

Nebraska Children's Commission Meeting

October 29, 2024
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Project Harmony
11949 Q Street
Omaha, NE 68137

1. Call to Order

Chair Misty Flowers welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 9:14 AM She asked attendees to introduce themselves. Roll call was taken by Adam Anderson through introductions.

2. Introductions and Roll Call

Commission Members Present (11)

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

Commission Members Absent (1)

A'Jamal Byndon

Commission Ex-Officio Members Present (6)

Proxy for Dr. Alyssa Bish, Camas Holder	Dr. Thom Janousek	Deb VanDyke-Ries
Jennifer Carter	Monika Gross	
	Judge Amy Schuchman	

Commission Ex-Officio Members Absent (5)

Senator Beau Ballard	LaDonna Jones-Dunlap
Senator Carol Blood	Kari Rumbaugh
Senator Myron Dorn	

Roll call was taken through introductions, and a quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (6)

Adam Anderson, Nebraska Children's Commission
Theresa Goley, Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee Co-Chair
Sage Leis, Nebraska Children's Commission
Jessica McDevitt, Nebraska DHHS
Michelle Nunemaker, Nebraska DHHS
Anahi Salazar, Voices for Children
Ryan Stanton, COMPASS
Ivy Svoboda, Nebraska Child Advocacy Center

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

It was moved by Lana Temple-Plotz and seconded by Richard Hasty to approve the agenda as presented.

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

FOR (10):

Jarren Breeling

Misty Flowers

Ron Giesselmann

Richard Hasty

Sara Hoyle

Melissa Nance

Felicia Nelsen

Lana Temple-Plotz

Susan Thomas

LaShawn Young

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (1):

A'Jamal Byndon

MOTION CARRIED

Note that the order of items in the minutes will not be reflective of the original agenda.

4. Approval of the Consent Agenda

a. [August 6, 2024 Minutes](#)

b. [Member Nomination Report](#)

It was moved by Richard Hasty and seconded by Ron Giesselman to approve the consent agenda items with corrections to the August 6, 2024 Minutes as discussed. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (10):

Jarren Breeling

Misty Flowers

Ron Giesselmann

Richard Hasty

Sara Hoyle

Melissa Nance

Felicia Nelsen

Lana Temple-Plotz

Susan Thomas

LaShawn Young

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (1):

MOTION CARRIED

5. Commission Membership & Vacancies

Adam Anderson shared information regarding membership. He shared that after Executive Committee had written a letter to Governor Pillen regarding Commission appointments, he tried to contact the Governor's Executive Assistance several times as well as emailing the Governor's Chief of Staff for any potential updates. He added that he reached out to his Senator in his personal capacity. Members discussed their options to bring the issue of vacancies to the attention of the Legislature. Sage Leis noted that she is scheduled to provide an update to the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature on November 13, 2024. Members spoke about how the update may be an opportune time to raise the issue with the Committee as to the ongoing efforts of the Commission and staff to get appointments made.

6. Governance Document Update

Adam Anderson spoke about the Governance Document and two potentially conflicting statements regarding quorum. He shared that the Commission has been operating that "The Commission requires a majority of voting members to be present to conduct business as per the Nebraska Open Meetings Act." ([Governance and Organizational Structure, p. 1, para. 4](#)) He added that further in the document, "A quorum of voting and non-voting members is required to hold a meeting and a quorum of voting members is required to take any action." ([Governance and Organizational Structure, p. 3, para. 5](#)) He continued by sharing, "that a body may establish internal rules for its governance and procedure." ([Stenberg, AG Opinion #97009](#)) Members discussed at length about the options of including non-voting members to determine quorum and about continuing to operate under the current system and removing the additional language from the Governance and Organizational Structure document. Members requested additional information from Anderson regarding the number of times quorum had not been achieved at the Commission and Committee level and options regarding setting quorum at differing amounts of voting and non-voting members. Anderson searched for additional information during the meeting, but due to time constraints the Commission was unable to take action on this item, and it was noted that Anderson will provide additional information to the members in advance of the future meeting.

7. Social Media Update

Sage Leis spoke about the recent entry of the Commission into a contract for social media management with Say Hey There. She noted that postings are approved by the Executive Committee and sent out on a determined schedule. She spoke about the work that has been done so far on the various social media platforms.

8. Chair Report

Chair Misty Flowers shared that she had a chance to sit in on the Joyce James Groundwater Analysis presentation. She mentioned that in the past, perhaps DHHS had provided that training. She shared that she enjoyed the training and found out that it is rather costly, however it is something worthwhile for engagement in diversity and inclusion. Members discussed that it might be a good opportunity for subcommittees, if there is funding available.

9. Prenatal/Parental Substance Use Treatment Presentation

Michelle Nunemaker and Jessica McDevitt presented information from the [NE Bx Health System- Referral and Transition Planning-Prenatal- FINAL.pdf](#). The shared specific information regarding navigating the behavioral health system and the process of referrals, evaluations and treatment recommendations. Members asked questions regarding removals and recommendations.

10. Foster Care Review Office Annual Report Presentation

Heather Wood and Patrick Griffin joined the meeting via Webex to present information from the [FCRO Annual Report Children's Commission Oct29 Final.pdf](#). They noted specific information from the yearly data that helped form recommendations regarding case manager turnover, caseloads, collaboration, and training. Members asked questions about missing Ansell Casey Assessments, to which DHHS reported that the assessments are most likely completed but the documentation is unclear. FCRO also shared information regarding how many children are placed with someone they know in a relative or kinship placement, being around 60%.

