

Nebraska Children’s Commission Meeting

August 18, 2020

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Lancaster County Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek, Lincoln, NE 68528

1. Call to Order

Chair Jeanne Brandner and called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. She welcomed everyone to the meeting, and asked everyone to introduce themselves and share how they have been educating themselves during the pandemic.

2. Introductions and Roll Call

Commission Members Present (11)

Breanna Anderson	Misty Frazier	Jessica Rockemman
Jim Blue	Ron Giesselmann	Lana Temple-Plotz
A’Jamal Byndon	Richard Hasty	Susan Thomas
Kathy Dinkel	Felicia Nelsen	

Commission Members Absent (4)

Beth Baxter	Terri Knutson
Vernon Davis	Melanie Williams-Smotherman

Commission Ex-Officio Members Present (6)

Stephanie Beasley	Sheri Dawson	Judge Roger Heideman
Jeanne Brandner	Monika Gross	Deb VanDyke-Ries

Commission Ex-Officio Members Absent (3)

Michele Borg	Senator Patty Pansing Brooks	Senator Lynne Walz
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Roll call was taken through introductions, and a quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (10)

Adam Anderson	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Tom McBride	Nebraska Juvenile Justice Association
Dr. Janine Fromm	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Mark LaBouchardiere	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Laura Opfer	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Ivy Svoboda	Nebraska Alliance of CACs

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 Meetings Calendar and Nebraska Children’s Commission websites 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 room.

3. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Jessica Rockemann and seconded by A’Jamal Byndon to approve the agenda as presented.

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

FOR (11):

Breanna Anderson
Jim Blue
A'Jamal Byndon
Kathy Dinkel

Misty Frazier
Ron Giesselmann
Richard Hasty
Jessica Rockemann

Felicia Nelsen
Lana Temple-Plotz
Susan Thomas

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (4):

Beth Baxter
Vernon Davis

Terri Knutson
Melanie Williams-Smotherman

MOTION CARRIED

Note that the order of items in the minutes will be reflective of the original agenda

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

- a. [Approval of May 19, 2020 Meeting Minutes](#)
- b. [Committee Member Nomination Report](#)
- c. [JSC Co-Chair Nomination Report](#)

Susan Thomas moved to approve the consent agenda items with corrections to the Nomination Report and May 19, 2020 Minutes. Richard Hasty seconded the motion. No further discussion ensued. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (11):

Breanna Anderson
Jim Blue
A'Jamal Byndon
Kathy Dinkel

Misty Frazier
Ron Giesselmann
Richard Hasty
Jessica Rockemann

Felicia Nelsen
Lana Temple-Plotz
Susan Thomas

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (4):

Beth Baxter
Vernon Davis

Terri Knutson
Melanie Williams-Smotherman

MOTION CARRIED

5. Statutory Committees

a. Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee

Laura shared information regarding the Foster Care Reimbursement Report and subsequent recommendations to the Nebraska Legislature during the next legislative session. The Committee is looking forward to working with legislators.

b. Strengthening Families Act Committee

Laura Opfer shared information regarding the work of the Committee. She shared that the Committee will be focusing on APPLA and harmonizing the work that has been done by the Youth and Family Voice Subcommittee and others as it pertains to the Youth in Care Bill of Rights legislation.

Members discussed the difference between B2i and APPLA.

i. Legislative Report (**Action Item**)

Misty Frazier would like to see a breakdown based on race and ethnicity in the trafficking data, noting that Native Americans have the highest rates of trafficking. She added that she would like to be added to the SFA Committee. Laura Opfer responded that a breakdown of the data will be requested from DHHS.

Kathy Dinkel noted the absence of the Independent Living tool completion and its importance to be prioritized. She added that some of the questions are not age appropriate in some cases. Laura Opfer responded that the APPLA Committee will continue to monitor the progress of DHHS completing the IL tool with youth.

Jessica Rockemann moved to approve the Strengthening Families Act Committee 2020 Annual Report with corrections as discussed. Misty Frazier seconded the motion. No further discussion ensued. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (11):

Breanna Anderson
Jim Blue
A'Jamal Byndon
Kathy Dinkel

Misty Frazier
Ron Giesselmann
Richard Hasty
Jessica Rockemann

Felicia Nelsen
Lana Temple-Plotz
Susan Thomas

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (4):

Beth Baxter
Vernon Davis

Terri Knutson
Melanie Williams-Smotherman

MOTION CARRIED

c. **Juvenile Services Committee**

Deb VanDyke-Ries updated the Commission regarding the recent work of the Committee. She noted a refocus on the strategic priority of the Committee in the next year. She noted the mutually beneficial partnership with the Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice. She provided an overview of all the workgroups of the Committee. The next steps in the upcoming year will revolve around reorganizing the workgroups to focus on truancy and status filings, and YRTC. She continued by noting there is a small group of members looking into coming into compliance and organizing to once again receive Title II funds as a state.

