



NEBRASKA CHILDREN'S COMMISSION

2021 New Member Orientation Packet

Nebraska Children's Commission

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Nebraska Children's Commission

New Member Orientation Packet

Welcome

Welcome to the Nebraska Children's Commission (Commission) and thank you for being willing to share your time and expertise! Included in this packet is information regarding the Commission and its subgroups. The Nebraska Children's Commission is dedicated to working collaboratively with the three branches of government along with state, local, community, public and private stakeholders to enhance practices and programs to improve the safety and well-being of children and families in Nebraska.

Enclosed you will find several documents that outline the purpose and history of the Commission and your responsibilities as a member. Should you have any questions concerning the Commission or related projects, staff is available to assist you. Below is the contact information for Commission staff.

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Commission History

[Legislative Resolution 37](#) called for the Health and Human Services Committee to “review, investigate and assess the effect of the child welfare reform initiative implemented by the Department of Health and Human Services.” This [investigation](#) found several areas that needed attention.

In 2012, the Nebraska Children’s Commission was created with the passing of [LB821](#). Responsibilities assigned to the Commission included the following:

- Create a statewide strategic plan for reform of the child welfare system programs and services,
- Review the operations of DHHS regarding child welfare programs and services.
- Recommend, either by the establishment of a new division within DHHS or establishment of a new state agency, options for attaining the intent of this act.
- Provide a permanent forum for collaboration among state, local, community, public and private stakeholders in child welfare programs and services.

Over the years, additional tasks have been assigned and membership representation has increased. Most significantly, the Commission’s scope has expanded to include both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. There have also been additional subgroups brought under the umbrella of the Commission. These groups are outlined in the [Commission Subgroup Structure](#) section of this packet.

The original sunset date of the Nebraska Children’s Commission was June 30, 2014. The date was extended in 2013, again in 2016 by [LB746](#) until June 30, 2019, and the sunset provision was removed in 2019 by LB600.

Information on relevant Legislation is available at <http://childrens.nebraska.gov/Legislative.html>.

Commission Subgroup Structure

The Commission currently has 20 different subgroups that are active. Below are all of the groups with outlined term limits either in statute or the Governance and Organizational Structure document.

- Nebraska Children’s Commission.....06/30/2023 (end of fiscal biennium)
- Bridge to Independence (B2I) Advisory Committee.....2 year terms
- Juvenile Services Committee (JSC).....2 year terms
- Alternative Response (AR) Advisory Committee.....2 year terms
- Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee (FCRRC).....4 year terms
- Strengthening Families Act (SFA) Committee.....2 year terms

The Commission created subgroups to work on specific issues. These groups have fluid membership and do not have term limits. Commission workgroups can be archived and called upon at a later date if needed.

Past examples of these groups include :

- Workforce Workgroup
- Legal Parties Taskforce
- Structure Taskforce

Many of these groups have broken down their assigned tasks into additional subgroups to allow for in depth discussion and research. Additional information on the work of these groups can be found at: <http://www.childrens.nebraska.gov/ActiveSubgroups.html>. An organizational chart of the Commission and subgroups can be found at: <https://childrens.nebraska.gov/about.html>. If you are interested in any of the Commission’s second or third tier subgroups please contact Commission Staff at NECC.Contact@nebraska.gov.

Meeting Schedules

Commission Meetings

The Commission typically meets on quarterly on Tuesday of the designated month. Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, scheduling has varied in accordance with local directed health measures as well as the Governor’s executive orders. The Commission may add additional meetings during the year should a need arise. Meetings

commonly occur in Lincoln, but can branch out into the greater Nebraska area. New locations that offer an educational opportunity for the Commission are welcome for suggestion. Members are expected to attend all meetings of the Commission.

Meeting materials are usually emailed to members and posted in advance on the Commission website at: <http://childrens.nebraska.gov/Meetings/CurrentMeetingDocs.html>.

Second Tier Subgroup Meetings

Second tier subgroups meet at the frequency necessitated by the action of the Committee. This has typically resulted in quarterly meetings. Meetings for these groups are often scheduled through the use of an online attendance survey to verify that a majority of members, or quorum, can attend a prospective meeting date.

Third Tier Subgroup Meetings

Third tier subgroups have no annual meeting requirements, and can vary in frequency depending on the assigned tasks and timelines of the group. Third tier subgroup meetings are commonly scheduled through an online attendance survey.

Commission and Subgroup Membership

Member Responsibilities

As a member of the Nebraska Children's Commission and/or its subgroups, you play an important role in ensuring that it holds true to its vision statement:

TO IMPROVE THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF ALL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN NEBRASKA.

The Commission will approve a set of bylaws which establish the policies and procedures of the Commission and will assist in clarifying the expectations of its members. This document is referred to as the "Governance and Organizational Structure" memo. It has been revised in 2014, 2017 and most recently in 2019.

Expense Reimbursement

Members appointed to the Commission and the statutory Committees are entitled to reimbursement of the travel costs to attend meetings. Lodging may also be provided for members traveling large distances to attend meetings. Lodging is arranged for members by staff. Copies of the expense reimbursement explanation and form are available on the Commission website at: <http://www.childrens.nebraska.gov/MemberResources.html>. Forms should be completed and submitted with a mapquest or google map verifying the miles traveled, supporting receipts, and agendas for meetings attended. Completed form should be submitted to the Commission's Administrative Assistant for processing.

