderson.....	Nebraska Children's Commission
Kathy Anstine.....	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Dr. Katie Bass.....	Foster Care Review Office
Mary Ann Harvey.....	Court Improvement Project
Tina Nocita.....	CASA for Douglas County
Laura Opfer.....	Nebraska Children's Commission
Sara Quiroz.....	Administrative Office of the Courts & Probation, Juvenile Division
Matt Tewes.....	Office of Senator Anna Wishart
Terrence Williams.....	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

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 Nebraska Children's Commission website.

III. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Susan Thomas and seconded by Misty Frazier to approve the [agenda](#) as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (11):

Mary Fraser Meints
Misty Frazier
Sarah Helvey
Doug Lenz

Christina Lloyd
Bailey Perry
Sara Riffel
Camas Holder

Juliet Summers
Susan Thomas
Lana Verbrigghe

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (2):

Whitney Beck
Vernon Davis

MOTION CARRIED

IV. Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Mary Fraser Meints to approve the [December 2, 2019 minutes](#) with spelling and attendance corrections. The motion was seconded by Juliet Summers. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (11):

Mary Fraser Meints
Misty Frazier
Sarah Helvey
Doug Lenz

Christina Lloyd
Bailey Perry
Sara Riffel
Camas Holder

Juliet Summers
Susan Thomas
Lana Verbrigghe

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (2):

Whitney Beck
Vernon Davis

MOTION CARRIED

V. Co-Chair Report

Co-chair Brandner welcomed members and updated the Committee on its recent work. She noted that Commission staff are working to make sure all the membership positions are filled and developing a plan for when Brandner steps away from the Committee. She reminded members that she is planning on stepping down from the Co-chair position, and that Sara Quiroz will be the Probation representative that will be coming on once Brandner steps down. The Committee is still seeking representation from Saint Francis since the transition from Promiseship.

a. Commission Update

Co-chair Brandner reminded that members of the recent work of the Commission, and noted that one of the requirements of the Commission is that one of the Co-chair positions of the Committees has to be filled by a Commission member. She noted that the Commission is working on fine-tuning all of the leadership positions of the Committees, as there has been some turnover of Commission and Committee members, such as Kim Hawekotte leaving the Foster Care Review Office.

Laura Opfer added that a lot depends on whether the Open Meetings Act and the Executive Order are extended past the end of May.

VI. Legislative Update

Policy Analyst, Laura Opfer introduced herself and updated the Committee on the recent movement of bills pertaining to B2i. She noted that the Legislature is not in session right now due to the current situation. There is not a date set to reconvene, but there is hope it will reconvene sometime in the summer or the fall. She added that there is a lot still up in the air. Opfer reminded the Committee that LB 849 was grouped into LB 848, which is a bill that would change Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day. She noted that LB 849 is the bill that extends B2i eligibility to tribal youth who reach the age of majority in their tribe at age 18. Juliet Summers added that the Speaker of the Legislature put out a statement that when the Legislature reconvenes there may be debate about what gets prioritized. Summers stated that she has been in contact with Senator Pansing Brooks to ensure LB 848 is not a bill that gets bumped when they reconvene. Summers will share any information with members regarding anything relating to the Committee.

VII. Workgroup Membership Review

Commission Staff Adam Anderson updated the Committee on current membership news and needs. He noted that there are current discussions about Commission representation for the Co-Chair position when Jeanne Brandner steps down. He added that when Lana Verbrigghe changed positions she maintained her Committee role but that opened up a need for representation from Child Saving Institute. Becky Bounds from CSI applied for the Committee and will be appointed at the next Commission meeting on May 19th.

Laura Opfer added that she has had conversations with Vernon Davis regarding Co-Chairing the Committee. He is willing to move over from the Strengthening Families Act Committee. Opfer added that she is currently working with Davis to develop a transition plan to aid the onboarding of Jessica Hilderbrand; a new Co-Chair of the SFA Committee. A timeline has not been determined for the transition to take place.

VIII. Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup Update

Chair of the Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup, Dr. Katie Bass, presented information regarding to the recently received [Technical Assistance Document](#) and presented the committee with options regarding next steps for the Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup. She noted that the B2i Evaluation was helpful, it is important to think about how the Committee evaluates the program long term, and how to sustain the evaluation process without searching for funding every few years. Dr. Bass provided information about the specific options for further evaluation laid out in the Technical Assistance Document.

Dr. Bass recommended that the Workgroup compare B2i participants to other populations, or long term tracking of participants after they leave the program. Members discussed the two options, finding that having the comparison data between participants would be very helpful in telling the story for expansion to other populations.