Laura Opfer shared that with recent transitions and planning regarding the YRTC system, it is important for the JSC to be a part of that conversation and to support when possible.

A'Jamal Byndon noted that it is important to track the racial and ethnic data to show the qualitative progress on the priorities. He added it is important that the public bodies in the state have a representative racial and ethnic makeup.

Misty Frazier shared her story regarding her first Commission meeting and not feeling welcome. She questioned why the public bodies are not able to hold virtual meetings, as it is extremely easy for anyone to

join and be a part of the discussion. Members discussed the racial and ethnic diversity of the various public bodies of the State of Nebraska, and the ability of them to meet and hold court hearings virtually would be very beneficial. Judge Heideman noted that there was past opposition to virtual court hearings, and that this may be an opportune time to propose this legislation again.

i. Legislative Report (**Action Item**)

A’Jamal Byndon moved to approve the Juvenile Services Committee and Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice 2020 Joint Annual Report with corrections as discussed. Jessica Rockemann seconded the motion.

No further discussion ensued. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (11):

Breanna Anderson
Jim Blue
A’Jamal Byndon
Kathy Dinkel

Misty Frazier
Ron Giesselmann
Richard Hasty
Jessica Rockemann

Felicia Nelsen
Lana Temple-Plotz
Susan Thomas

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (4):

Beth Baxter
Vernon Davis

Terri Knutson
Melanie Williams-Smotherman

MOTION CARRIED

d. Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee

Chair Brandner shared with the Commission updates on the recent work of the Committee. She noted information from the annual report regarding the successful b2i evaluation completed by Child Trends. The evaluation shows that b2i would be beneficial to other populations of youth in care. Brandner highlighted that [LB848](#) has passed and was signed by the Governor. The law extends b2i eligibility to Tribal Youth who have achieved the age of majority in their tribe and also co-names Columbus Day to Indigenous People’s Day. The Committee will continue to look at data to track improvements. Brandner shared that the Committee would like to expand b2i to other populations in the future. Committee work in the future will revolve around reorganizing workgroups to look at caseload sizes among other priorities. Lastly, Brandner shared her passion regarding expanding b2i to the juvenile justice population.

i. Legislative Report (**Action Item**)

Laura Opfer highlighted information from the report regarding improved outcomes for youth in areas of housing and connectedness to supports. She added that continued work needs to be done regarding aging out of the b2i program and transitioning between DHHS and private.

Kathy Dinkel moved to approve the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee 2020 Annual Report with corrections as discussed. Lana Temple-Plotz seconded the motion. No further discussion ensued. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (11):

Breanna Anderson
Jim Blue
A’Jamal Byndon
Kathy Dinkel

Misty Frazier
Ron Giesselmann
Richard Hasty
Jessica Rockemann

Felicia Nelsen
Lana Temple-Plotz
Susan Thomas

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (4):

Beth Baxter
Vernon Davis

Terri Knutson
Melanie Williams-Smotherman

MOTION CARRIED

6. Nebraska Children's Commission Annual Report

Laura Opfer shared the summary of the work in the annual report. Chair Brandner and Opfer noted that the report is a compilation of the work from all the Committees. Brandner added that there will be a few vacancies that will be filled in the near future, specifically, Senator Bolz's vacancy, and the recently appointed Inspector General for Child Welfare, Jennifer Carter.

Members discussed specific language in the report.

Kathy Dinkel moved to approve the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee 2020 Annual Report with corrections as discussed. Lana Temple-Plotz seconded the motion. No further discussion ensued. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (11):

Breanna Anderson
Jim Blue
A'Jamal Byndon
Kathy Dinkel

Misty Frazier
Ron Giesselmann
Richard Hasty
Jessica Rockemann

Felicia Nelsen
Lana Temple-Plotz
Susan Thomas

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (4):

Beth Baxter
Vernon Davis
Terri Knutson
Melanie Williams-Smotherman

7. Legislative Update

Chair Brandner shared information regarding the recent work of the Legislature. She noted specific legislation regarding truancy and status offense legislation that will be focused on by Senator Pansing Brooks.

Kathy Dinkel shared specific instances regarding status offenses being filed in the State. She noted that there is concern with parents being held responsible when children are committing offenses. She added that capturing the data regarding offenses that are not being filed would be next to impossible. DHHS Children and Family Services Director Stephanie Beasley noted that data from the Crisis Intervention system is available and was shared with Senator Pansing Brooks office to note the existence of data regarding youth that were contacted by law enforcement but perhaps not acted on.

