

NEBRASKA CHILDREN'S COMMISSION STRATEGIC PLAN



The Nebraska Children's Commission is a high-level leadership body created by the Nebraska Legislature and has created this statewide strategic plan pursuant to and in compliance with Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-4202.

Nebraska Children's Commission History

The Nebraska Children's Commission ["Commission"] was created by the Nebraska Legislature as a high-level leadership body to create a statewide strategic plan for reform of child welfare and juvenile justice programs and services and provide a permanent forum for collaboration among state, local, community, public, and private stakeholders in child welfare and juvenile justice programs and services. The Legislature extended the Commission's sunset date in 2013, and again in 2016 with LB746, signed into law by Governor Pete Ricketts. In 2019, legislation was passed to eliminate the sunset date on the Commission. The collective institutional and subject matter knowledge of the Commission membership is critical to improve the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, maximize and efficiently utilize funding, and improve the safety and well-being of all children and families in Nebraska.

Commission Strategic Planning

The Commission understands that if system improvement is to be effective and lasting it must happen at all levels including the system, program and practice levels. The three branches of government and the various system stakeholders must be dedicated to serving and supporting children and families with effective programs. At the practice level, all front-line case managers and their supervisors must be prepared and supported in their efforts of serving children and families differently. Furthermore, effective leadership is essential in successful child welfare and juvenile justice systems. There is a considerable amount of decision makers across Nebraska interested in addressing the challenges within the current child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and the Commission, as a high-level leadership body with representation from all three branches of government and private stakeholders, is in a unique position to support these positive efforts. Agents of change in Nebraska share optimism and the common belief that children and families deserve safety and well-being.

2023-2024 Nebraska Children’s Commission
Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Strategic Plan

Mission:

The Nebraska Children’s Commission works as a high-level leadership body with membership from the legislative, executive, and judicial branches along with system stakeholders to improve the safety and well-being of all children and families in Nebraska.

Values:

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

- The Commission is an inclusive body that respects all religions, places of origin, ethnicities, and identities by ensuring all people have a voice in the Commission’s work. The Commission values strong representation of diverse backgrounds and encourages participation however possible, including virtually in Commission, committee, and workgroup meetings.
- It is the responsibility of all Commission members to examine and challenge their implicit and explicit bias. The Commission acknowledges the negative impact these biases has had on individuals and will work collectively to solve problems within the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Family Voice:

- Children, youth, and their families are experts on their own experiences, and the Commission will provide the opportunity for active participation in all meetings conducted by the Commission, related committees, and workgroups. When in-person participation is not possible for children, youth, and their families that have expressed a desire to actively participate, they will be given the opportunity to participate virtually.
- The Commission identifies individuals with lived experience may be apprehensive to engage with the Commission due to past system engagement. The Commission members have an obligation to create a collaborative environment for these children, youth, and families that will promote meaningful dialogue that will influence change within child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

2023-2024 Nebraska Children’s Commission
 Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Strategic Plan

| Strategic Priorities: | | |
|---|---|--|
| Placement Stability & Solutions | Service Array | Prevention Continuum |
| <p>1. Provide recommendations to increase the level of support available to relative and kinship placements. <i>In recent years, the Foster Care Rate Review committee has made recommendations to the NCR levels and rates associated with them to assist with placement stability and continues to work with DHHS in finding appropriate rates for youth with all levels of need. Foster Care Placing agencies have begun working on new recruitment strategies to increase stability and find solutions regarding foster families available to serve the needs. Finally, the system has continued to actively search for kinship and relative supports for families to provide the best outcomes.</i></p> | <p>2. Identify what new or innovative services could be implemented in the State of Nebraska to improve placement stability. <i>The Nebraska legislature established a workgroup through LB 1173 that intends to address all aspects of the child welfare system, including service array review. The Commission has subcommittees to address various issues related to service array issues, and these subcommittees will continue to make recommendations. DHHS has opened a request for information on Innovative Child and Family Well-Being Solutions to elicit ways to improve the current service array for system involved families.</i></p> | <p>3. Create recommendations on how to better educate the people of Nebraska about services available for families and children. <i>Nebraska has created Bring Up Nebraska to help ensure communities across Nebraska provide preventative supports and services to reduce government system involvement. The LB1173 workgroup is cross walking preventative and community services to identify prevention gaps. Since enacting the Family First Prevention Services Act, DHHS has prioritized preventative services rather than out of home placements. School Community Intervention & Prevention is a program that provides prevention, education and early intervention services to at-risk youth in Nebraska’s schools, providing another layer of prevention services available to Nebraska families.</i></p> |

