

Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee

October 7, 2020
1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
Courtyard Marriott
808 R Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Co-Chair, Jeanne Brandner, called the meeting of the Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee to order at 1:10 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting the challenging times we are facing regarding meeting. Brandner added that the Governor's Commission for the Protection of Children was able to meet telephonically recently and encouraged Commission Staff to reach out to determine if meeting virtually is possible for Committees of the Children's Commission.

II. Roll Call and Introductions

Committee Members present (8):

Becky Bounds	<i>Proxy for Camas Holder, Shayne</i>	Sara Riffel
Vernon Davis	Schiermeister	Susan Thomas
Mary Fraser Meints (1:16 p.m.)	Christina Lloyd	Lana Verbrigghe

Committee members absent (5):

Whitney Beck	Sarah Helvey	Juliet Summers
<i>Proxy for Misty Frazier, Jill Holt</i>	Bailey Perry	

Ex-Officio Members present (2):

Jeanne Brandner
Katie McCleese Stephenson

Ex-Officio Members absent (6):

Brandy Gustoff	Candi Marcantel	Senator Anna Wishart
Maghan Madsen	Jennifer Skala	Deb VanDyke-Ries

A quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (10):

Adam Anderson.....	Nebraska Children's Commission
Deanna Brakhage.....	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Taylor Givens-Dunn.....	Voices for Children
Felipe Longoria.....	Central Plains Center for 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 at the sign-in table.

III. Approval of Agenda

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

FOR (7):

Becky Bounds	<i>Proxy for Camas Holder, Shayne</i>	Sara Riffel
Vernon Davis	Schiermeister	Susan Thomas
	Christina Lloyd	Lana Verbrigghe

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (6):

Whitney Beck
Mary Fraser Meints
Proxy for Misty Frazier, Jill Holt

Sarah Helvey
Bailey Perry
Juliet Summers

MOTION CARRIED

IV. Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Lana Verbrigghe to approve the [May 6, 2020 minutes](#) as presented. The motion was seconded by Sara Riffel. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (8):

Becky Bounds
Vernon Davis
Mary Fraser Meints

Proxy for Camas Holder, Shayne
Schiermeister
Christina Lloyd

Sara Riffel
Susan Thomas
Lana Verbrigghe

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (5):

Whitney Beck
Proxy for Misty Frazier, Jill Holt
Sarah Helvey
Bailey Perry
Juliet Summers

MOTION CARRIED

V. Co-Chair Report

Co-chair Brandner shared with the Committee the work of the Commission that occurred during the August 18, 2020 Children's Commission Meeting. She highlighted that it was the first in-person meeting of the Commission in a very long time and that it was nice to be able to meet to reacquaint everyone with some of the issues and goals. She added that there were many appointments made at the meeting and there was a lot of discussion regarding the YRTCs.

VI. Legislative Update

Policy Analyst, Laura Opfer reminded the Committee about LB 848 that was rolled into LB 849 and passed this summer. LB 849 will change some items regarding Tribal Youth eligibility in b2i. She added that Deanna Brakhage, from DHHS will provide an update later in the meeting regarding Tribal Court transfer issues that are currently being worked through.

Co-chair Brandner noted that the Children's Commission is looking at a variety of legislation regarding child welfare, and that information can be found on the Children's Commission Website. Adam Anderson added that the Commission website is currently being updated to remove unnecessary information.

VII. Immigrant Youth Eligibility

Alexis Steele, from the Immigrant Legal Center shared a [presentation](#) and history regarding youth with Special Immigrant Juvenile Status and their eligibility for the b2i program, noting that currently youth are not expressly eligible for b2i despite the legislation's intent as written in Section 5(3)(h). She noted that legislation will need to be introduced to allow these youth to become eligible regardless of immigration status.

Co-chair Brandner shared some history regarding the presentation and encouraged the Committee to add this topic to the next agenda as an action item and follow up with

VIII. Workgroup Membership Review

Adam Anderson provided an update of the membership of the Committee. He share that Taylor Givens-Dunn has applied to fill Juliet Summers' vacancy and Felipe Longoria will apply to fill Doug Lenz's vacancy. He also noted vacancies in representation from the Legislature and Youth.

