Minutes of the Meeting of the
Juvenile Services Committee (JSC)

July 23, 2026
9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Webex
&
Otoe Conference Room
Nebraska State Office Building
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, NE 68509

1. Call to Order

JSC Co-Chair Nick Juliano called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

2. Roll Call

Committee Members Present (10)

Amoreena Brady	Judge Denise Kracl	Vicky Smith
Sarah Brownell	Laura Lemoine	Deb VanDyke-Ries
Jennifer Carter	Paige McDowell	
Nick Juliano	Tammy Sassaman	

Committee Members Absent (5)

Beverly Duran	Patrick Sailors
Amy Hoffman	Dr. Richard Wiener
Dennis Marks	

Committee Resource Members Present (2)

Shaylee Fortner
Proxy for Bethany Nelson, Kendra Bishop

Committee Resource Members Absent (2)

Senator Victor Rountree
Julie Smith

A quorum was established for the Juvenile Services Committee

Guests in Attendance (1):

Adam Anderson

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 to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Tammy Sassaman. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (10):

Amoreena Brady	Judge Denis Kracl	Vicky Smith
Sarah Brownell	Laura Lemoine	Deb VanDyke-Ries
Jennifer Carter	Paige McDowell	
Nick Juliano	Tammy Sassaman	

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (5):

Beverly Duran	Dennis Marks	Dr. Richard Wiener
Amy Hoffman	Patrick Sailors	

MOTION CARRIED

******Minutes do not follow the approved agenda*

4. **Approval of May 5, 2026 Meeting Minutes**

A motion was made by Amoreena Brady to approve the May 5, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Jennifer Carter. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Amoreena Brady	Nick Juliano	Paige McDowell
Sarah Brownell	Judge Denis Kracl	Vicky Smith
Jennifer Carter	Laura Lemoine	Deb VanDyke-Ries

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (6):

Beverly Duran	Dennis Marks	Tammy Sassaman
Amy Hoffman	Patrick Sailors	Dr. Richard Wiener

MOTION CARRIED

5. **Policy Analyst**

Adam Anderson shared an update on the Policy Analyst position following Chloe Fowler's departure. Zac Ross has accepted the Child Welfare Policy Analyst position, starting the following Monday. Zac brings eight years of experience with DHHS and DAS. In the interim, Anderson has been filling in to complete the pending annual report drafts

6. **Annual Report**

Adam Anderson presented the draft Annual Report, highlighting updates made to transition from past joint reporting with the Coalition for Juvenile Justice to individual organizational reports while maintaining collaborative efforts.

- **Discussion & Edits:** Judge Denise Kracl requested technical corrections to statutory citations on page 2 (standardizing to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 71-807) and requested her title be corrected to *County Court Judge, Fifth Judicial District*. It was also noted to ensure Amoreena Brady is listed under the membership roster.

A motion was made by Tammy Sassaman to approve the 2026 Juvenile Services Committee Annual Report with the noted corrections. The motion was seconded by Paige McDowell. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Amoreena Brady	Nick Juliano	Paige McDowell
Sarah Brownell	Judge Denis Kracl	Vicky Smith
Jennifer Carter	Laura Lemoine	Deb VanDyke-Ries

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (6):

Beverly Duran	Dennis Marks	Tammy Sassaman
Amy Hoffman	Patrick Sailors	Dr. Richard Wiener

MOTION CARRIED

7. **JSC Workgroup Updates**

   a. **Access to Services**

   Dr. Matt Wittry shared an update regarding the workgroup's progress. The group is compiling information into an interim study-style presentation focusing on high-utilization youth with complex needs across juvenile justice, CFS, education, and Medicaid. The effort seeks to pair total cost data with outcomes to support the need for expanded service definitions and access to high-intensity services. Nick Juliano and Dr. Wittry discussed historical PRTF compliance models and aligning future blended funding proposals.

   b. **Racial & Ethnic Disparities**

   Adam Anderson and Tami Soper provided an update for the workgroup. The workgroup has not met recently. Discussions were held regarding aligning workgroup goals with the Children's Commission's strategic plan and One Nebraska initiatives, with further direction anticipated once the new Policy Analyst is onboarded.

   c. **Continuum of Care**

   Tammy Sassaman provided an overview of the "Lifebook" draft developed by the workgroup. The Lifebook is designed as a dynamic, high-level snapshot tool focusing on three core areas:

   - **Identity:** Family details, cultural practices, routines, food/language preferences.
   - **Continuity:** Medications, immediate mental/behavioral health needs, appointments, and placement history.
   - **Empowerment:** Personal preferences and self-advocacy notes to ease placement transitions and reduce re-traumatization.

