

# Nebraska Children's Commission Meeting

August 23, 2022

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Lincoln Community Foundation

215 Centennial Mall South

Lincoln, NE 68508

## 1. Call to Order

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Chair Misty Flowers welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. She asked Adam Anderson to call roll and attendees to introduce themselves.

## 2. Introductions and Roll Call

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### *Commission Members Present (11)*

Jarren Breeling (10:28 a.m.)

Kathy Dinkel

Misty Flowers

Ron Giesselmann

Richard Hasty

Sara Hoyle

Melissa Nance

Felicia Nelsen

Lana Temple-Plotz (10:20)

Susan Thomas

LaShawn Young

### *Commission Members Absent (4)*

A'Jamal Byndon

Vernon Davis

Rachel Folds

Terri Knutson

### *Commission Ex-Officio Members Present (9)*

Stephanie Beasley

*Proxy for* Jeanne Brandner,

*Amoreena Brady*

Jennifer Carter

*Proxy for* Senator Jen Day, *Sam*

*Huppert*

*Proxy for* Senator Myron Dorn,

*Janet Anderson*

Monica Gross

Judge Roger Heideman

LaDonna Jones-Dunlap (10:15

a.m.)

*Proxy for* Deb VanDyke-Ries,

*MaryPat Coe*

### *Commission Ex-Officio Members Absent (2)*

Sheri Dawson

Senator Patty Pansing Brooks

**Roll call was taken and a quorum was established.**

### *Guests in Attendance (3)*

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

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

Ivy Svoboda.....Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers

#### *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 Meetings Calendar and Nebraska Children's Commission websites 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 Children's Commission Website.

### 3. Approval of the Agenda

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It was moved by **Kathy Dinkel** and seconded by **Susan Thomas** to approve the agenda as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (9):**

Kathy Dinkel	Richard Hasty	Felicia Nelsen
Misty Flowers	Sara Hoyle	Susan Thomas
Ron Giesselmann	Melissa Nance	LaShawn Young

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAIN (0):**

**ABSENT (6):**

Jarren Breeling	Vernon Davis	Terri Knutson
A’Jamal Byndon	Rachel Folds	Lana Temple-Plotz

**MOTION CARRIED**

*Note that the order of items in the minutes will be reflective of the original agenda*

### 4. Approval of the Consent Agenda

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- a. [April 19, 2022 Meeting Minutes](#)
- b. [Member Nomination Report](#)

It was moved by **Richard Hasty** and seconded by **Kathy Dinkel** to approve the **Consent Agenda** items. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (9):**

Kathy Dinkel	Richard Hasty	Felicia Nelsen
Misty Flowers	Sara Hoyle	Susan Thomas
Ron Giesselmann	Melissa Nance	LaShawn Young

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAIN (0):**

**ABSENT (6):**

Jarren Breeling	Vernon Davis	Terri Knutson
A’Jamal Byndon	Rachel Folds	Lana Temple-Plotz

**MOTION CARRIED**

### 5. Executive Committee Update

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Vice Chair, Melissa Nance provided an update of the recent work of the Executive Committee. She noted that the Executive Committee met, discussed roles and responsibilities, and nominated Misty Flowers as Chair of the Children’s Commission and Melissa Nance as the Vice Chair.

Laura Opfer reminded the Commission that at the prior meeting the Commission had nominated and voted for members of the Executive Committee.

It was moved by Sara Hoyle and seconded by Susan Thomas to approve Misty Flowers as Chair and Melissa Nance as Vice Chair of the Nebraska Children's Commission. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (9):**

Kathy Dinkel  
Misty Flowers  
Ron Giesselmann

Richard Hasty  
Sara Hoyle  
Melissa Nance

Felicia Nelsen  
Susan Thomas  
LaShawn Young

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAIN (0):**

**ABSENT (6):**

Jarren Breeling  
A'Jamal Byndon

Vernon Davis  
Rachel Folds

Terri Knutson  
Lana Temple-Plotz

**MOTION CARRIED**

**6. Strategic Priorities**

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Vice Chair Melissa Nance introduced the topic and directed attention to the [handout](#) containing the top survey choices for strategic priorities. Laura Opfer discussed the process for selecting priorities and assigning them to the committees of the Commission. Chair Flowers discussed the priorities and shared additional information. She questioned what the Commission can do differently in terms of strategic priorities.

