

Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee

July 17, 2025
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Virtual
&
FCRO Conference Room
1225 L Street, Suite 401
Lincoln, NE 68508

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Chair Richard Hasty called the meeting of the Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee to order at 10:04 a.m. and asked Adam Anderson to call roll.

II. Roll Call and Introductions

Committee Members present (10):

Terry Gibbs
Dylan Graeve
Brandy Gustoff
Richard Hasty
Camas Holder

Felipe Longoria-Shinn
Monalisa McGee
Sarah Mitchell
Susan Thomas
Kitty Washburn

Committee Members absent (4):

Douglas Beck
Angela Jarecki
Camille Ohri
Sami Spain

Ex-Officio Members present (2):

Colton Stogdill

Brooke Fuhr

Ex-Officio Members absent (2):

Jennifer Skala
Theresa Cusic

A quorum was present.

Guests In Attendance (10):

Adam Anderson
Mindy Anderson
Maria Arriaga
Daren Boetel

Chris Mendoza
Lori Reed
Colton Stogdill
Terrence Williams
Heather Wood
JaQuala Yarbrow

Brooke Fullerton

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.

*Minutes do not follow the order of the agenda.

III. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Camas Holder and seconded by Susan Thomas to approve the agenda with additions to workgroup discussion. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Terry Gibbs
Dylan Graeve
Brandy Gustoff
Richard Hasty
Camas Holder

Felipe Longoria-Shinn
Monalisa McGee
Sarah Mitchell
Susan Thomas

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (5):

Douglas Beck
Angela Jarecki
Camille Ohri

Sami Spain
Kitty Washburn

MOTION CARRIED

IV. Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Brandy Gustoff and seconded by Monalisa McGee to approve the March 26, 2025 minutes as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Terry Gibbs
Dylan Graeve
Brandy Gustoff
Richard Hasty
Camas Holder

Felipe Longoria-Shinn
Monalisa McGee
Sarah Mitchell
Susan Thomas

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (5):

Douglas Beck
Angela Jarecki

Camille Ohri
Sami Spain

Kitty Washburn

MOTION CARRIED

V. Co-Chair Report

Chair Richard Hasty noted that discussion would primarily focus on clarifying and approving the workgroups later in the meeting. Hasty introduced the new Policy Analyst, Chloe Fowler for the Children's Commission, but she was not present at the meeting.

VI. Policy Analyst Update

Adam Anderson provided an update in place of Chloe Fowler. He noted that LB 346 was passed and signed by the Governor. He explained that the law sunsets the statutory B2i Committee on June 30, 2026, and rolls all its duties under the Nebraska Children's Commission. He noted that the Commission can create a B2i Subcommittee to fulfill these duties, and that the B2i Committee's final standalone report will be this year, with future reports being a statutory requirement of the Commission.

Anderson shared that appointments to the Children's Commission have been secured. Senator Meyer from the HHS Committee and Senator Armendariz from the Appropriation Committee will serve on the Commission.

Lastly, Anderson shared that there are no currently active interim studies but that some may start in October.

VII. Workgroup Discussion

a. Data and Evaluation Workgroup

Adam Anderson and Deanna Brakhage reported out on the recent meeting. They noted that the group discussed the need for more evaluation on B2i towards young people's milestones from entry to exit. Other items discussed were a potential virtual meeting to survey stakeholders on opting in versus opting out or automatic enrollment with the option to opt out; and an eligibility tracker, closer filtering with regard to barriers, and probation outreach for handoff to DHHS.

b. Sustainability Work Group

Co-Chairs Felipe Longoria-Shinn and Dylan Graeve provided an update. They noted that the group's consensus is that sustainability is a crucial piece of the program, focusing on young people achieving a sustainable future. A priority is to incorporate the young people's perspective on sustainability preparation and post-exit stability. The Co-Chairs are willing to embed the focus of the B2I Peer Work Group into the Sustainability Work Group to involve youth and avoid redundancy. Sarah Mitchell raised the point of compensating young people for their time. Adam Anderson clarified that the Children's Commission cannot directly pay members per statute, but can reimburse for travel, food, and hotel if an overnight stay is necessary. Grave noted that Nebraska Children and Families Foundation provides him with a stipend.

c. Expansion/Special Populations

The topic of expansion was discussed, stemming from previous work on the immigration status work group and looking at expanding B2I to other populations. Maria Arriaga stressed the continued importance of addressing the needs of immigrant youth, who face additional barriers. Felipe Longoria-Shinn supported the creation of a separate Special Populations work group, or similar name, to focus on the unique needs of populations such as immigrant youth, juvenile justice youth,

and tribal youth. Camas Holder noted that any changes to expansion would require a statute change, linking this work to policy and legislation.