2023-2024 Nebraska Children’s Commission
 Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Strategic Plan

| Strategies: | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>1.1 Identify In-Home services and supports for relative & kinship foster homes</p> <p>1.2 Review current reimbursement rates for youth with all levels of need in relative/kinship placements to determine if their needs are met</p> <p>1.3 Review placing agencies new recruitment strategies and family finding relative/kinship support efforts</p> <p>1.4 Review DHHS policy on criteria for relative/kinship home and outcomes of these placements</p> <p>1.5 Review current supports offered to families through the systems they are involved in and identify gaps</p> | <p>2.1 Partner with DHHS in reviewing “Innovative Child and Family Well-Being Solutions” RFI to identify ways to increase service options and improve long term outcomes</p> <p>2.2 Identify funding sources to research & development of new, innovative in-home and community-based services</p> <p>2.3 Review equitable services used among court, non-court, and alternative response cases in Nebraska and neighboring states that create positive outcomes for stability</p> <p>2.4 Review preventative services related to mental health/social/emotional health resulting from traumatic experiences to mitigate negative outcomes</p> <p>2.5 Increase family and provider input on how services could change for improvement.</p> | <p>3.1 Provide decision maker education on what resources are available to reduce gaps in preventative services</p> <p>3.2 Evaluate community involvement efforts in reducing isolation for families in need of assistance or services</p> <p>3.3 Review prevention resources available in communities across the state to determine gaps</p> <p>3.4 Review prevention services utilized in neighboring states</p> |

Nebraska Children's Commission Operations

There are ongoing activities of the Nebraska Children's Commission that are outlined below:

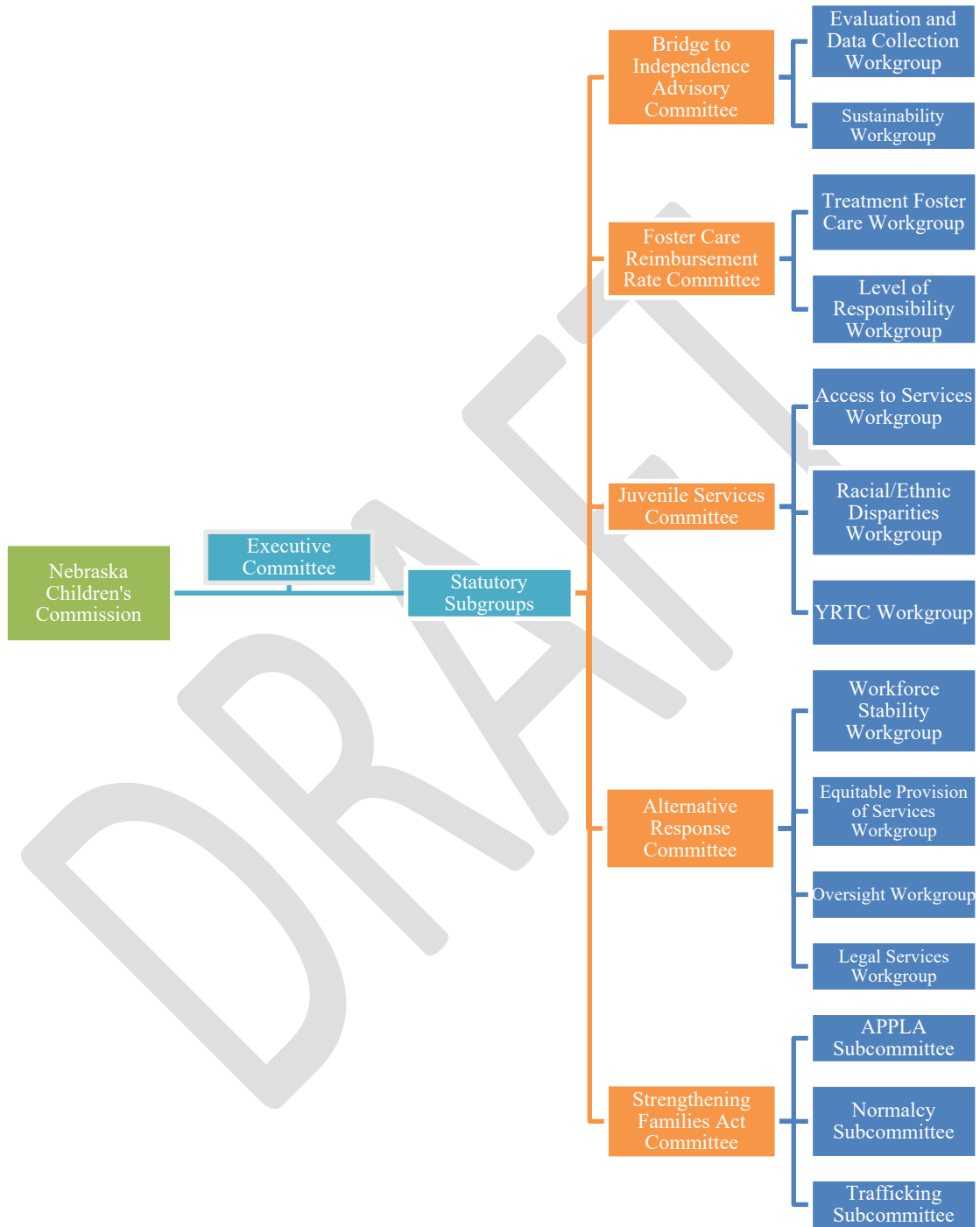
- Monitor, respond and act on issues concerning Nebraska's child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- Provide oversight for and advocate for safe and healthy children, families, and communities by making recommendations to the legislative, executive, and judicial systems.
- Monitor the work of the following legislatively required subcommittees:
 - Juvenile Services
 - Alternative Response
 - Foster Care Rate
 - Bridge To Independence (b2i)
 - Strengthening Families Act

