

Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee

February 3, 2022

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Zoom

And

Foster Care Review Office, Conference Room

1225 L Street, Suite 401

Lincoln, NE 68508

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Co-Chair, Christina Lloyd, called the meeting of the Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee to order at 10:02 a.m., and asked Adam Anderson to call roll

II. Roll Call and Introductions

Committee Members present (7):

Sarah Helvey

Felipe Longoria

Susan Thomas

Jill Holt

Bailey Perry

Christina Lloyd

Sara Riffel

Committee Members absent (3):

Douglas Beck

Whitney Beck

Michaela Hirschman

Ex-Officio Members present (3):

Maghan Madsen

Proxy for Lindsay Meyer, Julie Smith

Deb VanDyke-Ries

Ex-Officio Members absent (4):

Brandy Gustoff

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

Laura Opfer.....Nebraska Children’s Commission

Shayne Schiermeister.....Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

Kitty Washburn.....Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Coalition

Terrence Williams.....Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

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 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

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

FOR (7):

Sarah Helvey
Jill Holt
Christina Lloyd

Felipe Longoria
Bailey Perry
Sara Riffel

Susan Thomas

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (3):

Douglas Beck
Whitney Beck
Michaela Hirschman

MOTION CARRIED

IV. Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Susan Thomas to approve the November 9, 2021 minutes with corrections as discussed. The motion was seconded by Sara Riffel. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (7):

Sarah Helvey
Jill Holt
Christina Lloyd

Felipe Longoria
Bailey Perry
Sara Riffel

Susan Thomas

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (3):

Douglas Beck
Whitney Beck
Michaela Hirschman

MOTION CARRIED

V. Co-Chair Report

Co-Chair Lloyd shared that the Co-Chair report will be covered in items later in the agenda.

VI. Membership Update

Adam Anderson discussed membership openings, noting that Mary Fraser Meints recently resigned from the Committee. He shared that Douglas Beck has been appointed to the Committee, but the Committee is searching for representatives from independent living services agencies, child welfare services agencies, child welfare advocacy organizations, and federally recognized Indian Tribe residing in Nebraska. Members discussed options for appointment recommendations.

VII. Legislative Update

Laura Opfer updated the committee on the past luncheon regarding LB 202. Sarah Helvey noted that Senator Arch has concerns about the use of the stipend. Opfer noted the bill is still in Committee with no word yet from Senator Pansing Brooks regarding moving forward.

Opfer shared information regarding LB 932, the bill regarding Social Security processing. The Committee had many special technical requirements from this bill. Opfer noted several consent concerns and also noted that the Department is keeping funds to reimburse for their care. She shared that youth as young as 12 are signing consent forms. Sarah Helvey shared that LB 932 will require DHHS to screen all children for all Social Security benefits eligibility, provide notice to child and guardians ad litem if DHHS is intercepting payments, and save a portion of the payment in a particular type of account that won't affect SSI eligibility once a youth turns 14. Sarah Helvey shared information regarding the history and why this bill is important.

Opfer discussed LB 1113, which is a bill from Senator McKinney regarding a pilot program cash payments using ARPA funds to B2i participants. Helvey noted that this is a pilot program based on a California youth with foster care experience. She shared that it is open to youth that age out of B2i to receive \$1000 per month unconditional payment until 2026. This true pilot would then be studied to measure results.

Opfer shared that Senator Ben Hansen introduced LB 1254 that would use ARPA funds on the Dana Campus to aid youth that have aged out of foster care. Sara Riffel noted that the spirit behind the bill is a fund injection to aid in the maintenance in the Blair community as Angels Share has several direct pathways towards employment to former foster youth.

Deb VanDyke-Ries shared information in the chat regarding an upcoming legislative preview webinar: <https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/programs-services/court-improvement-project/events/2022-cip-webinar-legislative-preview>

Sara Riffel shared that "Legislative Days" is upcoming, where 60 young people come together to provide support for legislation. On Monday, February 7 there is a virtual luncheon. Deb VanDyke-Ries noted that she had a discussion regarding how to involve youth outside the legislative session. Riffel shared that there is a summer listening session that has been happening over the last few years. She noted that discussions have been had to increase the number of sessions and invite legislators or other policymakers among other ideas.

Laura shared the Bill Tracker in the chat: <https://childrens.nebraska.gov/News/BillsOfInterest.html>.

VIII. Workgroup Updates

a. Sustainability Workgroup

Sara Riffel noted that since the last meeting the Ad-hoc Sustainability group had two meetings. Youth and members of the Workgroup came to four recommendations: scale down payments, explore personalized stipend distribution, increase financial literacy prior to entry and prior to exit of B2i, explore a pilot regarding direct cash payments. She shared that similar direct cash payments pilot

have shown a lot of positive outcomes. Riffel shared that this workgroup recommends another ad-hoc workgroup regarding preparing youth for entrance into B2i. Sara Riffel will share the California research. Members discussed the recommendations from the workgroup.

b. Data & Evaluation Workgroup

Heather Wood shared that this Workgroup has reconvened and reviewed its history and direction from the larger Committee. Wood noted that the workgroup thought about prioritizing and meeting monthly. Members were asked to submit recommendations on priorities to Adam Anderson in advance of the February 10, 2022 meeting. Wood continued by sharing that the workgroup plans to dive into recommendations over the next few months. Laura Opfer shared that the group discussed coming to a consensus regarding why the workgroup needs to evaluate the B2i program, whether it be to advocate for expansion, to evaluate success, etc. Sara Riffel noted that it is important to think about youth time in B2i as part of a young adult continuum for evaluation, and that due to the public/private partnership there is opportunity for measuring outcomes long term.

IX. DHHS Update

Shayne Schiermeister shared that Lana Verbrigghe is the new Service Area Administrator in the ESA. He noted that there are 200 in the program currently. He shared caseloads range from 13 to 26. There are three tribal youth enrolled and two more enrolling this week. Schiermeister shared that the ESA transition has not affected the B2i program yet, but more information will be coming in the upcoming months. Sarah Helvey asked about enrollment drop in participation. Deanna Brakhage noted that the legislation regarding Developmental Disability eligible youth and out of state being disqualified from B2i has affected enrollment. Terrence Williams noted that less eligible young adults are aging out of the child welfare system. Trenton Waite also added that recently closures from the end of Pandemic Foster Care has lowered the number.

X. Public Comment

Mary Fraser Meints shared that she feels there should be regular data updates from the Data and Evaluation Workgroup at upcoming meetings. Members discussed options for data review.

XI. New Business

There was no new business.

XII. Upcoming Meetings:

- a. May 5, 2022
- b. August 11, 2022
- c. November 17, 2022

XIII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:03 p.m.