

Strengthening Families Act Committee Meeting

June 23, 2020

3:00 pm to 4:30 pm

Webex Online Video Conferencing System

1. Call to Order

Co-Chair of the Strengthening Families Act (SFA) Committee of the Nebraska Children’s Commission (Commission), Vernon Davis, called the meeting to order at 3:06 pm.

2. Roll Call and Introductions

Committee Members present (10):

Deanna Brakhage	Ron Giesselmann	Sara Riffel
Vernon Davis	Brandy Gustoff	Lisa Story
Pat Frost	Jessica Rockemann	
Stephanie Gardella	Amara Madsen	

Committee Members absent (6):

Payne Ackerman	Nathan Collier	Rebecca Daugherty
Ashley Brown	Heather Colton	Deb Shuck

Non-Voting Members present (2)

Bailey Perry
Jeremy Behrends

Ex Officio and Resource Members absent (1):

Deb VanDyke-Ries

A quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (12):

Crystal Aldmeyer	Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Adam Anderson	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Kathy Anstine	Department of Health and Human Services
Sarah Forrest	Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers
Mary Ann Harvey	Court Improvement Project
Jill Holt	Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Coalition
Tom McBride	Nebraska Juvenile Justice Association
Felicia Nelsen	Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parents Association
Laura Opfer	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Sara Quiroz	Administrative Office of Probation, Juvenile Services Division
Julie Smith	Administrative Office of Probation, Juvenile Services Division
Susan Thomas	Nebraska CASA Association

a. Notice of Publication

Recorder, Adam Anderson, 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 Nebraska Children's Commission Website

3. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Brandy Gustoff to approve the [agenda](#) as presented. Sara Riffel seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (10):

Deanna Brakhage	Ron Giesselmann	Sara Riffel
Vernon Davis	Brandy Gustoff	Lisa Story
Pat Frost	Terri Knutson	
Stephanie Gardella	Amara Madsen	

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (6):

Payne Ackerman	Nathan Collier	Rebecca Daugherty
Ashley Brown	Heather Colton	Deb Shuck

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

4. Approval of Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Lisa Story and seconded by Brandy Gustoff to approve the minutes of the [May 14, 2020](#) meetings as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (10):

Deanna Brakhage	Ron Giesselmann	Sara Riffel
Vernon Davis	Brandy Gustoff	Lisa Story
Pat Frost	Terri Knutson	
Stephanie Gardella	Amara Madsen	

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (6):

Payne Ackerman	Nathan Collier	Rebecca Daugherty
Ashley Brown	Heather Colton	Deb Shuck

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

5. Co-Chair Report

a. Nebraska Children's Commission Update

Co-chair Vernon Davis welcomed members to the meeting and gave a brief synopsis of the meeting, noting that a majority of the meeting will focus on the pending annual report approval.

6. Legislative Update

Laura Opfer noted that the session resumes July 20th. Senator Pansing Brooks was on the Children's Commission meeting in May. Pansing Brooks noted that priorities are going to shift. Any bills with fiscal impact are at risk of not being prioritized. Opfer noted that LB 219, regarding Drivers Licenses and Foster Parent Liability has a small fiscal note

and is likely in jeopardy. Opfer added that that the Youth in Care Bill of Rights did not make it out of committee. Opfer will discuss this item later in the agenda.

7. Normalcy Subcommittee

Tom McBride updated the Committee on the recent activity of the Normalcy Subcommittee. He noted that they had a meeting recently and reviewed the Normalcy Reports, submitted by the providers. He added that there is a broad range of reports – some good and some not so good. Some reports also included agency responses to the COVID 19 situation. McBride questioned how the subcommittee can provide feedback to agencies. He noted that the subcommittee would like to incorporate feedback from the youth panel at each agency to get their feedback. McBride thanked Karen Moran for her work on collecting and distributing the Normalcy Reports. McBride proposed that the Normalcy Subcommittee have a meeting with those that wrote the reports to have a discussion about the writing process for the report and getting access for a discussion with the youth panel.

McBride continued by noting that the original intent of the legislation became watered down. He noted that simply writing the report and submitting it fulfills the requirement for the report. There is no consideration for the basis of the report. McBride thanked Laura Opfer for the input on the annual report. He has reviewed the recommendations of the report. Felicia Nelsen thanked the subcommittee members and added that after discussions with the agencies, the reports next year will be better than ever.

Laura added how important Normalcy is for youth, how far it has come over the years, and she thanked Tom and Felicia for their work.

It was moved by Vernon Davis and seconded by Jessica Rockemann to approve the Normalcy Subcommittee action plan of holding a feedback session with providers and those involved in writing Normalcy Reports, with a youth feedback session. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (11):

Deanna Brakhage
Vernon Davis
Pat Frost
Stephanie Gardella

Ron Giesselmann
Brandy Gustoff
Terri Knutson
Amara Madsen

Sara Riffel
Jessica Rockemann
Lisa Story

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (6):

Payne Ackerman
Ashley Brown

Nathan Collier
Heather Colton

Rebecca Daugherty
Deb Shuck

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

8. APPLA Subcommittee

Chair Crystal Aldmeyer shared the recent activity of the APPLA Subcommittee. She noted that there was no recent meeting to discuss. She added that the next meeting will be in July, and at that time Dr. Katie Bass, from the FCRO will join the call to discuss aspects of the most recent FCRO report.

9. Trafficking Subcommittee

Sarah Forrest shared via the chat function that the subcommittee on the recent work of the Subcommittee. She shared that at the most recent meeting the subcommittee there was a great presentation from DHHS on the most current data and policy progress made. The subcommittee identified many additional data needs and questions. She added that DHHS and Probation identified the need to work on services for this population. The subcommittee will reconvene in August/September to see if clear work plan and next steps emerge.

10. Annual Report

Laura Opfer shared that she has finished up work on the SFA annual report. She received feedback from a few members and incorporated those into the report. Opfer plans to add specific trafficking numbers on pages seven and eight of the report. She noted that this year has been a relatively slow year for the committee due to the pandemic, and reorganization.

It was moved by Jessica Rockemann and seconded by Brandy Gustoff to approve the [2019-2020 NSFA Committee Annual Report](#) with discussed changes. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (11):

Deanna Brakhage
Vernon Davis
Pat Frost
Stephanie Gardella

Ron Giesselmann
Brandy Gustoff
Terri Knutson
Amara Madsen

Sara Riffel
Jessica Rockemann
Lisa Story

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (6):

Payne Ackerman
Ashley Brown

Nathan Collier
Heather Colton

Rebecca Daugherty
Deb Shuck

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

11. Youth in Care Bill of Rights

Laura Opfer proposed forming a subcommittee to look at the Foster Care Bill of Rights. Felicia Nelsen proposed reconvening the Community and Family Voice Subcommittee to look at this Foster Care Bill of Rights. Sara Riffel noted that we could join the efforts in progress to add the support of the Committee and Children's Commission in the next legislative session. Opfer added that it would be important for the Committee and the Commission to be a part of the conversation. Riffel discussed the potential for helping remove the fiscal note that may be attached to the bill. Opfer shared that she will update the committee once a plan is in place.

12. New Business

Co-Chair Davis reminded those in attendance to reach out to the Governor regarding extending the relaxation of the Open Meetings Act, in order to continue meeting online during the pandemic.

10. Public Comment

Co-Chair Davis opened the floor for public comment. There was none.

13. Next Steps

Co-Chair Davis noted that the next steps for the Committee are to submit the annual report to the Children's Commission for a formal vote in August, and that each statutory group will bring their report to the Commission at that time.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Adam Anderson

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