

**Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the
Juvenile Services Committee (JSC) and the Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ)**

April 24, 2025
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Lancaster Extension Education Center
444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A
Lincoln, NE 68528

1. Call to Order

NCJJ Chair Elain Menzel called the meeting to order at 9:08 AM, welcomed everyone and asked Adam Anderson to call roll.

2. Roll Call

Juvenile Services Committee

Committee Members Present (7)

Jennifer Carter
Amy Hoffman
Nick Juliano

Judge Denise Kracl
Mark LaBouchardiere
Dennis Marks

Tammy Sassaman

Committee Members Absent (6)

Amoreena Brady
Beverly Duran

Patrick Sailors
Vicky Smith

Deb VanDyke-Ries
Dr. Richard Wiener

Committee Resource Members Present (2)

Shaylee Fortner
Bethany Nelson

Committee Resource Members Absent (1)

Julie Smith

A quorum was established for the Juvenile Services Committee

Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice

Coalition Members Present (13)

Lincoln Arneal
Karen Bredthauer
Breanna Flaherty
Jorge Garcia
Monika Gross
Brian Halstead

Amy Hoffman
Nandi Kumondan
Proxy for Mark
LaBouchardiere, Sarah
Brownell
Elaine Menzel

Adama Sawadogo
Daniel Schleusener
Erika Schwarting

Coalition Members Absent (7)

Stanford Bradley
Ingrid Ganseborn
Denise Manthei

Jaiden Nelsen
Steve Solorio
Lauren Walag

Kirby Williams

Coalition Ex-Officio Members Present (2)

Judge Joel B. Jay
Judge Candice Novak

Coalition Ex-Officio Members Absent (1)

Sara Quiroz

Guests in Attendance (4):

Adam Anderson
Sarah Brownell
Shaylee Fortner
Keran Packerd

Crystal Olson
John Turner
Erin Wasserburger

a. Notice of Publication

Administrative Programs Officer for the Nebraska Children's Commission, Adam Anderson, indicated that the notice of publication for this meeting was posted on the Nebraska Children's Commission and Nebraska Public Meetings Calendar websites in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act.

b. Announcement of the placement of Open Meeting Act information

A copy of the Open Meetings Act was available for public inspection at the sign-in table and on the Nebraska Children's Commission website.

3. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Judge Denise Kracl from the JSC and Brian Halstead from the NCJJ to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Tammy Sassaman from the JSC and Breanna Flaherty from the NCJJ.

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

Juvenile Services Committee

FOR (7):

Jennifer Carter
Amy Hoffman
Nick Juliano

Judge Denise Kracl
Mark LaBouchardiere
Dennis Marks

Tammy Sassaman

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (6):

Amoreena Brady
Beverly Duran

Patrick Sailors
Vicky Smith

Deb VanDyke-Ries
Dr. Richard Wiener

MOTION CARRIED for the Juvenile Services Committee

Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice

FOR (12):

Lincoln Arneal
Karen Bredthauer
Breanna Flaherty
Jorge Garcia

Monika Gross
Brian Halstead
Amy Hoffman
Mark LaBouchardiere

Elaine Menzel
Adama Sawadogo
Daniel Schleusener
Erika Schwarting

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (7):

Stanford Bradley
Ingrid Ganseborn
Nandi Kumondan
Denise Manthei

Steve Solorio
Laren Walag
Kirby Williams

MOTION CARRIED for the Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice

**Minutes do not follow the approved agenda*

4. Approval of October January 23, 2025 Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Judge Denise Kracl from the JSC and Brian Halstead from NCJJ to approve the January 23, 2025 meeting minutes with edits as discussed. The motion was seconded by Mark LaBouchardiere from the JSC and Mark LaBouchardiere from the NCJJ. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

Juvenile Services Committee

FOR (7):

Jennifer Carter
Amy Hoffman
Nick Juliano

Judge Denise Kracl
Mark LaBouchardiere
Dennis Marks

Tammy Sassaman

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (6):

Amoreena Brady
Beverly Duran

Patrick Sailors
Vicky Smith

Deb VanDyke-Ries
Dr. Richard Wiener

MOTION CARRIED for the Juvenile Services Committee

Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice

FOR (12):