Members discussed top priorities and follow-up actions. Members discussed incorporating priorities such as Family Voice and R/ED into all work and recommendations done by the Commission and committees. Jennifer Carter also added that an overall shift towards prevention has helped direct the conversation recently. Carter noted that effects of the pandemic have added to families struggling, and coming out of the pandemic is a vulnerable time for them. Members continued discussion, focusing on a great need for placement solutions for youth with high levels of need, which also affects placement stability.

Laura Opfer shared information regarding foster family recruitment at the federal level. She focused the conversation on specific action steps for the Commission to recommend.

Kathy Dinkel discussed visitation observation services. She noted that visitation sometimes is not interaction, and parental coaching during visitation may be a better solution. Members discussed visitation workers are not trained or paid to offer coaching services.

Chair Flowers discussed service access and funding for tribes is lacking. She added that at recent tribal coalition meetings, members have discussed these difficulties. She continued by noting that culturally appropriate services are also lacking, specifically with the tribes.

Vice Chair Nance shared thoughts regarding Family Voice, and how family involvement is important to the success of the services.

Laura Opfer shared that CWLA has released additional information regarding workload that has changed. CWLA noted that workload can not simply be a number, and they have noted that many factors go into the makeup of a caseload.

Director Beasley discussed placement solutions and how that plays into placement stability and service array. She noted a need for more relative and kinship placements. Vice Chair Nance added that supporting families also adds into the effectiveness of services provided by relative and kinship placements.

Members discussed assigning priorities to the committees of the Commission. Laura Opfer noted that once these priorities are decided, the next Commission meeting will assign the committees and decide on action steps or whether to create new workgroups.

**It was moved by Susan Thomas and seconded by Lana Temple-Plotz to adopt Prevention Continuum, Placement Stability and Solutions, and Service Array as Strategic Priorities, and Racial and Ethnic Disparities and Youth and Family Voice as Core Values.** There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (11):**

Jarren Breeling  
Kathy Dinkel  
Misty Flowers  
Ron Giesselmann

Richard Hasty  
Sara Hoyle  
Melissa Nance  
Felicia Nelsen

Lana Temple-Plotz  
Susan Thomas  
LaShawn Young

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAIN (0):**

**ABSENT (4):**

A'Jamal Byndon  
Vernon Davis

Rachel Folds  
Terri Knutson

**MOTION CARRIED**

**7. DHHS Update**

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Children and Family Services Director Beasley shared information regarding LB 1173. She noted the request for proposal(RFP) for analysis will be released later this week. She discussed specifics regarding the RFP She added information regarding the citizen review panel and how it is another opportunity for a foundation for change.

Beasley shared that the tiered foster care recommendations have been submitted and is moving forward for contracts to be signed in October 2022.

Beasley noted that Jarren Breeling has been hired by DHHS as an advocate for family voice. Breeling and others will review policy recommendations. Breeling noted that she has seen positive moves towards family voice inclusion.

Beasley noted that the Eastern Service Area contract has been closed out with Saint Francis Ministries. She noted that most workers transitioned over, but the department has hired 100 CFS Specialists. She shared that there is still work to finalize but improvements have been already been made since DHHS has taken back case management.

**8. Probation Update**

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Amoreena Brady from the Administrative Office of Courts and Probation shared a handout regarding the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement: Nebraska Initiative. Brady noted that the grant is for three years, and the pandemic has slowed the work of the initiative, however an extension request will be made. She shared additional information from the handout regarding the work towards the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement.

