

## Strengthening Families Act Committee Meeting

July 22, 2021

1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Lower Level Conference Room C

Nebraska State Office Building

301 Centennial Mall South

Lincoln, NE 68508

### 1. Call to Order

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Co-Chair of the Strengthening Families Act (SFA) Committee of the Nebraska Children's Commission (Commission), Jessica Rockemann, called the meeting to order at 1:10 pm and asked attendees to introduce themselves. Roll call was taken through introductions.

### 2. Roll Call and Introductions

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

Payne Ackerman

Misty Frazier

Pat Frost

Ron Giesselmann

Brandy Gustoff

#### *Committee Members absent (11):*

Deanna Brakhage (online)

Ashley Brown

Heather Colton

Rhia Connley

Rebecca Daugherty

Vernon Davis

Stephanie Gardella

Terri Knutson

Sara Riffel

Deb Shuck

Tiffany Uher

#### *Non-Voting Members present (2)*

Deb VanDyke-Ries

#### *Non-Voting Members absent (2):*

Bailey Perry

Jeremy Behrends

Monika Gross

#### **A quorum was not established.**

#### *Guests in Attendance (7):*

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

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

Bobbi Taylor.....Nebraska Children and Families Foundation

#### *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

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**\*A quorum was not present, and no action was taken. Discussion followed the draft agenda.**

### 4. Approval of Meeting Minutes

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**\*A quorum was not present, and no action was taken. Minutes will be approved at the following meeting.**

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## **5. Co-Chair Report**

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Co-Chair Rockemann noted nothing new to report but shared that the Co-chairs wanted to take time during the meeting to ground the Committee in the purpose and priorities. Co-chair Frazier discussed agenda and that the Committee will spend some time with a presentation regarding the purpose of the Committee.

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## **6. Annual Report**

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Laura Opfer provided an overview of the [annual report](#). Members discussed the recommendation regarding Transition Aged Youth (TAY) Advocates. Members also discussed the utilization of Chaffee funding to enhance this model. Deb VanDyke-Ries noted that perhaps a recommendation to assess the Chaffee funding as to whether it could be used to fund a TAY Advocate or for sustainability.

Deanna Brakhage noted that not every youth is recommended to PALS because Chaffee funds have been cut due to a drop in population. Brakhage shared that with the amount of money left over after Pandemic Foster Care, funds can be utilized to support former foster youth. Brakhage shared some of the plans proposed by other states and noted that the unused additional Chaffee funding has to be used by September 2022. Deb VanDyke-Ries shared that it would be helpful to look at all the parties' plans regarding utilizing those funds. The Co-Chairs noted that the next full meeting will have an agenda item regarding Chaffee funding review.

Co-Chair Misty Frazier noted that with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Specialist position, the workers are not allowed higher compensation. She shared that the passion is there, but it is difficult without additional funding.

Members discussed removing recommendation #4 from the annual report and noted that it is too broad. Bobbi Taylor noted that the Committee should think of also recommending DHHS also incorporate a youth satisfaction survey, with feedback from youth about their caseworkers and experience. VanDyke-Ries recommended "regular and ongoing assessment of youth knowledge of their rights."

Taylor shared information regarding [BINTI](#), a case management system which allows, among other things, information to be transferred freely to the parties involved. VanDyke-Ries shared information regarding the statutory processes of sharing court reports among legal parties.

Patricia Frost recommended involving the Family Engagement Specialist at the Department of Education.

Laura noted that members can share changes with her via email before the next meeting.

Co-Chair Frazier discussed including RED in the annual report.

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## **7. Normalcy Subcommittee**

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Laura Opfer shared some of the recent work of the Subcommittee, noting the recent review of Normalcy Reports from the providers. She noted some positive themes throughout the reports are some feedback received from the providers, specifically how the Covid affected normalcy activities in congregate care settings. Ron Giesselman noted that the facilities are getting better year by year. He noted that the common theme was that the facilities were specifically listing the normalcy activities available. He added that educating the facilities about this will go a long way. Payne Ackerman shared information regarding a report her read regarding institutional foster care. Ackerman shared a link of the report and Adam Anderson will share it with the Committee. Ackerman also noted on the annual report that items one and three are repetitive. He discussed the historical perspective of the recommendation to include the juvenile justice population.

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## **8. APPLA Subcommittee**

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Laura Opfer shared information regarding the work of the APPLA Committee noting the most recent work regarding a recommendation to DHHS to institute a Transition Aged Youth Advocate. Opfer noted that the Subcommittee is seeking approval to explore this issue further at the next meeting of the SFA Committee

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## **9. Trafficking Subcommittee**

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Laura Opfer shared information regarding the work of the Subcommittee, noting that the Subcommittee has been inactive recently due to the grant received by Children and Families Foundation to examine trafficking. Co-Chair Frazier noted recent work of the Statewide Committee and that the SFA Committee is involved in assisting with the work of that Statewide Committee, headed by Lauren Ward.

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#### **10. Legislative Update**

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Laura Opfer updated the Committee regarding recent legislation. She noted that LB 357, the Youth in Care Bill of Rights is on General File. She shared the Senators worked on some amendments.

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#### **11. Statute Review & Strategic Priorities Discussion**

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Laura Opfer shared a brief PowerPoint with an overview of the Strengthening Families Act Statute and previous strategic planning recommendations. The Co-Chairs recommended a more in-depth review session at the next meeting. Opfer noted that the PowerPoint will be shared with members following the meeting.

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#### **12. New Business**

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Laura Opfer shared information regarding the upcoming appointment process of the Children's Commission.

Co-Chair Frazier challenged members to think outside the box to make system improvements in improve racial and ethnic disparities.

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#### **13. Public Comment**

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\*A quorum was not present, therefore there was not public comment.

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#### **14. Next Steps**

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Due to the meeting not having quorum, a virtual meeting is scheduled for August 6, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.

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#### **11. Adjournment**

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The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Adam Anderson