Nebraska Children's Commission Meeting Minutes
August 11, 2026
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

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

1. Call to Order

Ron Giesselmann called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and asked members to introduce themselves. A quorum was reached at 9:24 a.m., upon the arrival of members during introductions.

Commission Members Present (9)
Ron Giesselmann
Richard Hasty (10:00 AM)
Sara Hoyle
Clarice Jackson
Nancy Lyon
Felicia Nelsen
Lana Temple-Plotz
Susan Thomas
LaShawn Young

Commission Members Absent (4)
Jarren Breeling
Abigail Fox
Angel Geller
Melissa Nilges

Commission Ex-Officio Members Present (6)
Lane Carr
Jennifer Carter
Monika Gross
Senator Victor Rountree
Proxy for Kari Rumbaugh, Erin Curran
Deb VanDyke-Ries

Commission Ex-Officio Members Absent (4)
Senator Christy Armendariz
Dr. Alyssa Bish
Thomas Janousek
Senator Glen Meyer

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

Guests in Attendance (12)
Adam Anderson, Nebraska Children's Commission
Blair Bagley, Bagley Strategies
Logan Chitty, Office of Inspector General of Child Welfare
Erin Curran, Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation
Ashley Dancy, B2i Committee Nominee
Teresa Goley, KVC Nebraska
Ali McFarland, CEDARS
Tami Soper, Boys Town
Zac Ross, Nebraska Children's Commission
Kelli Schadwinkel, Office of Inspector General of Child Welfare
Meghan Svik, Office of Inspector General of Child Welfare
Ivy Svoboda, Nebraska Child Advocacy Centers

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.

2. Approval of the Consent Agenda

- **a.** Agenda
- **b.** May 12, 2026 Meeting Minutes
- **c.** Member Nomination Report

It was moved by Susan Thomas and seconded by Felicia Nelsen to approve the consent agenda items as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (8):
Ron Giesselmann
Sara Hoyle
Clarice Jackson
Nancy Lyon
Felicia Nelsen
Lana Temple-Plotz
Susan Thomas
LaShawn Young

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (5):
Jarren Breeling
Abigail Fox
Angel Geller
Richard Hasty
Melissa Nilges

MOTION CARRIED

3. Chair Update (Action Item)

Vice Chair Ron Giesselmann introduced Zac Ross as the new Child Welfare Policy Analyst for the Commission. Additionally, Administrative Programs Officer Adam Anderson identified a vacancy for an at-large Executive Committee position. Clarice Jackson volunteered to fill the open position on the Executive Committee.

It was moved by Lana Temple-Plotz and seconded by Susan Thomas to elect Clarice Jackson to the open Executive Committee position. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (8):
Ron Giesselmann
Sara Hoyle
Clarice Jackson
Nancy Lyon
Felicia Nelsen
Lana Temple-Plotz
Susan Thomas
LaShawn Young

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (5):
Jarren Breeling
Abigail Fox
Angel Geller
Richard Hasty
Melissa Nilges

MOTION CARRIED

4. Policy Analyst Update

- **Interim Resolutions:** Monika Gross outlined several legislative interim resolutions under review. Senator Victor Rountree provided an update on his juvenile shackling resolution (LR 380), noting that scheduling with the Judiciary Committee is pending. Members reviewed additional resolutions, including LR 425 regarding YRTC facilities, LR 408 on the age of majority in Nebraska, and LR 412 examining childcare financing models.
- **Social Media Quarterly Report:** Adam Anderson presented the quarterly metrics prepared by Say Hey There. The platform experienced growth with 331 new Facebook followers and 101 Instagram followers, along with an increase in click-through rates. Paid social media advertising has been temporarily paused while the Commission evaluates the return on investment and establishes better engagement/follow-through processes for incoming inquiries.

