

Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee

January 14, 2021

1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Webex Online Video Conferencing System

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Co-Chair, Christina Lloyd, called the meeting of the Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee to order at 1:02 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Lloyd asked Adam Anderson to call roll.

Laura Opfer noted that the Governor extended the Open Meetings Act waiver until then end of April, 2021.

II. Roll Call and Introductions

Committee Members present (11):

Becky Bounds	Sarah Helvey	Sara Riffel
Vernon Davis (1:40 p.m.)	Camas Holder	Susan Thomas
Mary Fraser Meints	Christina Lloyd	Lana Verbrigghe
<i>Proxy for Juliet Summers</i> , Taylor Givens-Dunn	Bailey Perry	

Committee members absent (1):

Whitney Beck

Ex-Officio Members present (4):

Brandy Gustoff
Candi Marcantel
Katie McLeese Stephenson
Deb VanDyke-Ries

Ex-Officio Members absent (3):

Maghan Madsen
Jennifer Skala
Senator Anna Wishart

A quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (10):

Adam Anderson.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Deanna Brakhage.....	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Linda M. Cox.....	Foster Care Review Office
Jason Feldhaus.....	Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Sharon Fenn.....	Access to Justice Commission
Jill Holt.....	Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Coalition
Felipe Longoria.....	Central Plains Center for Services
Sami Magpie.....	Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Coalition
Laura Opfer.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Kathleen Stolz.....	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 Sara Riffel and seconded by Lana Verbrigghe to approve the [agenda](#) as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (10):

Becky Bounds

Mary Fraser Meints

Proxy for Juliet Summers, Taylor

Givens-Dunn

Sarah Helvey

Camas Holder

Christina Lloyd

Bailey Perry

Sara Riffel

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 [October 7, 2020 minutes](#) as presented. The motion was seconded by Susan Thomas. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (10):

Becky Bounds

Mary Fraser Meints

Proxy for Juliet Summers, Taylor

Givens-Dunn

Sarah Helvey

Camas Holder

Christina Lloyd

Bailey Perry

Sara Riffel

Susan Thomas

Lana Verbrigghe

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (2):

Whitney Beck

Vernon Davis

MOTION CARRIED

V. Co-Chair Report

Co-chair Lloyd noted that there was nothing new to report out to the Committee at this time. Laura Opfer noted that Vernon Davis will be voted in as Co-Chair of the B2i Committee at the next Commission Meeting. Adam Anderson added that members in attendance that weren't approved prior to this meeting will be at the next Commission meeting on January 18, 2021, and that is due to the previous Commission meeting cancellation.

VI. Legislative Update

Policy Analyst, Laura Opfer gave an update on LB262 regarding B2i eligibility for youth with Special Juvenile Immigration Status (SJIS). Opfer encouraged members to read the bill. Sarah Helvey added that it also includes Medicaid Coverage up to age 21 for this population.

Sarah Helvey shared that LB202 would allow a subset of the juvenile justice population B2i eligibility. Helvey reminded the Committee that the inclusion of this population was one of the original recommendations of this Committee that had to be removed due to budget constraints. Helvey noted that LB202 would make eligible young adults that are in and out-of-home placements six months before their 19th birthday and whom it would not be in their best interest to return home. She continued that the court can look at certain circumstances that would allow them access to B2i.

VII. Special Juvenile Immigration Status

Co-chair Lloyd discussed the SJIS recommendation made at the Committee meeting on October 7, 2020. She reminded the Committee of the presentation by Alexis Steele at the last meeting regarding SJIS. Sarah Helvey added that there was a court case that went up to the Nebraska Supreme Court that ended up that Special Juvenile Immigrant Status youth were not eligible for B2i due to other statutes in place in the state. The argument presented was essentially that Nebraska allows unlawfully present immigrants access to foster care and that B2i is an extension of foster care. Helvey noted that due to other laws in the state, the B2i law needed to have an explicit inclusion within to allow this population eligibility. She added that LB262 contains this explicit inclusion. Sarah Helvey encouraged the Committee to be in support of this inclusion.

