

## Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee

November 9, 2021

9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Lancaster Extension Education Center

444 Cherrycreek Road

Lincoln, NE 68528

### I. Call to Order and Welcome

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Co-Chair, Christina Lloyd, called the meeting of the Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee to order at 11:34 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Lloyd asked Adam Anderson to call roll.

### II. Roll Call and Introductions

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#### *Committee Members present (9):*

Becky Bounds

Mary Fraser Meints

Sarah Helvey

Jill Holt

Christina Lloyd

Felipe Longoria

Proxy for Bailey Perry, *Brandy*

*Gustoff*

Sara Riffel

Susan Thomas

#### *Committee members absent (4):*

Whitney Beck

Taylor Givens-Dunn

Camas Holder

Lana Verbrigghe

#### *Ex-Officio Members present (3):*

Brandy Gustoff

Sara Quiroz

Deb VanDyke-Ries

#### *Ex-Officio Members absent (4):*

Maghan Madsen

Candi Marcantel

Katie McLeese Stephenson

Jennifer Skala

#### **A quorum was established.**

#### *Guests in Attendance (4):*

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

Deanna Brakhage.....Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

Lindsay Meyer.....Supreme Court Administrative Office of Courts and Probation

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

#### *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

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

**FOR (9)**

Becky Bounds  
Mary Fraser Meints  
Sarah Helvey  
Jill Holt

Christina Lloyd  
Felipe Longoria  
Proxy for Bailey Perry, *Brandy Gustoff*

Sara Riffel  
Susan Thomas

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**ABSENT (4):**

Whitney Beck  
Taylor Givens-Dunn

Camas Holder  
Lana Verbrigghe

**MOTION CARRIED**

**IV. Approval of Minutes**

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It was moved by Sarah Helvey to approve the July 1, 2021 minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Proxy for Bailey Perry, Brandy Gustoff. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (9)**

Becky Bounds  
Mary Fraser Meints  
Sarah Helvey  
Jill Holt

Christina Lloyd  
Felipe Longoria  
Proxy for Bailey Perry, *Brandy Gustoff*

Sara Riffel  
Susan Thomas

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAINED (0):**

**ABSENT (4):**

Whitney Beck  
Taylor Givens-Dunn

Camas Holder  
Lana Verbrigghe

**MOTION CARRIED**

**V. Annual Report**

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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**

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Co-chair Christina Lloyd noted that there was nothing new to report out as the majority of discussion will be focused later in the agenda.

### **VII. Membership Update**

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Adam Anderson discussed vacancies on the Committee. He noted vacancies in the Tribal, and Young Adult with Current or Previous Foster Care Experience roles. Members discussed stipends for youth participants. Sara Riffel noted that Connected Youth Initiative will post it on the Connected Youth website and that they can pay a stipend for youth participants of \$30 per hour, childcare, and mileage. Sarah Helvey noted that she will have Applesseed post the youth vacancies on the Applesseed Facebook page.

### **VIII. Legislative Update**

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Laura Opfer updated regarding the luncheon hosted by Applesseed in October to educate Senators regarding LB 202, a bill by Senator Pansing Brooks that would expand b2i eligibility to a select group of probation youth. Helvey noted that most of the Senators are now gone that were originally around when LB 216 was introduced and the beginning of b2i. Judge Gendler was a great advocate for the use of funds paid directly to probation youth. Helvey noted a particularly impactful statement by a youth about her use of the stipend to get through college and positive things about her Independence Coordinator. Opfer and Helvey thought it would be a good idea to have the b2i Committee recognize the DHHS b2i Independence Coordinators. Judge Gendler and Senator Pansing Brooks were very articulate in noting that if a 3A case closes and the probation case continues, the youth is no longer eligible for b2i, and that that population of youth are the same as youth that are solely involved in the child welfare system.

Deanna Brakhage shared that CFS Director Beasley is looking to share videos from three or four young adults from b2i about their experience with the program. Brakhage noted that they are currently looking for a contractor to produce the videos.

Mary Fraser Meints shared LR 198 had a hearing recently and it focuses on Social Security being collected by the state instead of going to youth. Fraser Meints noted support for this resolution and discussed her experience of collecting Social Security for foster youth, keeping it in an account and returning it to them upon exiting foster care. Members discussed how this process currently plays out in the state and noted that some youth and their lawyers were not aware of the process or disagreed with the testimony provided by the state contractor, Maximus, about how the process works. Members discussed continuing to monitor this situation and perhaps supporting legislation if it is introduced. Members discussed the Maryland Model of SSI accounting. Laura Opfer noted that it may fall under SFA.

Sarah Helvey shared that Senator Vargas has a bill pending from last session to extend b2i eligibility to Special Immigration Juvenile Status. She noted that there were technical questions from DHHS regarding the Medicaid aspects of the bill.

### **IX. Child Trends Evaluation Review and Planning**

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Laura Opfer shared a PowerPoint with information regarding the Child Trends Evaluation. Opfer reminded the Committee of the specific recommendations from the evaluation. Members discussed the recommendations.

Members discussed the ways in which other states were utilizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds within this population. Members also discussed moving forward a recommendation regarding a pilot to look at utilizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to extend assistance past 2022, and voting on such at the next meeting.

Christina Lloyd suggested reviewing workgroup membership and reaching out to members and determine status.

Deb VanDyke-Reis noted that ARPA funds utilization be looked at by the Finance and Policy Workgroup. Sarah Helvey noted that it would need to be a quick turnaround for looking at ARPA funds, adding that Senators looking at the funds will most likely be looking at the funds in December. Sara Riffel noted that she is willing to lead a workgroup to look at the ARPA recommendations. Members noted creating an ad-hoc Sustainability Workgroup, with youth members Anderson and Opfer will create a Google Spreadsheet for membership.

## **X. Workgroup Updates**

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Co-Chair Lloyd noted that conversation regarding workgroups and upcoming workgroup planning occurred during the previous agenda item.

## **XI. DHHS Update**

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Deanna Brakhage shared a handout with CQI data of b2i participants. Members discussed the data contained in the handouts.

Brakhage shared that there is a pilot program in Thurston County regrading holding court on the reservations for Tribal Wards. Jill Holt noted that there are ongoing conversations happening with the Tribes regarding this pilot.

Brakhage also shared data and updates regarding the Consolidated Appropriation Act that extended b2i eligibility through September 2021. Rara Riffel also shared updates regarding this extension. Riffel noted that no youth left b2i since March 2020, which is a statistically significant data for a pilot to extend b2i with ARPA funding.

## **XII. Public Comment**

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Co-Chair Lloyd welcomed public comment. There was no public comment.

## **XIII. New Business**

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Mary Fraser Meints noted that she will send out the links to all three CAFCON webinars.

Sara Riffel shared that CYI has created a new Connected Youth Website, that is youth focused and designed, that talks about all of the same stuff talked about at the meeting. She will send out the link, but noted the link is Neconnectedyouth.org.

## **XIV. Upcoming Meeting Planning**

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- February 3, 2022
- May 5, 2022
- August 11, 2022
- November 17, 2022

## **XV. Adjourn**

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The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Adam Anderson