Brady answered question regarding anonymous feedback. She noted that families can find a QR code in the office for feedback. She shared that families provided input on a brochure about what to expect when coming into probation. Brady also shared information regarding outreach to stakeholders in the Juvenile Justice System

**9. Committee Update & Chair Vacancies**

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Laura Opfer shared that the SFA is needing two Co-Chairs. She encouraged members to join if interested. She added that Brandy Gustoff was voted as a Co-Chair of the B2i Committee, but the B2i Committee is lacking one Co-Chair.

**Alternative Response Committee:** AR Co-Chair Monika Gross noted that the AR Committee recently met in July, and at that meeting voted on strategic priorities that include: expanding access to legal resources for families, promote the equitable provision of child welfare services within AR and Non-Court Cases, examine oversight mechanisms for AR and Non-Court cases, and promote the stabilization of the child welfare workforce. She noted that the Committee voted to form a workforce workgroup.

**Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee:** Laura Opfer noted the lack of a Co-Chair. She noted that the recommendations will be discussed later in the meeting. She shared that the recent work of the Committee has focused on the 2019 evaluation done by Child Trends, and the Committee has been looking at the entry into and exit out of B2i. She added that these transition periods are particularly vulnerable times for youth.

**Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee:** Co-Chair Felicia Nelsen noted that Michelle Moline has agreed to Co-Chair the FCRRC. Nelsen shared that the next meeting of the Committee will be upcoming on October 5<sup>th</sup>, at which time the Committee will be examining the status of the additional tiers of the Nebraska Caregivers Responsibility Tool.

**Juvenile Services Committee:** Laura Opfer noted that the recommendations will be reviewed later in the meeting. She noted that Julie Smith has recently restarted the work of the Access to Services Workgroup, which will examine statewide access to services for juvenile justice and child welfare.

**Strengthening Families Act Committee:** SFA Co-Chair Misty Flowers noted her stepping down from the Co-Chair position. Flowers hoped that the Committee and Commission can work towards compensation for youth and families with lived experience. She noted the interest from Payne Ackerman in the Co-Chair position. Flowers noted the APPLA Subcommittee has made recommendations regarding Independent Living Champions, and DHHS has made movement on these positions that specialize in Transition Aged Youth. Co-Chair Flowers noted that NCCFF has received a grant to study human trafficking, and she noted that the SFA Committee and Commission are there to help support the work of NCCFF.

## 10. Annual Reports

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Laura Opfer directed the Commission's attention to a [PowerPoint](#) and provided highlights of each report from the Bridge to Independence Committee, Juvenile Services Committee, Strengthening Families Act Committee, and Children's Commission Annual Reports. Members discussed specific recommendations contained within the reports. Opfer noted the AR Committee.

**It was moved by Lana Temple-Plotz and seconded by Felicia Nelsen to approve the annual reports from the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee, Juvenile Services Committee, Strengthening Families Act Committee, and Nebraska Children's Commission, with changes as discussed and grammatical corrections.**

There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

**FOR (11):**

Jarren Breeling	Richard Hasty	Lana Temple-Plotz
Kathy Dinkel	Sara Hoyle	Susan Thomas
Misty Flowers	Melissa Nance	LaShawn Young
Ron Giesselmann	Felicia Nelsen	

**AGAINST (0):**

**ABSTAIN (0):**

**ABSENT (4):**

A'Jamal Byndon	Rachel Folds
Vernon Davis	Terri Knutson

**MOTION CARRIED**

**11. Public Comment**

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Chair Flowers opened the floor for public comment. There was none.

**12. New Business**

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Laura Opfer shared information regarding her employment change. Chair Flowers explained the process for posting and hiring a new Policy Analyst.

**13. Upcoming Meeting Planning**

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November 1, 2022

**14. Adjourn**

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The meeting adjourned at 1:08 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Adam Anderson

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