5. Budget Update

- **Financial Overview:** Monika Gross reviewed the FY 2025 budget status and current year draft figures. The Commission operates on an annual budget of approximately $234,000 sourced from the Health Care Cash Fund (with no General Funds). Personnel costs account for roughly $200,000, leaving around $34,000 for operating expenses.
- **Call to Action:** Following a 5% budget reduction directive from the Governor's office (withholding approximately $12,000–$13,000), discussion ensued regarding the necessity of advocacy to maintain commission sustainability. Lana Temple-Plotz volunteered to lead an ad-hoc group to develop a targeted "Call to Action" and talking points. She will coordinate with Zac Ross, Monika Gross, and interested members to reach out to senators regarding future budget requests.

6. Strategic Plan / Consulting Proposal

Blair Bagley presented the strategic plan, outlining four core strategic goals:

1. Strengthen External Engagement
2. Build Stable Relationships
3. Elevate Impact Through Communication
4. Recommendation to Action

Member Discussion Highlights:

- **Internal Capacity:** Members noted the plan relies on Commission member volunteers to drive initiatives due to small staff size.
- **Inter-Commission Coordination:** Jennifer Carter suggested creating a small, connected subgroup between the Supreme Court Commission, Governor's Commission, and Children's Commission to streamline overlapping initiatives.
- **Stakeholder Outreach:** LaShawn Young recommended incorporating legal system outreach, such as informational presentations/CLEs for attorneys practicing in juvenile courts.

It was moved by Lana Temple-Plotz and seconded by Sara Hoyle to accept the strategic plan as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Ron Giesselmann
Richard Hasty
Sara Hoyle
Clarice Jackson
Nancy Lyon
Felicia Nelsen
Lana Temple-Plotz
Susan Thomas
LaShawn Young

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (4):

Jarren Breeling
Abigail Fox
Angel Geller
Melissa Nilges

MOTION CARRIED

Monika Gross presented a strategic planning facilitation and consulting proposal submitted by Blair Bagley.

- **Cost & Scope:** The proposed contract is **$800 a month** for up to **10 hours of monthly support** to assist the Commission in implementing its strategic goals.
- **Rationale:** Additional support is needed due to limited internal staff resources, allowing the Commission to properly manage its workload, maintain subgroup meetings, and ensure a strong start toward its objectives.
- **Budget & Flexibility:** The proposal fits within the current budget, contingent on continued funding, and includes a **30-day cancellation clause** for either party if funding or needs change.

Vice Chair Ron Giesselmann voiced support, noting it provides valuable guidance for new policy analyst Zach Ross while maintaining a safe exit plan.

It was moved by Felicia Nelsen and seconded by Lana Temple-Plotz to accept the support proposal as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Ron Giesselmann	Clarice Jackson	Lana Temple-Plotz
Richard Hasty	Nancy Lyon	Susan Thomas
Sara Hoyle	Felicia Nelsen	LaShawn Young

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (4):

Jarren Breeling	Angel Geller
Abigail Fox	Melissa Nilges

MOTION CARRIED

7. Annual Reports

a. **Bridge to Independence Advisory Subcommittee**

B2i Subcommittee Chair Richard Hasty provided an update on recent committee activities and announced his upcoming retirement and departure from the Commission in June 2027, noting the subcommittee will be seeking a new Chair. Discussion included updates on workgroup structures, B2i dashboard transitions, and focus areas including transportation, employment, and special populations.

Adam Anderson reviewed the annual report and outlined the process taken in preparing the annual report for submission to the Commission for approval.

It was moved by Susan Thomas and seconded by Sara Hoyle to approve the B2i annual report as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Ron Giesselmann	Clarice Jackson	Lana Temple-Plotz
Richard Hasty	Nancy Lyon	Susan Thomas
Sara Hoyle	Felicia Nelsen	LaShawn Young

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (4):

Jarren Breeling	Angel Geller
Abigail Fox	Melissa Nilges

MOTION CARRIED

b. Juvenile Services Committee

JSC Co-Chair Deb VanDyke-Ries delivered the committee update and annual report review. She highlighted the work of the Access to Services workgroup concerning high-utilization youth with complex needs, the Continuum of Care workgroup's recommendation for a mobile "Life Book" to follow youth across placements, and upcoming realignment for the Racial and Ethnic Disparities workgroup.