It was moved by Sarah Helvey to recommend the Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup move forward with the comparison option from the Technical Assistance Document. The motion was seconded by Mary Fraser Meints. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (11):

Mary Fraser Meints
Misty Frazier
Sarah Helvey
Doug Lenz

Christina Lloyd
Bailey Perry
Sara Riffel
Camas Holder

Juliet Summers
Susan Thomas
Lana Verbrigghe

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (2):

Whitney Beck
Vernon Davis

MOTION CARRIED

IX. Case Management Workgroup

Sara Riffel updated the Committee regarding the Case Management Workgroup. The workgroup has not met since the last Committee meeting. Next meeting will be coming up at the end of the month. There has been some outreach to previous participants due to the pandemic, to make sure previous participants can access emergency assistance. B2i Coordinators have been able to connect participants to Central Navigation Services to make sure their needs are met.

Sarah Helvey added that upon reviewing cases, she was impressed at the assistance made available, and asked whether there was a moratorium regarding aging out during the pandemic. Camas Holder noted that a decision to enact a moratorium has not been made.

Members agreed with the idea of enacting a moratorium on aging out during the pandemic, and strongly encouraged DHHS to take such action, but an official vote to recommend such action was not called. Co-Chair Brandner added that during this time it is hoped that families are met with extreme flexibility in terms of accessing services.

X. Finance & Policy Workgroup Update

Co-Chair Lloyd noted that Jason Feldhaus was not in attendance at the meeting. Adam Anderson noted that a meeting was scheduled prior to the current situation, however it was canceled. Anderson added that discussion are being had about rescheduling meetings.

XI. DHHS Update

Camas Holder reminded the Committee that over the last few weeks there has been an effort to contact young adults that exited the program of the last 18 months. B2i Coordinators were able to reach 129 previous participants and ask if they needed help or had questions about housing, food, mental health, unemployment, loss of income, domestic violence, post-secondary education, health and healthcare access, and parenting. DHHS was also able to provide resources for all those topics. All contacts were tracked to note how the participants were contacted and what resources were provided. Holder noted that trends from the contacts included income, unemployment, and mental health.

Regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, Holder noted that B2i Coordinators were among the first to move to a remote-based working environment and remote contacts. She added that participants are very comfortable with technology and have adapted to virtual contacts easily. Holder later added that government stimulus payments have been somewhat of an issue due to not filing taxes in 2018 or being claimed on someone's taxes. Terrence Williams added that Independence Coordinators have been having discussions with participants and past participants regarding, to make sure young adults had the information and to show them how to look on the IRS website to follow that guidance. Williams noted that some young adults have been able to get the payment and some were unfortunately not eligible. Doug Lenz agreed with Williams, that some young adults were able to receive payment and some weren't.

Holder presented caseload data, noting that Terrence Williams team had caseloads ranging from 13 to 26 cases. Kathy Anstine's team had 24 to 27 cases. 42 young adults are pending entrance to the program between now and July.

XII. Public Comment

The Co-Chairs welcomed public comment. There was no public comment.

During the course of the meeting Mary Fraser Meints shared via chat that May is National Foster Care Month, and Katie McLeese Stephenson shared that May 6th is Children's Mental Health Awareness Day.

Misty Frazier shared that Motherhood is Sacred and Fatherhood is Sacred programs are starting virtually next week.

XIII. New Business

Co-Chairs opened up the floor for new business. Co-Chair Brandner reminded the Committee to think of Chair nominations for 2020.

Juliet Summers recommended in the chat that the next meeting should be soon in order to weigh-in on new legislative opportunities and to add an action item to the next meeting regarding a legislative update.

Laura Opfer stated that she will be looking at annual reports very soon. The B2i Committee has a report due September 1st. In order to move the final report to the Children's Commission this Committee will need to meet in June or July in order to approve the final copy of the report. Opfer noted that any feedback or input is appreciated.

Sara Riffel shared that because there is a lot of alignment with B2i and the Connected Youth Initiative; she received some good news. The four-year evaluation project of CYI has been finalized and accepted. The evaluation ended with a moderate level of evidence as an evidence-based program. Riffel added that there will be formal communication coming out soon.

XIV. Upcoming Meeting Planning

Co-Chair Brandner noted that the Commission Staff will continue to monitor the current meeting options and Governor's Executive Order regarding meeting in person. The Committee will look at meeting in June.

XV. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:13 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Anderson

DRAFT