The tool is intended to travel with youth across placements (such as detention to group homes/Boys Town) alongside standard formal documentation.

8. **YRTC Update**

Sarah Brownell presented the YRTC updates:

a. **Whitehall Updates:** Whitehall no longer falls under the Office of Juvenile Services and is now overseen by the Division of Behavioral Health under Dr. Sean Curtis. Exterior safety repairs have begun. Senators toured the site on June 29, and an interim study hearing was held on June 30.

b. **YRTC Findings:** Jennifer Carter shared that the OIG findings report has been finalized and submitted to the agency for its 15-day statutory review window. Once finalized next week, the report and executive summary will be made public and shared with the committee.

c. **New Construction:** Construction on the new facility in Kearney is complete, with final safety and security measures being finalized. The new living unit at Hastings is progressing ahead of schedule, with expected completion in October 2026.

d. **Staffing and Census:** Camella Jocobe is serving as Interim Youth Facility Senior Administrator. Census numbers as of July 22, 2026:
   - **Hastings:** 15
   - **Kearney:** 58
   - **Lincoln:** 15

   Percentages of youth committed by county at the YRTCs were provided after the meeting:

   Hastings:
   - Lancaster: 40%
   - Douglas/Sarpy: 27%
   - Other: 33%

   Kearney:
   - Lancaster: 22%
   - Douglas/Sarpy: 38%
   - Other: 40%

   Lincoln:
   - Lancaster: 27%
   - Douglas/Sarpy: 40%
   - Other: 33%

9. **Probation Update**

Amoreena Brady provided updates and handouts regarding Juvenile Probation: Juvenile Intake_Infographic Q1_2026.pdf, Q2-2026-Juvenile-Infographics.pdf

- **Intake Data & LB 530:** Distributed the Q1 2026 intake data infographic generated following LB 530 changes.
- **Quarterly Metrics:** Total probation population decreased from 2,711 (Q2 2025) to 2,539 (Q2 2026). Successful probation completions increased to 80% (up from 78%), ensuring automatic record sealing for those youth. Time spent on probation for status youth decreased to 11 months. An upcoming August judicial webinar will address new status youth case management tools.
- **District 11 & 12 Scan Implementation:** Subcommittees are addressing prioritized recommendations from the UNK environmental scan, emphasizing expansion of in-home treatment services and **Thrive Mentoring**. Thrive is a judicial-led, informal natural-support mentoring model currently operating in parts of Districts 1, 8, 10, and 11, with plans to expand further into Districts 11 and 12.
- **SJI Grant Award:** Nebraska Probation was awarded a State Justice Institute (SJI) grant to conduct a Probation and Youth Justice System Review in District 4J (Douglas County) in partnership with the RFK National Resource Center, set to begin in September 2026.

10. **New Business**
    - **RADIUS Milestone:** Nick Juliano shared that RADIUS celebrated its 3-year anniversary on July 11. Highlights include 10 high school graduates, dozens of successful probation discharges, and an initial internal recidivism rate of ~18% (compared to the statewide high-risk average of 27–33%). RADIUS is partnering with Dr. Keith Cruz on Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) implementation.
    - **NJJA Conference:** Tammy Sassaman announced that NJJA will host a one-day conference in Columbus, NE, on September 23, 2026. Save-the-date notices have been distributed.
    - **Upstream Mapping Roundtable:** Deb VanDyke-Ries and Judge Denise Kracl shared that a local data discussion and Upstream Community Mapping event led by Judge Kracl and Judge Flaherty will take place on September 10–11 in Columbus.

11. **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

12. **Upcoming Meeting Planning**
    a. October 29, 2026, 9:30-11:30 AM (In-person)
        - Note: Jennifer Carter and Judge Denise Kracl noted potential scheduling conflicts/absences for this date.
13. **Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Anderson