It was moved by Sara Hoyle and seconded by Lana Temple-Plotz to approve the JSC annual report as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Ron Giesselmann	Clarice Jackson	Lana Temple-Plotz
Richard Hasty	Nancy Lyon	Susan Thomas
Sara Hoyle	Felicia Nelsen	LaShawn Young

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (4):

Jarren Breeling	Angel Geller
Abigail Fox	Melissa Nilges

MOTION CARRIED

c. Strengthening Families Act Committee

SFA Co-Chair Ron Giesselmann provided a brief summary of the SFA Committee's work across its Normalcy, Trafficking, and APPA workgroups, monitoring statutory compliance and quality-of-life efforts for youth in care. Giesselmann also provided a brief overview of the SFA annual report.

It was moved by LaShawn Young and seconded by Susan Thomas to approve the SFA annual report as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Ron Giesselmann	Clarice Jackson	Lana Temple-Plotz
Richard Hasty	Nancy Lyon	Susan Thomas
Sara Hoyle	Felicia Nelsen	LaShawn Young

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (4):

Jarren Breeling	Angel Geller
Abigail Fox	Melissa Nilges

MOTION CARRIED

8. Children's Commission Annual Report

Zac Ross and Adam Anderson shared the overarching Commission Annual Report details, finalizing statutory reporting requirements for submission to the Governor and Legislature.

It was moved by Felicia Nelsen and seconded by Sara Hoyle to approve the Commission annual report as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll call vote as follows:

FOR (9):

Ron Giesselmann	Clarice Jackson	Lana Temple-Plotz
Richard Hasty	Nancy Lyon	Susan Thomas
Sara Hoyle	Felicia Nelsen	LaShawn Young

AGAINST (0):

ABSTAIN (0):

ABSENT (4):

Jarren Breeling	Angel Geller
Abigail Fox	Melissa Nilges

MOTION CARRIED

9. Office of Inspector General Update

Inspector General Jennifer Carter, along with Assistant Inspectors General Logan Chitty and Meghan Svik, presented the findings from their recent report, *Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Youth by Staff at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center at Kearney*, and corresponding executive summary, which was recently submitted to the Nebraska Legislature and released to the public.

Key Findings

- **Systemic Screening Failures:** A review of historical employee records and past Out-of-Home Assessments (OHAs) conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) revealed recurring systemic issues and procedural gaps that allowed critical red flags to go unaddressed.
- **Screening Gaps at Hotline:** Ombudsman Kelli Schadwinkel noted that calls made to the Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline regarding YRTC-Kearney facility staff were systematically screened out for institutional assessment and diverted solely to law enforcement. This process prevented DHHS from conducting proper administrative child welfare investigations.

Member Discussion Highlights

- **Administrative vs. Criminal Thresholds:** Commission members engaged in extended discussion regarding the distinction between administrative child welfare compliance and criminal law enforcement investigations. It was emphasized that while certain conduct or boundary violations by staff may not meet the evidentiary standard for criminal prosecution, it can still constitute child abuse or neglect under institutional administrative standards and must be investigated as such.
- **Resumption of Out-of-Home Assessments (OHAs):** Inspector General Jennifer Carter stressed that the OIG's top recommendation is the immediate reinstatement and consistent execution of comprehensive Out-of-Home Assessments by DHHS for institutional allegations at state facilities.
- **Systemic Accountability:** Members discussed the necessity of cross-agency coordination between local law enforcement, facility management, and DHHS to ensure that administrative oversight is maintained regardless of whether criminal charges are filed.

10. Public Comment

Tami Soper provided public comment, suggesting that official Commission endorsement or support of the OIG recommendations could significantly help advance legislative solutions during the upcoming session.

11. Upcoming Meeting Planning

a. November 17, 2026, in-person, time and location TBD.

12. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Anderson