

Nebraska Children's Commission Meeting

June 29, 2021
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Courtyard Marriott
808 R Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

1. Call to Order

Vice Chair Lana Temple-Plotz welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. She asked attendees to introduce themselves. Adam Anderson took roll from the introductions.

2. Introductions and Roll Call

Commission Members Present (9)

Beth Baxter	Kathy Dinkel	Felicia Nelsen
A'Jamal Byndon	Misty Frazier	Lana Temple-Plotz
Vernon Davis	Richard Hasty	Susan Thomas

Commission Members Absent (6)

Breanna Anderson	Ron Giesselmann	Jessica Rockemann
Jim Blue	Terri Knutson	Melanie Williams-Smotherman

Commission Ex-Officio Members Present (6)

Stephanie Beasley	Sheri Dawson	Monika Gross
Jennifer Carter	Senator Myron Dorn	Judge Roger Heideman

Commission Ex-Officio Members Absent (5)

Michelle Borg (listening online)	Senator Patty Pansing Brooks	Senator Lynne Walz
Jeanne Brandner	Deb VanDyke-Ries	

Roll call was taken through introductions, and a quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (10)

Adam Anderson	Nebraska Children's Commission
Laura Opfer	Nebraska Children's Commission
Heather Wood	Foster Care Review Office

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 at the sign-in table and on the Children's Commission Website.

3. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Vernon Davis and seconded by Beth Baxter to approve the agenda as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Beth Baxter
A’Jamal Byndon
Vernon Davis

Kathy Dinkel
Misty Frazier
Richard Hasty

Felicia Nelsen
Lana Temple-Plotz
Susan Thomas

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (6):

Breanna Anderson
Jim Blue
Ron Giesselmann

Terri Knutson
Jessica Rockemann
Melanie Williams-Smotherman

MOTION CARRIED

Note that the order of items in the minutes will not be reflective of the original agenda

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

a. [Approval of April 20, 2021](#)

Beth Baxter moved to approve the consent agenda items as presented. A’Jamal Byndon seconded the motion. No further discussion ensued. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Beth Baxter
A’Jamal Byndon
Vernon Davis

Kathy Dinkel
Misty Frazier
Richard Hasty

Felicia Nelsen
Lana Temple-Plotz
Susan Thomas

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (6):

Breanna Anderson
Jim Blue
Ron Giesselmann

Terri Knutson
Jessica Rockemann
Melanie Williams-Smotherman

MOTION CARRIED

5. NCC Membership Application Process 2021-2023

Laura Opfer explained the membership process and updated the Commission regarding the current status. Members discussed concerns as new appointees. Kathy Dinkel noted that voting for the Executive Committee at the first meeting is hard as a new member because they might not know who they are voting for. A’Jamal Byndon noted the expansion of the governance to include racial diversity in the Executive Committee. Vice Chair Temple-Plotz noted that profiles in advance of those that are interested in the executive committee will be gathered and distributed in the August meeting material to help members get to know each other.

6. Legislative Update

Laura Opfer provided an update regarding the Legislature. She noted the flexibility of LB 83 and meeting virtually. Opfer, Adam Anderson, and Senator Dorn clarified some of the provisions of LB 83.

Opfer noted the CIP Legislative Webinar is upcoming and she will send out a reminder.

Opfer continued by highlighting LB 202 and LB 262 as two bills that would expand eligibility for youth to enter the B2i program. She noted that the B2i Committee provided support for both bills. She also shared that Senator Patty Pansing Brooks continues to work on LB 568, that addresses chronic absenteeism. Judge Roger Heideman shared information regarding truancy filings. Senator Myron Dorn noted that LB 568 is on Select File and will be addressed when the legislative session begins again. Members continued to discuss the implications of the bill and the debate between rural and urban communities. Member Kathy Dinkel shared a personal story regarding her daughter as it relates to status offense.

Opfer shared that there are a number of bills that the Commission will continue to monitor, including a package of bills related to foster care reimbursement rates, the youth rehabilitation and treatment centers. She noted that members can watch the [Commission Bill Tracker](#) for updates.

Member A'Jamal Byndon noted that it helpful when Senators visit communities other than Lincoln. He hoped that the Commission could have events in other communities outside of Lincoln.

Senator Dorn shared specific information regarding the legislation that had passed through the Appropriations Committee. He noted that the Committee passed and increase of 2% for providers of child welfare. He shared information that the rainy day fund in Nebraska has ballooned to \$808 million and Nebraska numbers have come in at \$294 million above forecast for the year.

Opfer then discussed LB 570, which was amended into LB 428. She noted that the legislation requires DHHS to notify the Legislature within 120 days prior to making substantial changes to the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC) system and also creates a special Oversight Committee for the Eastern Service Area. Senator Dorn shared an update on the Oversight Committee. Inspector General Jennifer Carter shared information regarding the most recent meeting of the Committee. Members discussed the procurement process and the history of the Eastern Service Area pilot.

Lastly, Opfer noted that each of the statutory committees are working on drafting and approving annual reports to the Legislature. The reports will come to the Commission in August for approval.

7. Statutory Committees

a. Alternative Response Advisory Committee

Monika Gross shared updates regarding the work of the Committee. She noted that a meeting on May 28 did not have quorum, however discussion included introductions, strategic planning, and statutory obligations. She continued by noting the Committee discussed the receipt and screening of DHHS's response to reports of abuse and neglect. The members discussed their knowledge of the process.