11. Office of the Inspector General of Child Welfare Annual Report Presentation

Inspector General Jennifer Carter presented information regarding the duties of the Inspector General. She noted additional reports of “safe sleep” deaths occurred during the last reporting period. Members discussed the comparison between the Child Death Review Team, which reviews all child deaths. Carter noted that data could be compared to OIG numbers, but the CDRT is currently reporting from 2022. Carter noted that the CDRT tracks deaths by race/ethnicity and cause of death.

Members continued discussion about commitment hearings and lack of in-state continuum of care as well as the need for an adolescent psych unit. Additionally, members noted youth of color awaiting placement are overrepresented.

12. DHHS Update

a. CFSR initial updates/planning

Holder shared that DHHS is currently in the stakeholder engagement phase with 200 who signed up to participate. Holder added that the CFSR preparation is still progressing according to schedule.

b. Programming/Contract Updates

Holder shared that LB50, which extended the B2i program to some youth in the juvenile justice population is currently being appealed, and more information will be available in the future.

Holder shared that DHHS is transitioning from the Structured Decision Making model to the Safety Assessment Family Evaluation (SAFE) Model, which she shared is similar to a new iteration of the Nebraska Safety Intervention System (NSIS). She noted that the transition to SAFE will be completed by August 2025. With the change, she added that there will be additional training, NFOCUS training, and staff changes. She noted that the objectives with the new model are improved case planning, standardized decision-making criteria, universal process to evaluate families, and enhanced support for caregivers. Holder shared a link to the [SAFE Assessment and Staff Training PPT.pdf](#).

Holder discussed the new worker training. She shared that contract between Center for Children Families and the Law and DHHS will end December 2024. She shared that the new model will include more learning by doing and individualized with a mentoring system. Holder shared that mentors were chosen through an interview process and there will be a matching process for new workers to be matched with mentors. She noted that an assessment will be done through real-time surveys and regular contact through reflective practice. She stated that lead workers will no longer carry cases until a mentee gets assigned cases which the lead worker will work alongside the mentee.

13. Committee Update

a. Alternative Response Committee

Co-Chair Monika Gross shared that the Committee has not met recently and they will be regrouping in the first of the year, 2025.

b. Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee

Co-Chair Richard Hasty shared that the next meeting of the Committee will be November 14th at 10:00 AM. He shared that there were changes to the membership of the Committee voted on earlier during the meeting. He also pointed out that there has been additional engagement with members who have been a part of the B2i program in the past.

c. Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee

Co-Chair Felicia Nelsen shared that the NCR group has met working to make adjustments to the NCR to bring in additional tools from other states for review, and noted that the group is looking to include behavioral considerations and looking at risk when calculating a rate basis. Members discussed the prior history of the NCR when it was intentionally changed to focus on what a foster parent can provide rather than what a child's behaviors are. Members also recollected that at the time of the change a child's behaviors were being exaggerated to bring them up to a higher level of care. Camas Holder noted that there are 232 Letters of Agreement, which are single-case agreements outside of the payment structure of the NCR. She noted that many of the youth in NCR Level 3 homes and not eligible for Therapeutic Family Care.

d. Juvenile Services Committee

Co-Chair Deb VanDyke-Ries shared that the JSC has three workgroups: Racial and Ethnic Disparities, Access to Services, and Continuum of Care Workgroups. She shared a little about the preliminary work of the Access to Services Workgroup, who are looking at finding ways to expand access to behavioral and mental health services for a specific group of youth within the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. She continued by noting that the Continuum of Care Workgroup is currently surveying congregate care settings across the state to share with the Committee. Sage Leis shared information regarding the R/ED Workgroup and their current goal of exploring the idea of school-based services.

e. Strengthening Families Act Committee

Co-Chair Ron Giesselmann shared that the SFA Committee is currently evaluating the history and reviewing the goals of the Committee. He is hopeful that in the near future the SFA will be able to dial down on some proposals.

14. Strategic Priorities Discussion

Sage Leis began the discussion by listing some potential topics to consider for strategic priorities. She proposed "lack of care" in the need for services and access to services, as well as examining why there youth are placed out of state. She continued by noting the prevalence of removals due to parental drug abuse. She noted access to advocacy as a potential goal for the Commission. Leis also spoke to the idea of reviewing the shortcomings of the previous strategic plan.

Richard Hasty spoke about transitional living plans as well as completion of the Ansel Casey from the FCRO presentation.

Ryan Stanton shared public comment regarding R/ED data from the FCRO as a potential focus, as well as a provider rate study, and access to services across the state.

Melissa Nance shared information regarding nutrition as it relates to child welfare, and Monika Gross added how the environment can also affect children and family. Gross also discussed direct cash assistance as being promising as evidenced in other states. Nance also spoke about court attendance.

Theresa Goley spoke about bringing law enforcement and other entities to the table to discuss child welfare data and DHHS's work on a warmline that would be a good point of emphasis.

Lana Temple-Plotz and Jennifer Carter spoke about what the Commission is capable of influencing and promoting.

Ron Giesselmann spoke about advocating for additional assistance for foster parents.

LaShawn Young spoke to the idea of court attendance, R/ED, as well as the idea of family and cultural differences and the need for culturally competent services.

Sage Leis concluded the discussion by asking Commission members to think about tangible ideas that they can bring to the next meeting.

15. New Business

There was no new business.

16. Upcoming Meeting Planning

a. Tentatively January 7, 2025, virtually.

17. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 PM

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Anderson

DRAFT