Strategic Plan Implementation Structure and Operational Support

| Activity | Timeframe | Person(s) Responsible | Purpose | Documentation |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Statutory Committee Meetings & Workgroups | Frequency of meetings varies depending on the Committee and statutory requirements | Chairpersons and Subgroup leads | Work groups gather to 1) Create Action Plan 2) Report progress; 3) Identify barriers and solutions; 4) Adjust the action plan as needed; 5) Produce the work of the Action Plan 6) Advance recommendations to the Commission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan • Meeting notes • Quarterly updates and Performance Management • Recommendations |
| Nebraska Children’s Commission | Quarterly meetings; Annual retreat | Commission members | 1) Discussion of statewide child welfare and juvenile justice activities and events. 2) Assign work to Committees, Subcommittees and workgroups 3) Review Performance of Committees and Workgroups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting notes • Strategic Plan • Annual Report |
| Membership Appointments | Every two years, unless otherwise determined by statutory Committee | Commission Members | 1) Review Applications 2) Appoint members according to statutory requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications • Confirmation letters • Roles and Responsibilities for new members |
| Annual Report | Period of review is the state fiscal year (July 1 to June 30 th) Submitted September 1 st , annually | Commission Personnel | 1) Provide an annual report of activities, priorities and recommendations. 2) Update on strategic plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report |
| Strategic Planning | Annual | Facilitation as provided in statute, Commission Personnel | Provide guidance, structure and scope for the work of the Nebraska’s child welfare and juvenile justice systems. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan • Operations Plan |
| Biennium Budget | Budget cycle, every two years, | Executive Committee, Commission Personnel, FCRO Administration | 1) Fund the operations of the commission using the Nebraska Health Care Cash Fund | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Narrative Report, • Budget • Administrative, Membership Expense Documentation and • Reimbursements |
| Operational Support | Duration of Commission’s existence | Personnel- Administrative Assistant & Policy Analyst; FCRO Administration | 1) Administrative support 2) Policy Analyst duties as prescribed in statute 3) Commission documentation, reporting, scheduling and maintenance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above mentioned documentation in all categories. |