Lincoln Arneal
Karen Bredthauer
Breanna Flaherty
Jorge Garcia

Monika Gross
Brian Halstead
Amy Hoffman
Nandi Kumondan

Mark LaBouchardiere
Adama Sawadogo
Daniel Schleusener
Erika Schwarting

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (1):

Elaine Menzel

ABSENT (6):

Stanford Bradley
Ingrid Ganseborn
Denise Manthei

Steve Solorio
Laren Walag
Kirby Williams

MOTION CARRIED for the Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice

5. Approval of Title II Priorities

A motion was made by Breanna Flaherty from NCJJ to approve the NCJJ Title II Priorities as presented. The motion was seconded by Brian Halstead from the NCJJ. Erin Wasserburger gave an overview of the Title II grant process noting that part of the process was to note in the application whether the group would like to continue working on priorities from the previous year, as to where the money is spent. She noted the NCJJ receives a little over \$600K and part of that goes towards compliance monitoring, training, travel, and staff, and 66.66% has to be passed through to programs,

counties, etc. She also gave an overview of the four core requirements. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice

FOR (13):

Lincoln Arneal
Karen Bredthauer
Breanna Flaherty
Jorge Garcia
Monika Gross

Brian Halstead
Amy Hoffman
Nandi Kumondan
Mark LaBouchardiere
Elaine Menzel

Adama Sawadogo
Daniel Schleusener
Erika Schwarting

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (6):

Stanford Bradley
Ingrid Ganseborn
Denise Manthei

Steve Solorio
Laren Walag
Kirby Williams

MOTION CARRIED for the Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice

6. NCJJ Bylaws Revision

Erin Wasserburger shared information regarding the revisions to the bylaws. She stated that revisions will be proposed to the Crime Commission Board to allow travel expenses for members,

7. Policy Analyst and Legislative Update

Interim Policy Analyst, Adam Anderson shared that Sage Leis has left the Commission as of April 3rd, and he will be filling in as the contact person prior to the hiring of a new Policy Analyst.

Anderson shared that LB 296 was signed by the governor and that bill requires the State Department of Education to create a centralized education record system and employ registrars relating to students under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court and also to change provisions relating to graduation requirements and State Department of Education approval of grants.

Anderson also shared that LB 346 will sunset the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee and the Foster Care Rates Reimbursement Committee. The work of those committees would come under the direct responsibility of the children's Commission.

Members discussed LB 556 that it will not move forward as a whole package without enough support.

8. YRTC Update

Mark LaBouchardiere discussed current populations at the Nebraska YRTCs. He stated there are 10 youth in the Lincoln YRTC, 9 youth in Hastings, and 79 youth in Kearney, soon to be 80. He noted trends from last year included an increase in female population, and more recently there has been an increase of males, bringing the population from the mid-60s to nearly 80. He noted an increase in violent commitments, including gang activity. He also stated that many of the youth know each other outside of the facility. He continued that this can be problematic in a dorm style facility. He looks forward to the new building completion date around January of 2026, noting that the new facility will be individual rooms and bathrooms.

LaBouchardiere stated that the ACA audit will be coming up in June.

LaBouchardiere answered a question regarding staffing levels, noting that they are doing really well.

Nick Juliano noted that it is a struggle with all staff that work with youth at this level.

Members discussed the closure of the PREA Resource Center, who are tasked with conducting PREA audits.

9. Probation Update

There was no update from Probation due to scheduled Probation meetings.

10. JSC Workgroup Updates

a. Access to Services

Adam Anderson shared that the group continues to be one of the most active workgroups under the Commission. He noted that the workgroup is looking at the services in place at PRTFs and how to unbundle them to be able to be provided in the community through a Medicaid waiver. He noted that DHHS and Probation are looking at cost comparisons for youth that might be served well with this type of service in the community.