IX. Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup Update

Laura Opfer provided an update of the workgroup. She shared that workgroup is continuing to review the evaluation and deciding what metrics to monitor. She continued, noting the next steps for the group is to review the exit survey from DHHS to see how the Committee can incorporate that survey into the ongoing data review. A small group of members will be meeting in the coming weeks to discuss the survey process and developing an ongoing plan. Opfer stated that this workgroup will have an update about the meeting.

X. Case Management Workgroup

Sara Riffel noted that the workgroup hadn't met recently but she shared that the workgroup worked with DHHS, Connected Youth Initiative, Central Plains, NE Works and the Sherwood Foundation, and developed what is called the GOALS program to continue to receive their stipend upon exiting the b2i program during the pandemic. Youth that aged out in between March-September continued to receive their stipend.

Riffel answered question regarding the program process. She noted that DHHS has enrolled 52 out of 54 into the GOALS program. Riffel specified that this program affects youth that are aging out during the COVID pandemic. Felipe Longoria specified some of the program requirements, such as continuing to meet with their b2i coordinator monthly. Riffel added that some of the data that will be captured from NE Works includes wage growth and job retention. She answered questions regarding evaluation of the participants.

XI. Finance & Policy Workgroup Update

Laura Opfer shared information regarding the work of the workgroup. She shared that Workgroup Chair Jason Feldhaus is interested in knowing whether the Committee is interested in having the Finance and Policy Workgroup dive back into the issue of stipend amounts and how that stipend is determined. Mary Fraser Meints speculated that perhaps a rent-based determination or another method for determining the stipend would be wise, noting that rent rates and utilities in Omaha can exceed that amount monthly. Members noted that variances in the stipend amount has been an issue in the past, and that it is important to continue to look into this issue again. Opfer will take this idea and others back to the Workgroup to discuss.

XII. Tribal Court Transfers (related to LB849)

Deanna Brakhage shared information regarding Tribal Court Transfers as related to LB849. Tribal Courts questioned why the youth would have to file the petition in county courts to fill the gap year. The judges would like to keep it in Tribal Court. Brakhage noted that as written DHHS has to file the petition, however, DHHS does not have the authority to file in Tribal Courts. Further confusion exists as to whether Tribal Courts will allow this specific population, as it is not written into Tribal Code; currently only in state statute. Members suggested working with Judge Runge from the Tribal Court and the Court Improvement Project. Laura Opfer will follow-up with the CIP and share with members if there are updates to this issue.

XIII. DHHS Update

Shayne Schiermeister shared information from DHHS. He noted that all the B2i workers are back in the office working. He added that there have been particular issues related to the pandemic regarding youth searching for work. Additionally, he shared that some youth lost their jobs and ended up receiving more money through unemployment. Some workers shared success stories regarding the DocuSign Application, which allowed workers and prospective applicants to apply for the program. Schiermeister noted that there are 217 youth currently being served, caseload ranges between 18 and 29, two ICs have left and one of position has been repurposed in the Southeast Service Area. Two of three positions have been filled. He noted that there are 10 Independence Coordinators across the state: One in the Northern Service Area, four in the Omaha

area, three in the Southeast Service Area, and two in the Western and Central Service Areas. Deanna Brakhage noted that the Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup will resume looking at and reporting out caseload sizes and numbers of youth currently being served at future meetings.

XIV. Public Comment

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

XV. New Business

Co-chair Jeanne Brandner noted that discussion regarding Special Immigrant Juvenile Status should be added to the next agenda as an action item.

Members thanked Co-Chair Brandner for her service as Co-chair over the last few years. Brandner noted that Sara Quiroz will be filling the position from the Judicial Branch to maintain that connection and hopefully in the future be able to offer b2i to the Juvenile Justice Probation population.

XVI. Upcoming Meeting Planning

It was shared that Vernon Davis and Christina Lloyd will discuss meeting planning for 2021. The next meeting date was announced.

XVII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:41 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Anderson