Kathy Dinkel noted that her family had been working with Alternative Response, noting a personal experience regarding her family. Dinkel noted that it's important to think about personal experience as it relates to policy. Dinkel added that it would be helpful to know where to provide the input into changing the system. She continued by sharing thoughts about the runaround she experienced in the system. She noted

that as an educated person she thought it would be incredibly difficult for those that are not educated. She hoped for a positive outcome through a traumatic situation.

A’Jamal Byndon shared thoughts about how the Commission can advocate for system changes as ambassadors rather than getting in the weeds. Byndon shared ideas about how to increase awareness of the work of the Commission. He speculated that it would be good to incorporate some downtime in the agenda to share personal stories. Beth Baxter shared thoughts about becoming more comfortable being uncomfortable as it relates to stories of lived experience. She noted that it is important to think about the personal experiences of others when drafting policy. Richard Hasty encouraged the new Executive Committee and Commission staff to incorporate feedback from those with lived experience. Judge Heideman apologized for the Dinkel’s experience with the court system. He noted the recent meetings with people with lived experience. Misty Frazier noted that it’s difficult to figure out the best way to make an impact as a new member.

b. Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee

Co-Chair of the FCRRC, Felicia Nelsen noted that the FCRRC has not met recently, however has an upcoming meeting. She shared that a majority of the recent work of the committee has focused on pushing for bills related to rates. She continued by noting that the Stephen Group report draft has arrived. She noted the Stephen Group was tasked to review recommendations by the FCRRC of Treatment Family Care and additional tiers to the reimbursement rate schedule. She believes that a 2% rate has been amended into LB 100 beginning in July 1, 2021 and again in July 1, 2022. Nelsen thanked Peg Harriott for the work she has done on the Committee, noting that she will be greatly missed.

DHHS Director, Stephanie Beasley noted that the work of the Stephen Group was important to determine if there were other gaps. She noted the great work of committee regarding the Specialized Rate. She continued by noting that the Stephen Group looked at DHHS and Medicaid Data regarding single-case agreements. The Stephen Group’s report will be released soon that will also include best-practice advice.

c. Strengthening Families Act Committee

Misty Frazier noted the next meeting is July 22. Frazier shared that the Committee continues to look at strategic planning. She shared that the Trafficking Subcommittee will be working to incorporate new voices due to a new grant regarding trafficking statewide.

Opfer added information regarding the work of the Committee and Subcommittees.

d. Juvenile Services Committee

Laura Opfer shared information regarding the work of the Committee and Workgroups.

Co-Chair of the RED Workgroup, A’Jamal Byndon shared information regarding the work of the Racial and Ethnic Disparity Workgroup. He shared that the workgroup hopes to receive data to deconstruct some of the issues at hand. He hopes to have a RED dashboard incorporated on the website.

Opfer shared information regarding the work of the YRTC Workgroup and Needs Assessment Workgroup.

e. Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee

Vernon Davis updated the Commission regarding the work of the Committee. He noted that the work of the Committee focused on the introduced legislation as discussed by Laura Opfer earlier in the meeting. He shared that he will be resigning as Co-Chair of the Committee but hopes to attend as time permits as a member of the public.

Misty Frazier asked about any Committees or Commissions regarding Resource Development at DHHS. Stephanie Beasley noted that Roger Robinson oversees the design and management of RD and Alger Studstill supervises the staff. Frazier shared a personal story regarding relative or kinship caregiving and the policy regarding as such. Stephanie Beasley offered to discuss the issue with Frazier.

8. FCRO Quarterly Report

Heather Wood, Research Director from the Foster Care Review Office shared a [PowerPoint](#) presentation with an overview of the FCRO Quarterly Report. She highlighted data reviewed by the FCRO from Children and Family Services and Probation, including data related to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

9. DHHS Update

Stephanie Beasley provided an update regarding the work of DHHS. She noted the anticipated Stephen Group Report and opportunity for quick recommendations based on that report. She shared info regarding the Families First Prevention Services Act of 2019. She shared that Chapin Hall has released the readiness report. FFPSA continues to be a long-term project. She appreciates the work of the Commission.

She noted that Makesha Judson has been hired as a Deputy Director of Policy and Legislative Services.

Beasley shared that Extended Foster Care is rolling out this week and there are some changes in policy that would extend foster care for those that aged out of foster care during the pandemic. That program would wrap up in September.

She noted the good work of the members in the room, and noted the most recent Kids Count data showed well-being for Nebraska youth in care increased from 10th in the nation to 7th.

10. Commission Highlights and Exit Survey

A'Jamal Byndon noted that the Executive Committee has heard responses regarding onboarding at the Commission. He asked members to share something positive they have learned since joining the Committee.

Byndon noted that Laura Opfer and Adam Anderson are developing a survey regarding feedback for the Commission Member's experience, and it will be released shortly following the meeting.

Members and staff shared positive stories regarding their experience with the Commission during their terms.

11. Public Comment

Vice Chair Temple-Plotz opened the floor for public comment. There was none.

12. New Business

There was no new business.

13. Upcoming Meeting Planning

August 17, 2021

October 19, 2021

14. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:43 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Anderson