

Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee

July 1, 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 1:05 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Lloyd asked Adam Anderson to call roll.

II. Roll Call and Introductions

Committee Members present (11):

Becky Bounds	Sarah Helvey	Proxy for Bailey Perry, <i>Brandy</i>
Vernon Davis	Camas Holder	<i>Gustoff</i>
Mary Fraser Meints	Christina Lloyd	Sara Riffel
Taylor Givens-Dunn	Felipe Longoria	Lana Verbrigghe

Committee members absent (3):

Whitney Beck	Susan Thomas
Jill Holt	

Ex-Officio Members present (3):

Brandy Gustoff
Katie McLeese Stephenson
Proxy for Deb VanDyke-Ries, *Mandi Juricek*

Ex-Officio Members absent (4):

Maghan Madsen
Candi Marcantel
Jennifer Skala
Sara Quiroz

A quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (10):

Adam Anderson.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Deanna Brakhage.....	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Sara Druke.....	Community Action
Mandi Juricek.....	Court Improvement Project
Laura Opfer.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Andrew Ritta.....	Community Action

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 and on the Nebraska Children’s Commission website.

III. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Sarah Helvey and seconded by Sara Riffel to approve the agenda as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (11)

Becky Bounds
Vernon Davis
Mary Fraser Meints
Taylor Givens-Dunn

Sarah Helvey
Camas Holder
Christina Lloyd
Felipe Longoria

Proxy for Bailey Perry, *Brandy Gustoff*
Sara Riffel
Lana Verbrigghe

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (1):

Whitney Beck
Jill Holt

Susan Thomas

MOTION CARRIED

IV. Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Sarah Helvey to approve the April 1, 2021 minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Lana Verbrigghe. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (11)

Becky Bounds
Vernon Davis
Mary Fraser Meints
Taylor Givens-Dunn

Sarah Helvey
Camas Holder
Christina Lloyd
Felipe Longoria

Proxy for Bailey Perry, *Brandy Gustoff*
Sara Riffel
Lana Verbrigghe

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (1):

Whitney Beck
Jill Holt

Susan Thomas

MOTION CARRIED

V. Annual Report

Laura Opfer shared information regarding the annual report. She highlighted the recommendations, including: expanding b2i to the juvenile justice and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status populations, focusing additional resources on youth entering and exiting the program, and recommended caseload sizes. Members discussed the recommendations at length, suggesting minor changes in language. Laura Opfer noted that she will edit the report based on the discussion and send out a revised copy to confirm all changes are made according to the discussion.

It was moved by Mary Fraser Meints to approve the 2021 B2i Annual Report with changes as discussed. The motion was seconded by Lana Verbrigghe. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (11)

Becky Bounds
Vernon Davis
Mary Fraser Meints
Taylor Givens-Dunn

Sarah Helvey
Camas Holder
Christina Lloyd
Felipe Longoria

Proxy for Bailey Perry, *Brandy Gustoff*
Sara Riffel
Lana Verbrigghe

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (1):

Whitney Beck
Jill Holt

Susan Thomas

MOTION CARRIED

VI. Co-Chair Report

Co-chair Davis noted that this is his last meeting on the b2i Advisory Committee. He noted that he has been appointed to the new African American Commission. If time permits, Davis hopes to remain involved in the future. Laura Opfer noted that b2i will be looking for a new representative of the Children's Commission to take the Co-chair position once the new members are appointed to the Commission.

VII. Membership Update

Adam Anderson discussed vacancies on the Committee. He noted vacancies in the Legislative, Tribal, and Young Adult with Current or Previous Foster Care Experience roles. Members discussed compensation as encouragement for membership. Laura Opfer noted that compensation for members is prohibited in State Statute but added that discussions are happening at the Commission level regarding this situation. Anderson added that expense reimbursement is available for mileage, meals and overnight stays. Sarah Helvey noted that it would be great to have a member from the HHS Committee of the Legislature to have a role on the b2i Committee.

VIII. Legislative Update

Laura Opfer updated the Committee regarding LB 202 and LB 262. She noted that these bills did not advance during this current session, however Senator Pansing Brooks and Vargas plan to work to advance them in the next session. Sarah Helvey shared information regarding a bill that passed in 2020, expanding b2i eligibility for Tribal Youth reaching age of majority in their tribes, goes into effect today. Sara Riffel added that a lot of time was spent in the last session education senators about the specifics of the b2i program and anything that the members can do over the next several months would be very beneficial in movement of LB 202 and 262.

IX. Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup Update

Laura Opfer introduced Heather Wood from the Foster Care Review Office. Wood gave a brief background of her work history, education, and provided information regarding the reviews conducted by her staff. She shared that she is beginning to familiarize herself with the 2019 evaluation, legislation and history of the b2i program. Laura Opfer shared some of the recent work and the next steps for the workgroup, and she noted that she hopes to pick up the work of the workgroup once again in the near future.

X. Case Management Workgroup

Chair Sara Riffel noted that the Workgroup hasn't met as they had worked through their previous goals. She shared that at the next meeting the Workgroup will review the evaluation to look at issues around exiting and case load sizes.

XI. Finance & Policy Workgroup Update

Sara Riffel noted that this Workgroup does not have an update for now. Laura Opfer hopes that this Workgroup will be active in the next six months.

XII. Tribal Court Transfers

Mandi Juricek shared updates regarding Tribal Court Transfers. She noted specific ideas being worked on regarding the transfers. Deanna Brakhage shared concerns regarding youth voice as it pertains to tribal court transfers. She noted specific instances that the youth do not wish to transfer back to tribal court.

XIII. Tax Updates Related to B2i Payments

Sara Drueke from Community Action introduced herself and provided information regarding Opportunity Passport. She introduced Andrew Ritta from Community Action. Ritta provided information regarding tax implications regarding payments received under the GOALS program. Members specified that the GOALS program is a temporary extension of B2i participants that reached age 22 during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Ritta noted that regularly, b2i payments are not considered income because the payments come from the government, however because the pandemic foster care payment that come from providers instead of the government, they are considered income. Members discussed the different tax situations and payments coming in from different sources.

XIV. DHHS Update

Camas Holder provided info regarding Pandemic Foster Care Assistance. She will provide information regarding the plan recently approved by the Governor. She noted that letters were sent that would allow participants to re-enter b2i. She added that Caseworkers are also calling previous participants. Holder noted that previous participants are allowed to reenter the program until July 30, 2021 and that all participants that apply by July 30th are allowed to receive back-payments. Holder added that participants can continue to work with their GOALS case manager, if they had one, or change to DHHS. Holder continued by noting reentrants will receive the same management as previously provided however all visits will be conducted via zoom. Holder also noted that the stipend will remain the same and a new voluntary services agreement will be signed. Lastly, she shared the email address: dhhs.pandemicfostercare@nebraska.gov for questions.

Deanna Brakhage noted that this may affect Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) payments. Members discussed that the lump sum payment is over \$4000, and that payment has public benefit implications. Sarah Helvey expressed disappointment regarding the time it took since the passage of the legislation to approve a plan for these funds.

XV. Public Comment

The Co-Chair Davis welcomed public comment. There was no public comment.

XVI. New Business

There was no new business.

XVII. Upcoming Meeting Planning

July 1, 2021; and September 30, 2021. Locations to be determined at a later date.

XVIII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Anderson