Deb VanDyke-Reis shared that in other states that have eliminated status offenses, funding and resources were transferred to the schools to meet the needs of students. A'Jamal Byndon added that status offenses in various counties in Nebraska are handled differently. He added that services up front keep kids from entering the juvenile

justice system. He continued that data regarding race and ethnicity is difficult but necessary to get. Deb VanDyke-Ries added that JSC will be focusing on the truancy issue. Sheri Dawson noted that Tamara Gavin, from the JSC, would be able to provide data from Systems of Care.

Brandner also shared information regarding legislation regarding court cases being transferred between juvenile and adult court. Judge Heidemann shared that there are occasions where youth are filed on in adult court, that the youth can remain in detention during this time, while attempting to transfer the case to juvenile court. A'Jamal Byndon noted that there is a higher number of youth of color being charged in adult court. Brandner and Byndon shared that there is a documentary about African-American youth in Omaha called "Out of Omaha," available on Starz.

Brandner noted that [LB1144](#) created a special Legislative Committee that will approve YRTC plan. Senator Pansing Brooks will be on this Committee.

Laura Opfer shared a [handout](#) regarding upcoming LR's and legislation.

Brandner shared information regarding [LB1061](#) which created an Alternative Response Advisory Committee. Opfer added that the planning for the AR Committee is progress. Information and an application will be sent out soon. Lastly, Brandner noted that LB1061 also deactivated the Meds Committee.

Deb VanDyke-Ries shared information regarding the upcoming Legislative Webinar happening on September 9.

8. Strategic Priorities

Laura Opfer led the Commission through a [handout](#), which shows the various strategic priorities of the Commission and to which Committee they are assigned.

Jeanne Brandner commented that we should add [LR421](#). She also reminded the Commission regarding the history of the strategic priorities and the duties of the Commission as priorities are fulfilled.

Members discussed the priorities and the ESA transition. Members expressed an interest to revisit this priority at an upcoming Commission meeting.

9. DHHS Update

DHHS Children and Family Services Director Stephanie Beasley shared information with the Commission regarding the operations of DHHS. Beasley shared information regarding the dramatic drop in calls to the Hotline. She noted that DHHS has been working on outreach during the pandemic. She shared some of the areas of concern that have been food security, mental health issues. As schools have begun to reopen calls to the Hotline have increased 15%, and record numbers of calls to Access Nebraska, for SNAP applications. Beasley shared that a subgroup of NDE and DHSS have been working in collaboration regarding outreach during the pandemic. Beasley added, on August 26 there is a summit for youth voice, to discuss and set priorities for DHHS.

Beasley shared that Nebraska has been selected as a tier-one site for proof of concept for prevention.

Beasley continued by sharing information regarding the lessons-learned during the pandemic. She noted that when the system flipped to virtual services, it was difficult for families to have access to technology. Virtual visits were shorter but held more frequently. She shared that daily community collaboratives were extremely beneficial in order to get aid to the areas that were most needy.

Dr. Janine Fromm introduced herself to the Commission and provided some history regarding YRTC Geneva, where she observed poor conditions and one youth in isolation for a week. She shared a [handout](#) regarding the plan for the YRTC system. She likened the YRTC in Lincoln as operating somewhat like a PRIF. She shared information regarding the Hastings Regional Center, which currently houses a substance-abuse center for young males. She noted that the dorms there are newer and able to house youth with a variety of commitments. The census has been historically low at Hastings. Additionally, she shared there is also a low census at Whitehall. Dr. Fromm noted that The Missouri Youth Services Institute has been hired to recommend changes. She share a [handout](#) with information about the MYSI approach. Additionally, NDE has also been contracted to look at the school programs to provide more student engagement.

Dr. Fromm answered questions regarding programming across the different sites and accrediting bodies reviewing practices across the YRTC system. Dr. Fromm shared that she would address these questions with MYSI.

Mark LaBouchardiere answered a question regarding limits for admitting Tribal Youth. He noted that there limits have never been enforced regarding youth. If a youth is ordered to the YRTC they are allowed in. LaBouchardiere also answered questions regarding visitation policies before and during the pandemic, noting the outreach and resources provided to families to make visits happen.

Dr. Fromm answered questions regarding culturally relevant programming. She also provided information regarding the future state of programming that will enhance the experience for youth: shorter length of stays, successful reintegration into the community, and less recidivism. She added that there is a full schedule of stakeholder meetings upcoming.

10. Public Comment

Chair Jeanne Brandner opened the floor for public comment. Tom McBride share comments regarding YRTC issues. Mark LaBouchardiere replied regarding the method and plan for the MYSI project.

11. New Business

12. Upcoming Meeting Planning

- November 17, 2020 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. Adam will check availability for the Lancaster County Extension Education Center for this meeting.

13. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Anderson