Membership Composition

Commission Membership

The Nebraska Children's Commission has 15 voting members and 11 Ex-Officio members as defined in [Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-4202](#).

Commission voting members are appointed by the Governor for a two year term. If applicable, information about the reapplication process will be provided to members.

Second Tier Committee Membership

Membership appointments of second tier subgroup can vary depending on statute and/or at Commission discretion. Committees with specific membership positions outlined include the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee ([Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-4513](#)), the Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee ([Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-4216](#)), and the Strengthening Families Act Committee ([Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-4218](#)).

The Juvenile Services and Psychotropic Medication Committees are appointed at the discretion of the Commission. The remaining second tier subgroups consist of workgroups or taskforces created by the Commission. These groups have open membership to any interested parties. All subgroups are created with the goal of a
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balanced membership. As such, the Chairpersons of the second tier subgroups and Executive Committee of the Commission may implement membership guidelines to ensure subgroups have adequate representation.

Third Tier Subgroup Membership

Third tier subgroups consist of subcommittees, taskforces, and workgroups. These groups have open membership to any interested parties. All subgroups are created with the goal of a balanced membership. As such, the Chairpersons of the third tier subgroups and Executive Committee of the Commission may implement membership guidelines to ensure subgroups have adequate representation. No workgroup, subcommittee or task force may consist of a quorum of the parent body's voting membership. Or in other words, no more than half of the voting members of a Committee may serve on a workgroup.

Strategic Priorities

[LB600](#) (2019) requires the Nebraska Children's Commission to determine three to five strategic child welfare priorities for research or policy development for each biennium. In determining the strategic child welfare priorities, the commission must take into consideration the findings and recommendations of the annual reports of the Foster Care Review Office and Office of Inspector General for Child Welfare, and the federal Child and Family Services Review. (Nebr. Rev. Stat. [§43-4204](#)).

Strategic Priorities identified in 2019:

1. Prevention Continuum including Alternative Response, Non-Court and Voluntary cases and the Family First Prevention Services Act
2. Placement Stability
3. Racial & Ethnic Disparities
4. Truancy & Status Offense Filings
5. Statutory Committees

Additionally, NCC is committed to continuing to monitor and request updates regarding the Eastern Service Area Contract Transition as well as the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers.

Updated strategic priorities will be developed for 2021-2023 after new membership is established in July 2021.

Statutory Reports

In 2015, [LB87](#) created the requirement for the Commission, B2i Advisory Committee, JSC, and SFA Committees to submit an annual report of activities. [LB732](#) (2018) moved the reporting dates from December to September 1st in an effort to ensure that members of the legislature had timely access to recommendations that may require legislative changes. All other second and third tier subgroups work to submit updates and recommendations for inclusion in the Commission and/or respective Committee annual report.

Reports can be found on the [Commission website](#).

Workflow

Operations Tools

There are a number of tools created by Commission staff to assist the subgroups in their work. Tools include a charter template, a template for proposing recommendations to the Commission, a matrix to assist in determining if projects are within the scope of the Commission, and a standard form for use in providing updates of subgroup activities to the Commission.

Recommendation and Report Approval Process

All formal recommendations and reports must receive Commission approval. As mentioned under the Statutory Reports section, reports or updates are completed annually by all Commission subgroups.

All subgroups need to form their recommendations and timelines with the Commission schedule in mind. Most statutory Committees will meet 2-6 weeks prior to the August Commission meeting. This means that groups should plan to have any final work products ready for review around June or July of each year.

Commission Website

The Commission has a website that is available at www.childrens.nebraska.gov. This website will prove to be a valuable resource for members. The website is host to many resources including current meeting materials, past meeting materials, a calendar of meeting activities, summaries and member listings for the Commission and each subgroup, past publications and reports, and membership openings.

The website is constantly being updated, and suggestions for edits are welcome.

Financing Primer

In 2015 the Commission released the Nebraska Child Welfare Financing Primer as an educational document on the sources and purposes of expenditures in Nebraska's child welfare system. The Primer provides a comprehensive picture of how the state uses federal and state funds to support children and families involved in the child welfare system. Child welfare funding is complex, and the primer is designed to explain the major sources of funding available, the extent to which Nebraska leverages those funding streams, and how federal and state dollars work together to achieve core child welfare outcomes. The primer was written and researched by ChildFocus, Inc., in collaboration with an advisory board of Nebraska child welfare experts. It was funded through the generous support of the Sherwood Foundation.

An executive summary of the findings is included in this packet as. A copy of the full primer can be found at: <http://www.childrens.nebraska.gov/publications.html>.

Blueprint Report

The Nebraska Child Welfare Blueprint Report is another educational document created by ChildFocus Inc. that was released by the Commission. The 2017 document outlines the progress of Nebraska relating to child welfare issues as well as the necessary areas for continued attention. The ideas contained in the report reflect an overarching consensus in Nebraska and nationally that child welfare agencies operate in a larger system that depends on partnerships across multiple state agencies, private providers, legal systems, and community organizations.

An executive summary of the findings is included in this packet as. A copy of the full primer can be found at: <http://www.childrens.nebraska.gov/publications.html>.