

## Strengthening Families Act Committee Meeting

February 18, 2021

1:00 pm to 3:00 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), Jessica Rockemann, called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. and asked Adam Anderson to call roll.

### 2. Roll Call and Introductions

---

#### *Committee Members present (12):*

Deanna Brakhage (1:34 p.m.)

Ashley Brown

Heather Colton

Vernon Davis

Misty Frazier

Patricia Frost

Stephanie Gardella

Brandy Gustoff

Sara Riffel

Jessica Rockeman

Deb Shuck

Tiffany Uher

#### *Committee Members absent (5):*

Payne Ackerman

Rebecca Daugherty

Ron Giesselmann

Terri Knutson

#### *Non-Voting Members present (3)*

Bailey Perry

Jeremy Behrends

Deb VanDyke-Ries

#### *Non-Voting Members absent (1):*

Monika Gross

### A quorum was established.

#### *Guests in Attendance (12):*

Crystal Aldmeyer.....Nebraska Children and Families Foundation

Adam Anderson.....Nebraska Children's Commission

Jill Holt.....Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Coalition, INC.

Felicia Nelsen.....Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parents Association

Laura Opfer.....Nebraska Children's Commission

Susan Thomas.....Nebraska CASA Association

Lauren Ward.....Nebraska Children and Families Foundation

Lana Verbrigghe.....Children's Square USA

#### *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 Jessica Rockemann to approve the [agenda](#) as presented. Sara Riffel seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

**FOR (11):**

Ashley Brown	Patricia Frost	Jessica Rockemann
Heather Colton	Stephanie Gardella	Deb Shuck
Vernon Davis	Brandy Gustoff	Tiffany Uher
Misty Frazier	Sara Riffel	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (5):**

Payne Ackerman	Ron Giesselmann
Deanna Brakhage	Terri Knutson
Rebecca Daugherty	

**ABSTAINED (0)**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**4. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

---

It was moved by Jessica Rockemann and seconded by Stephanie Gardella to approve the minutes of the [November 9, 2020](#) meeting as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (10):**

Ashley Brown	Stephanie Gardella	Deb Shuck
Heather Colton	Brandy Gustoff	Tiffany Uher
Vernon Davis	Sara Riffel	
Patricia Frost	Jessica Rockemann	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSENT (5):**

Payne Ackerman	Ron Giesselmann
Deanna Brakhage	Terri Knutson
Rebecca Daugherty	

**ABSTAINED (1)**

Misty Frazier

**MOTION CARRIED**

**5. Co-Chair Report**

---

*a. Welcome new co-chair, Misty Frazier*

Co-chair Jessica Rockemann noted no new updates except to welcome Misty Frazier as the new Co-Chair of the Strengthening Families Act Committee. Misty Frazier introduced herself and shared a little information about herself and her history working with children and families. She shared her goals for the Committee. Co-chair Rockemann expressed excitement that Misty Frazier will be Co-chairing the Committee.

**6. Membership Vacancies**

---

Adam Anderson provided an update of vacant positions, noting that the SFA Committee is currently waiting for a nomination from the Legislature, a current or former foster parent.

## **7. Normalcy Subcommittee**

---

Co-Chair of the Normalcy Subcommittee, Felicia Nelsen provided an overview of the work of the Subcommittee. She noted that the Subcommittee recently met with some of the agencies that are required to fill out Normalcy Plans and Reports. The Subcommittee will be sending questionnaires and meeting with the agencies in April and then reviewing the reports in May. Nelsen was questioned about reports coming from the Tribes and noted that there is one report that comes in from the Tribes out of the 13 or so that are submitted.

## **8. APPLA Subcommittee**

---

Co-Chair Aldmeyer shared with the Committee that there has been no recent work of the subcommittee. However, she shared that she has received feedback from youth in the pilot program of the Youth Thrive Survey. She noted that the feedback received was very positive. Aldmeyer added that the pilot program is continuing in order to receive more feedback. She continued that the Subcommittee will continue to look at data in hopes to improve Transitional Living Plans (TLP). Lastly, she shared that the Subcommittee is working on figuring out what the barriers are, and what the Subcommittee can make recommendation on to improve.

## **9. Community & Family Voice Subcommittee**

---

Laura Opfer shared that the Subcommittee hasn't met, but met briefly in the fall to review the Youth Bill of Rights legislation. She added that this bill would bulk up the DHHS bill of rights and adds duties. Opfer noted that LB 941 from last session included probation and this year LB 357 separated out the two populations due to some factors including parental rights. She continued that there is a plan to revisit the issue regarding probation youth. Opfer offered to reach out to Senator Hunt regarding how we can support this legislation moving forward. She noted there might be opportunity for support if it passes through to the floor.

## **10. Trafficking Subcommittee**

---

Sara Riffel introduced Lauren Ward, the Assistant Vice President of Trafficking and Violence Prevention at Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. Ward shared information regarding a 3-year grant through the Office of Victims of Crime (OVC) in partnership with DHHS, for survivors of sex and labor trafficking or sexual and domestic violence who are ages 16-24. She added that Nebraska Children and Families foundation will be creating a statewide action team that will focus on how to best support trafficking survivors. She noted that year one of the grant will consist of a needs assessment and service array assessment. Ward shared that there have been a number of changes in the system within the last six months. Years two and three of the grant will consist of the same process with the tribal population. She continued by noting that part of the grant will provide for information and training for service providers and state agencies and law enforcement. Ward added that the action team will be bringing a screening tool to help providers take out the guesswork in determining human trafficking. The screen tool will be through Providing Avenues for Victim Empowerment (PAVE) with Human Trafficking Initiative (HTI) Labs. She continued that a big goal of the grant will be the creation of a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) through the Nebraska Alliance of CACs and community-based providers. She added that voice and participation is essential to this process. She encouraged members to share information about this effort. Ward shared her email address for communication is [lward@nebraskachildren.org](mailto:lward@nebraskachildren.org).

Misty Frazier asked how the SFA Committee and Trafficking Subcommittee can help and collaborate with the MDT. Ward answered that she welcomed overlapping some of work.

Sara Riffel noted that the Trafficking Subcommittee had a lot of input on this grant and the creation of this grant. She added that the Co-chair position of the Trafficking Subcommittee could shift to Lauren in the future to combine some of the efforts.

## **11. New Business**

---

Co-Chair Rockemann asked for new business. Laura Opfer shared information regarding the statutory intent of the Committee. She asked the members to think about the unique areas that can have the biggest impact on youth and families in Nebraska within the next year or two. She asked if there are areas that the Committee can focus on or shift resources to.

Stephanie Gardella noted that the Committee should keep Racial and Ethnic Disparities at the forefront of future discussions and goals, and to intentionally attempt to address the issue. She feels like this is an important issue to address. Laura Opfer noted that in the Normalcy Subcommittee there are areas to look at in that regard, which would be a small part of addressing this issue.

---

---

**10. Public Comment**

---

---

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

---

---

**12. Next Steps**

---

---

Next meeting will be on April 15, 2021, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

---

---

**11. Adjournment**

---

---

The meeting adjourned at 1:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Adam Anderson