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

October 29 2026
9:30 AM – 11:30AM

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

1. **Call to Order**
   JSC Co-Chair Deb VanDyke-Ries called the meeting to order at 9:41

2. **Roll Call**

Committee Members Present (8)

Amoreena Brady
Sarah Brownell
Proxy for Jennifer Carter, Logan Chitty
Proxy for Amy Hoffman, Erin Wasserburger
Laura Lemoine
Tammy Sassaman
Patrick Sailors
Deb VanDyke-Ries

Committee Members Absent (4)

Nick Juliano
Judge Denise Kracl
Dennis Marks
Paige McDowell
Vicky Smith
Dr. Richard Wiener

Committee Resource Members Present (3)

Shaylee Fortner
Senator Victor Rountree *(9:45 a.m.)*
Julie Smith

Committee Resource Members Absent (1)

Kendra Bishop

A quorum was established for the Juvenile Services Committee

Guests in Attendance (5):

Adam Anderson
Monika Gross
Katie Nunegesser
Zac Ross
Dr. Matt Wittry

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.

DRAFT

3. **Approval of Agenda**

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

FOR (8):

Amoreena Brady	Proxy for Amy Hoffman, Erin Wasserburger	Tammy Sassaman
Sarah Brownell	Laura Lemoine	Deb VanDyke-Ries
Proxy for Jennifer Carter, Logan Chitty	Patrick Sailors	

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (5):

Nick Juliano	Dennis Marks	Vicky Smith
Judge Denise Kracl	Paige McDowell	Dr. Richard Wiener

MOTION CARRIED

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

4. **Approval of January 22, 2026 Meeting Minutes**

A motion was made by Laura Lemoine to approve the July 23, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Amoreena Brady. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (8):

Amoreena Brady	Proxy for Amy Hoffman, Erin Wasserburger	Tammy Sassaman
Sarah Brownell	Laura Lemoine	Deb VanDyke-Ries
Proxy for Jennifer Carter, Logan Chitty	Patrick Sailors	

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAINED (0):

ABSENT (5):

Nick Juliano	Dennis Marks	Vicky Smith
Judge Denise Kracl	Paige McDowell	Dr. Richard Wiener

MOTION CARRIED

5. **Policy Analyst Update**

Zac Ross provided updates regarding ongoing collaborative work with strategic planning consultant Blair Bagley, including weekly alignment meetings, elevating recommendations, and developing a comprehensive public-facing legislative bill tracker.

DRAFT

- **Legislative Bill Tracker Discussion:** Members discussed desired features for the tracker:
    - Amendments tracking to easily see what has changed over time (noted by Laura Lemoine).
    - Simplified, fifth grade level language summaries to make complex bill components manageable (suggested by Tammy Sassaman and supported by members).
    - A dedicated resource column highlighting what Commission resources or data are available to help Senators.
    - Commission focus areas and tracking which JSC committees or workgroups are monitoring specific legislation.
    - Hearing dates, times, and locations (noted by Pat Sailors).
    - Tracking potential unintended or unseen cross-system impacts (highlighted by Shaylee Fortner and Erin Wasserburger).
- **Legislative Workgroup:** Adam Anderson and Zac Ross announced plans to create or revive a legislative workgroup meeting weekly during the upcoming session. Adam will share the Commission's policy filter and one-pager documents with the minutes.
- **Legislative Updates & Interim Studies:**
    - **Youth Shackling (LR 403):** Zac Ross and Senator Victor Rountree shared follow-up information regarding the September 21 hearing on youth shackling and potential next steps for upcoming legislation.
    - **Cross-System Funding (LR 452):** Zac Ross reported on the cross-system interim study hearing regarding how to leverage Title IV-E funding. Discussions emphasized the operational necessity for Juvenile Services to maintain a formal contract with DHHS (the designated IV-E agency) to successfully access federal funds. The hearing also addressed high-acuity youth placements and DCS adult-charged offenders, with Shaylee Fortner clarifying specific distinctions between YRTCs and DCS.
    - **Youth Facility Transitions:** Members discussed youth movement between facilities, transitional services, access to treatment, and a perceived lack of transparency regarding facility planning prior to the interim study.
    - **HHS Committee Briefing:** Zac Ross reminded members of the upcoming Nebraska Children's Commission briefing to the Health and Human Services (HHS) Committee scheduled for November 16, 2026, at 9:00 a.m., welcoming member attendance.
    - **Upcoming Legislative Focus:** Senator Rountree shared that the upcoming session will look closely at SNAP benefits, mental health resources, youth shackling, and mitigating the impacts of Medicaid budget cuts. Katie Nunegesser highlighted a recent successful mental health discussion convening.

6. JSC Workgroup Updates

- **Access to Services Workgroup:** Julie Smith provided updates from the Access to Services Workgroup, noting that the group is operating in a "dreamer phase" to reimagine service delivery without necessarily requesting new funding. A data request was submitted to Medicaid regarding funding utilization for youth in Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTFs). Julie highlighted that Probation frequently utilizes state general funds because they cannot access IV-E funding. Dr. Matt Wittry added that the group is reviewing

DRAFT

specific multi-system youth examples to demonstrate funding allocation outside recognized levels of care. Members discussed systemic barriers regarding PRTF access, referrals, waitlists, and denials.

- **Racial and Ethnic Disparities (R/ED) Workgroup:** Zac Ross shared updates from the R/ED workgroup, emphasizing the importance of embedding R/ED considerations directly into the work and recommendations of all standing workgroups. Tammy Sassaman shared a perspective on the cultural shift required to address generational effects. Senator Rountree shared poignant thoughts on R/ED, compassion, and the vital role of community members with lived experience. Chair Deb VanDyke-Ries expressed interest in joining the workgroup. Erin Wasserburger noted that the Crime Commission tracks R/ED data across five distinct points in a case and will explore sharing relevant data regarding juvenile justice youth.
- **Continuum of Care Workgroup:** Tammy Sassaman reported that the workgroup has created a transitional "one-pager" document designed to accompany youth during system transitions, as well as an informational one-pager explaining the YRTC process.

7. YRTC Update

Shaylee Fortner reported current YRTC population numbers (Lincoln: 11, Hastings: 16, Kearney: 44). Kearney is launching a test unit in November with the new facility, and construction on the Hastings build is expected to conclude within a week or two, with the new cottage opening in the spring. Aaron Ross and Cammy Jacobe transitions were also noted.

8. Probation Report

Amoreena Brady highlighted data from the *Juvenile Probation Quarterly Outcome Report (July 1 – September 30, 2026)*. She noted a 16% statewide recidivism rate and explained that as diversion services expand, the population of low-risk youth on probation is decreasing, allowing probation resources to target higher-risk youth. She also highlighted educational sessions offered to judges and senators regarding status youth, the statewide expansion of the probation supervision tool for status offenders, and an internal workgroup reviewing all transition points under LB 962.

9. New Business

Monika Gross discussed ongoing strategic goal implementation with Commission consultant Blair Bagley, welcoming member feedback on the strategic plan to be shared by Adam Anderson.

10. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

11. Upcoming Meeting Planning

- **Next Meeting:** January 28, 2026 (Note: scheduled as virtual with an optional in-person location to be determined).

12. Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 11:34 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Anderson

DRAFT