Richard Hasty recommended postponing the final decision and approval of the work group structure and names until the next meeting, suggesting an in-person meeting would allow for more reflection, feedback, and clearer articulation of purpose, given the technical difficulties and the presence of new members.

VIII. Annual Report Review and Approval (Action Item)

Adam Anderson presented an overview of the annual report and discussed some of the work completed in drafting. He noted that this report will be forwarded to the Children's Commission for final approval at their next meeting. Anderson added that further edits to the document can occur at the Commission meeting.

It was moved by Terry Gibbs and seconded by Felipe Longoria-Shinn to approve the B2i 2025 Annual Report as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Terry Gibbs
Dylan Graeve
Brandy Gustoff
Richard Hasty
Felipe Longoria-Shinn

Monalisa McGee
Sarah Mitchell
Susan Thomas
Kitty Washburn

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (5):

Douglas Beck
Camas Holder
Angela Jarecki

Camille Ohri
Sami Spain

MOTION CARRIED

IX. Membership Update

Adam Anderson shared information regarding the membership of the Committees and following up with membership turnover.

X. DHHS Update

Terrence Williams shared information with the Committee regarding staffing, SNAP work requirements, and B2i entries. Williams noted that Angie Moorhead has joined the Bridge to Independence team and taken over a supervisory position, and two recent hires have been made for Moorhead's team to handle the expansion of services to youth on probation under LB 50. The agency will continue monitoring caseload numbers for additional staffing needs as budgeted.

Williams noted a key update regarding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Changes are taking effect that will eliminate the exception from work requirements for young adults under 24 who aged out of

foster care at 18. This means they will still be required to meet the 80 hours a month of work or participation. He noted the B2i team is waiting for federal guidance from the OEA team regarding this change.

Williams stated that the team has seen a significant increase in the number of young adults entering the B2i program, and this is particularly noticeable in the population of youth who were eligible under adoption or guardianship cases (those adopted or placed in guardianship at age 16 or older).

Williams shared that several B2i staff members, along with a former foster youth/young adult with lived experience in the system, are being sent to the Daniel's National Independent Living Conference at the end of August. The team is excited for the training opportunity and the involvement of former youth.

Deanna Brakhage provided updates regarding data and the CQI packet. She shared that a new slide breaks down the number of young adults currently in the program by their eligible population, including tribal, probation, adoption/guardianship, and foster care. Additionally, a slide has been added to address the question of the penetration rate for those with subsidized guardianship and adoptions. While no data was available before 2024, the slide includes 2024 data and predicts a drastic increase in participation for the first half of 2025 (up until June 30th).

Brakhage noted that the team is working hard to increase the penetration rate. This involves improving communication to get the correct language needed for the department to make IV-E determinations, as a high penetration rate is crucial for securing federal funding reimbursement.

Brakhage and members also discussed Probation expansion. Brakhage noted seven young adults from juvenile probation have entered B2i so far. The full implementation of the LB 50 decision has begun, and information is now being given to every youth at 18 and a half. Probation's Brook Fuhr reports the process has been "hit or miss"—some youth are very interested and ready to engage, while others are "absolutely zero percent interested." And the challenge lies in encouraging these legal parties to get the court order while the youth is active on probation, so they can access the program later if needed.

XI. New Business

Terrence Williams shared that B2i participated in a project called A Narrative Change where they worked with Central Plains and B2I to kind of do a focus group and develop a report. He shared that he will share and discuss the report at the next meeting.

XII. Upcoming Meetings:

- a. October 2025

XIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.