Dr. Wittry, from DHHS added more detail about the populations of youth the workgroup is looking to serve, such as aggression, concern for congregate care settings, and developmental disorders, or co-occurring serious medical problems. He continued that the group is looking at what sort of service definition would best serve those youth. Members discussed at length some of the concerns with placement at PRTFs, and how to best solve the problems of accessing services in the community or with alternative levels of care.

b. Racial & Ethnic Disparities

Adam Anderson shared that the workgroup is currently on hold as they come up with a plan for combining with the Strengthening Families Act Committee and focus on a new population of youth to look at prevention prior to involvement in the juvenile justice system.

c. Continuum of Care

Tammy Sassaman presented information from data gathered by touring congregate care facilities in Nebraska and speaking with staff. Sassaman spoke of the frustrations of youth that are detained longer due to permanent placements not being ready at the time needed. Often the youth don't know where they are going to be placed until days in advance, which can be scary for them. Sassaman also noted that half the population of the Lancaster Detention Center will be tried as adults.

Another issue that stuck out to Sassaman was the issue of Medicaid being dropped for youth who are committed. The facility then has to pick up for medication and insurance part of it.

Discussions among the workgroup co-chairs involved the time period when youth are released. They noted that often times the youth are going back to the same unhealthy environments. They spoke about solutions such as videos about de-escalation, triggers, and reward systems for the family to consider.

Nick Juliano noted a topic for next meeting: Discuss the RAI certification for detention decisions that will be released by the JJI on the validation of that measure..

11. NCJJ Subcommittee Updates

a. Executive Subcommittee

Elaine Menzel briefly shared that anyone interested in joining any of the subcommittees to reach out to herself, Erin Wasserburger, or John Turner. Menzel noted that the group met to prepare the agenda for this meeting.

b. Community Planning Advisory Subcommittee

Erin Wasserburger noted that the Community-Based Aid and Juvenile Services grant applications have a Community Plan requirement that will go into effect July 1, and the plans were recently submitted. The subcommittee reviewed the plans and provided feedback. She noted changes for the upcoming year including a checklist and flexibility of the structure of the plan.

c. Juvenile Diversion Subcommittee

Erin Wasserburger noted that the group has worked with UNL on an assessment tool. She noted there have been several trainings and over 50 counties using the NSAT tool. She stated 7000 cases have been entered into the portal. At this point, she said this is the time to go back to the people who developed the tool for evaluation and any updates in training or process.

d. Grant Review Subcommittee

Erin Wasserburger discussed the process for grant reviews. She stated that they met in March and reviewed 31 CBA grant requests totaling \$5,392,000 and 17 EV grant requests totaling \$1,085,630. She noted that the subcommittee had to cut over \$600K in requests. Wasserburger discussed the review process.

Wasserburger continued by noting the JS grant requests closed April 2 and review is scheduled for May 5th. She noted that the group has \$564K to award to \$1.75M in requests across 26 applications.

e. Young Adult Subcommittee

John Turner gave an update regarding the subcommittee. He noted Steve Solorio will be the chair of the group. Turner noted that they are trying to focus on recruiting 18–24-year-olds for the group. Turner noted that they have developed an application for youth to apply, which will be reviewed by the Coalition. The subcommittee will then develop goals to guide the Coalition in the work they do.

12. Title II Update

Erin

a. Compliance and Monitoring

John Turner noted that Nebraska has been compliant in all four core requirements since 2023, but the tool has not been opened to enter 2024 data in. Turner raised one concern with a checklist that judges must follow when a juvenile is charged as an adult. He noted a training will be occurring in October regarding this issue. He noted one strong suit of Nebraska is the deinstitutionalization of status offenders. Amy Hoffman talked about some of the issues regarding coming back into compliance, such as data requests and applications.

b. Award and Budget Update

Erin Wasserburger shared information regarding awards and budgets.

c. RED Plan Update

Erin Wasserburger talked about how the plan has to be updated each year. She will have an updated plan moving forward.

d. Partnership with Nebraska Children and Families Foundation – Lincoln Arneal

Erin Wasserburger did not have an update regarding the partnership.

13. Community Based Aid Conference

Wasserburger shared that Lancaster County and NCJJ will be holding a conference in June 11 and 12th at Cornhusker Hotel in Downtown Lincoln. There will be no cost to attend. She will be sending out information soon.

14. New Business

Tammy Sassaman shared that the NJJA will have a conference on May 7th and 8th. She shared information regarding the speakers and CEUs, as well as MCLEs. More information is available on their website: njja.org.

15. Upcoming Meeting Planning

a. July 24, 2025, Virtual

16. Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 11:05 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Anderson