It was moved by Susan Thomas to recommend that Section 43-4504 be amended to state that all young adults described in subsection 2, including young adults who are not lawfully present in the United States, be eligible for all services and supports available under the b2i program. The motion was seconded by Mary Fraser Meints. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Becky Bounds
Mary Fraser Meints
Proxy for Juliet Summers, Taylor
Givens-Dunn

Sarah Helvey
Christina Lloyd
Bailey Perry
Sara Riffel

Susan Thomas
Lana Verbrigghe

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (1):

Camas Holder

ABSENT (2):

Whitney Beck
Vernon Davis

MOTION CARRIED

VIII. Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup Update

Laura Opfer noted that Dr. Katie Bass has left the Foster Care Review Office and the Data and Evaluation Workgroup. She asked the Committee for recommendations as to whether to search for a new Chair of the Workgroup or wait until a new Research Analyst is hired at the FCRO. Opfer added that work was beginning on the ongoing data collection as recommended in the Child Trends evaluation as to how to evaluate the success of the B2i program on an ongoing basis rather than a one-time evaluation. This work may be on pause at the moment.

IX. Case Management Workgroup

Sara Riffel updated the Committee that the group had reconvened to think about some of the experiences that were talked about from the Child Trends evaluation. In 2020, the workgroup shifted focus to how to better serve youth exiting b2i during the COVID-19 pandemic. Riffel shared that, at this point the workgroup again plans to go inactive until another case management need arises. Riffel noted that it could be regarding the new fiscal stimulus plan recently passed.

X. Finance & Policy Workgroup Update

Jason Feldhaus shared that there is ongoing discussion regarding the stipend amount and that the Committee would like to continue to look at how that meets the needs of young people. Feldhaus noted that he plans to reconvene the group in February and present some new tools to the workgroup, such as the Financial Well-Being Tool, along with other data from the young adults whether the stipend is meeting their needs. Feldhaus hasn't heard yet regarding any policy discussion, but would present them if needed.

XI. Tribal Court Transfers

Laura Opfer shared that there is ongoing conversation regarding tribal court transfers. B2i will continue to try to engage tribal youth. Deanna Brakhage noted that the department is still unable to file motions in tribal court. Sharon Fenn noted that the Consortium, under the Access to Justice Commission is in discussion regarding transfers to and from state court, and the integrity of losing connections. She added that Judge Runge is interested in starting a workgroup regarding this issue.

XII. DHHS Update

Camas Holder shared caseload sizes. Western and Southeast Service Areas average 17 cases. Omaha averages 22 cases. She noted that there is one case manager opening. Holder shared that the staff is back in rotating waves in the office and back to face-to-face visits. Work, employment, and healthcare continue to be concerns for the youth and case managers. Holder also noted the document shared prior to the meeting regarding fiscal stimulus as it relates to the Transition Age Youth. She added that B2i eligibility waivers will continue due to the recently announced fiscal stimulus.

Sara Riffel noted that due to the recent fiscal stimulus there are increased avenues for supports directly provided to youth. Riffel encouraged those involved to advocate for those supports. Deb VanDyke-Ries asked if there are specific priority areas or groups that DHHS will be focusing on. Camas Holder replied that this fiscal stimulus is new and groups are being formed at the moment. She added that DHHS is waiting to hear about funding amounts. Mary Fraser Meints encouraged conversation regarding providers that don't always have contracts with DHHS. Members discussed additional meetings regarding this funding. Adam Anderson and Laura Opfer will schedule a meeting in the next two weeks regarding federal funding with DHHS.

XIII. Public Comment

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

XIV. New Business

There was no new business.

XV. Upcoming Meeting Planning

Upcoming meetings will be held April 1, 2021; July 1, 2021; and September 30, 2021. Locations to be determined at a later date.

XVI. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:41 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Anderson