

Alternative Response (AR) Advisory Committee

May 20, 2022
10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Lancaster County Extension Office
444 Cherrycreek Road
Lincoln, NE 68528

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Co-Chair, Monika Gross, called the meeting of the Alternative Response (AR) Advisory Committee to order at 10:09 a.m., and asked Adam Anderson to call roll.

II. Roll Call and Introductions

Committee Members present (8):

Jarren Breeling (10:50 a.m.)
Pat Carraher
Jennifer Carter

Monika Gross
Sarah Helvey
Ivy Svoboda

Susan Thomas
Mikayla Wicks

Committee Members absent (8):

Alisa Baker
Alex Hilderbrand
Bri McLarty

Michelle Oldham
Michelle Paxton
Carey Potter

Jan Reeves
Reggie Young

A quorum was NOT established.

Guests In Attendance (3):

Adam Anderson

Luke Finlaw-Draper

Laura Opfer

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

A quorum was not present, and therefore no votes were made. Discussion followed the proposed agenda.

IV. Approval of February 25, 2022 Meeting Minutes

A quorum was not present, and therefore no votes were made. Approval of February, 25, 2022 minutes will occur at the subsequent meeting.

V. Strategic Priorities Discussion

Laura Opfer began the introduction to the Strategic Priorities and Subgroups by noting that no action will be taken but the group may have a discussion to bring back at future meeting for approval. Laura Opfer and

Jennifer Carter noted caseload standards for AR workers need to be woven into the strategic priorities. Co-Chair Gross noted that non-court cases follow out of home caseload standards.

1. Expand access to legal resources for families: Members asked about legal services and the rights of participants. Opfer shared previous discussion included what rights participants have to pre-petition legal services and other things like legal notices. Sarah Helvey noted that there was speculation about whether IV-E funds are available for pre-petition funds. Members discussed this issue and also that the Committee could discuss this in a workgroup setting to draft a recommendation. Opfer added that an informational brochure is included in the discussion. Mikayla Wicks noted that the workers hand out the brochure at the first meeting with the parents and a “consent form” is signed that states the worker reviewed and answered questions regarding the brochure. Co-Chair Gross noted that the workgroup could also discuss the brochure in conjunction with legal representation and rights of the participants. Members discussed AILAs in terms of Non-court cases. Gross added that Omaha is doing a study of eviction cases in correlation to domestic violence and then will loop in research regarding abuse and neglect.
2. Promote the equitable provision of child welfare services within Alternative Response and Non-court cases: Co-chair Gross clarified that the description includes the accessibility and delivery. Jennifer Carter asked whether it means equitable between AR and TR or Non-court. Wicks noted that the prime difference is that AR cases have access to the purchase card which allows quicker access to services that might not be available in the short duration of AR cases. Members discussed that regional access to services is the most glaring issue for equitable provision of services. Members determined that “availability and accessibility” would be the optimum wording for this priority and that the committee doesn’t need to solve the problem, but rather make recommendations on how to help this issue. Opfer noted that a good next step would be to look at what services are needed most or have the longest waitlist and make recommendations for strategies to address this.
3. Examine oversight mechanisms for Alternative Response and Non-Court Cases: Opfer asked if there is enough oversight or the right kind of oversight for AR. Jennifer Carter noted that the OIG has a small level of oversight in a summary of AR cases, complaints, and critical incidents. She noted an increase of serious injury incidents on AR intakes within the last year. She asked whether it was due to the increase in numbers of AR cases. She speculated that maybe increased transparency on the data outcomes. Gross noted that FCRO has authority to review AILA’s but not openly shared with judges, GALs, etc. Laura asked if there is a gap in the way that oversight is enforced. Ivy Svoboda noted that AR cases can be reviewed by 1184 Team meetings among the 1184 core members. She added that additional funding or separate meetings for AR does not happen. Members discussed that maybe additional funding or separate meetings might be necessary due to the increase in AR cases. Members discussed the oversight mechanisms. Ivy Svoboda discussed the 1184 Team processes. Sarah Helvey noted that maybe injecting more law enforcement into oversight might not necessarily be the right path. Gross added that maybe it involves lack of data or understanding and trust in the AR program. Wicks added that more openness and communication between law enforcement and DHHS.

Create recommendations regarding workforce.

VI. Workgroup Creation Discussion

Members discussed options regarding moving forward workgroups and Opfer explained the options regarding actions to take at future meetings.

VII. DHHS Update

Mikayla Wicks provided updates from the AR program and an overview of a PowerPoint.

VIII. New Business

There was no new business

IX. Upcoming Meetings:

July 22, 2022, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

September 23, 2022, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

X. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:51 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Anderson

DRAFT