| Group | Subgroup | Membership Requirements | History | Meeting Requirements | Number of Subgroups | Reporting |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Children's Commission | | <u>28 Members</u> 17 Appointed by Governor 9 Ex-Officio Non- Voting Members | Est. 2012 | Min. of 4 mtgs/yr. | 9 Subgroups; 13 3 rd Tier | Annual Report |
| Statutory Subgroups | Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee | Minimum of 9 18 Current members | Est. 2013 | Min. of 2 mtgs/yr. | 2 Subgroups | Annual Report |
| | Foster Care Rate Reimbursement Rate Committee | minimum of 11 voting and 5 ex-officio; 13 Current members | Est. 2012 | None | 4 Subgroups | Report due 2024 |
| | Juvenile Services Committee | 19 Current members; | OJS Est. 2012; Merged OJS Committee and NCJJ 2017 | None for OJS, 2 mtgs/yr for NCJJ | 3 Subgroups | Annual Report |
| | Alternative Response | 14 voting members | Est. 2020 | None | 4 Subgroup | No Annual Report |
| | Strengthening Families Act Committee | 16; minimum 13 voting and 3 Ex-Officio | Est. 2015 | None | 3 Subgroups | Annual Report |

Nebraska Children's Commission Structure 2022



Nebraska Children's Commission Membership

| Member Name | Member Type | Title and Organization | Representation |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---|--|
| Jarren Breeling | Voting | Program Manager, Nebraska Family Support Network | Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System |
| A'Jamal Byndon | Voting | Stakeholder | Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System |
| Vernon Davis | Voting | Young Adult, Young Adult Previously in Foster Care | Young Adult previously in Foster Care |
| Kathy Dinkel | Voting | Adoptive Parent | Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System |
| Misty Flowers (Chair) | Voting | Executive Director, Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Coalition | Representative of a federally recognized Indian tribe residing within the State of Nebraska |
| Rachael Folds | Voting | Foster Parent | Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System |
| Ron Giesselmann | Voting | Executive Director, Masonic-Eastern Star Home for Children | Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System |
| Richard Hasty | Voting | Superintendent and Special Education Director, Plattsmouth Community Schools | Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System |
| Sara Hoyle | Voting | Human Services Director, Lancaster County | Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System |
| Terri Knutson | Voting | Parent | Biological Parent currently or previously involved with the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System |
| Melissa Nance (Vice Chair) | Voting | Vice President of Service Delivery, CEDARS Youth Services | Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System |
| Felicia Nelsen | Voting | Executive Director, Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association | Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System |
| Lana Temple-Plotz | Voting | Chief Executive Officer, Nebraska Children's Home Society | Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System |

| Member Name | Member Type | Title and Organization | Representation |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---|--|
| Susan Thomas | Voting | Court Appointed Special Advocate , Nebraska CASA Association | Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System |
| LaShawn Young | Voting | Attorney , Young & Young Attorneys at Law | Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System |
| Jeanne Brandner | Ex-Officio | Deputy Administrator of the Division of Juvenile Services , Administrative Office of Probation | Appointed by the State Court Administrator |
| Jennifer Carter | Ex-Officio | Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare , Office of Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare | Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare |
| Sen. Jen Day | Ex-Officio | Senator, District 49 , Nebraska Legislative Council | Designee of the Chairperson of the HHS Committee of the Legislature |
| Sen. Myron Dorn | Ex-Officio | Senator, District 30 , Nebraska Legislative Council, District 30 | Designee of the Chairperson of the Appropriations Committee of the Legislature |
| Monika Gross | Ex-Officio | Executive Director , Foster Care Review Office | Executive Director of the Foster Care Review Office |
| Judge Roger Heideman | Ex-Officio | Separate Juvenile Court Judge , Lancaster County Separate Juvenile Court | Appointed by the State Court Administrator |
| LaDonna Jones-Dunlap | Ex-Officio | Systems Involved Youth Specialist , Nebraska Department of Education/Nebraska Children and Families Foundation | Designee of the Commissioner of the Department of Education |
| Vacant | Ex-Officio | Director , DHHS, Division of Behavioral Health | Director of Behavioral Health Division of DHHS. |
| Vacant | Ex-Officio | Vacant , Nebraska Legislative Council | Designee of the Chairperson of the Judiciary Committee of the Legislature |
| Vacant | Ex-Officio | Director, Division of Children & Family Services , DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services | Director of Children and Family Services Division of DHHS |

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