

NEBRASKA CHILDREN'S COMMISSION STRATEGIC PLAN



The Nebraska Children's Commission is a high-level leadership body created by the Nebraska Legislature and has created this statewide strategic plan pursuant to and in compliance with Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-4202.

Nebraska Children's Commission History

The Nebraska Children's Commission ["Commission"] was created by the Nebraska Legislature as a high-level leadership body to create a statewide strategic plan for reform of child welfare and juvenile justice programs and services as well as provide a permanent forum for collaboration among state, local, community, public, and private stakeholders in child welfare and juvenile justice programs and services. The Legislature extended the Commission's sunset date in 2013, and again in 2016 with LB746, signed into law by Governor Pete Ricketts. In 2019, legislation was passed to eliminate the sunset date on the Commission. The collective institutional and subject matter knowledge of the Commission membership is critical to improve the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, maximize and efficiently utilize funding, and improve the safety and well-being of all children and families in Nebraska.

Commission Strategic Planning

The Commission understands that if system improvement is to be effective and lasting it must happen at all levels including the system, program and practice levels. The three branches of government and the various system stakeholders must be dedicated to serving and supporting children and families with effective programs. At the practice level, all front-line case managers and their supervisors must be prepared and supported in their efforts of serving children and families differently. Furthermore, effective leadership is essential in successful child welfare and juvenile justice systems. There is a considerable amount of decision makers across Nebraska interested in addressing the challenges within the current child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and the Commission, as a high-level leadership body with representation from all three branches of government and private stakeholders, is in a unique position to support these positive efforts. Agents of change in Nebraska share optimism and the common belief that children and families deserve safety and well-being.

2023-2024 Nebraska Children’s Commission
Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Strategic Plan

Mission:	
<p>The Nebraska Children’s Commission works as a high-level leadership body with membership from the legislative, executive, and judicial branches along with system stakeholders to improve the safety and well-being of all children and families in Nebraska.</p>	
Values:	
<p>Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Commission is an inclusive body that respects all religions, places of origin, ethnicities, and identities by ensuring all people have a voice in the Commission’s work. The Commission values strong representation of diverse backgrounds and encourages participation however possible, including virtually in Commission, committee, and workgroup meetings.• It is the responsibility of all Commission members to examine and challenge their implicit and explicit bias. The Commission acknowledges the negative impact these biases has had on individuals and will work collectively to solve problems within the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.	<p>Family Voice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children, youth, and their families are experts on their own experiences, and the Commission will provide the opportunity for active participation in all meetings conducted by the Commission, related committees, and workgroups. When in-person participation is not possible for children, youth, and their families that have expressed a desire to actively participate, they will be given the opportunity to participate virtually.• The Commission identifies individuals with lived experience may be apprehensive to engage with the Commission due to past system engagement. The Commission members have an obligation to create a collaborative environment for these children, youth, and families that will promote meaningful dialogue that will influence change within child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

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 Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Strategic Plan

Strategic Priorities:		
Placement Stability & Solutions	Service Array	Prevention Continuum
<p>1. Provide recommendations to increase the level of support available to relative and kinship placements. <i>In recent years, the Foster Care Rate Review committee has made recommendations to the NCR levels and rates associated with them to assist with placement stability and continues to work with DHHS in finding appropriate rates for youth with all levels of need. Foster Care Placing agencies have begun working on new recruitment strategies to increase stability and find solutions regarding foster families available to serve the needs. Finally, the system has continued to actively search for kinship and relative supports for families to provide the best outcomes.</i></p>	<p>2. Identify what new or innovative evidenced based practices and services could be implemented in the State of Nebraska to improve placement stability. <i>The Nebraska legislature established a workgroup through LB1173 that intends to address all aspects of the child welfare system, including service array review. The Commission has subcommittees to address various issues related to service array issues, and these subcommittees will continue to make recommendations. DHHS has opened a request for information on Innovative Child and Family Well-Being Solutions to elicit ways to improve the current service array for system involved families.</i></p>	<p>3. Create recommendations on how to better educate the people of Nebraska about services available for families and children. <i>Nebraska has created Bring Up Nebraska to help ensure communities across Nebraska provide preventative supports and services to reduce government system involvement. The LB1173 workgroup is cross walking preventative and community services to identify prevention gaps. Since enacting the Family First Prevention Services Act, DHHS has prioritized preventative services rather than out of home placements. School Community Intervention & Prevention is a program that provides prevention, education and early intervention services to at-risk youth in Nebraska’s schools, providing another layer of prevention services available to Nebraska families.</i></p>

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Strategies:		
<p>1.1 Identify In-Home services and supports for relative & kinship foster homes</p> <p>1.2 Review current reimbursement rates for youth with all levels of need in relative/kinship placements to determine if their needs are met</p> <p>1.3 Review placing agencies new recruitment strategies and family finding relative/kinship support efforts</p> <p>1.4 Review DHHS policy on criteria for relative/kinship home and outcomes of these placements</p> <p>1.5 Review current supports offered to families through the systems they are involved in and identify gaps</p>	<p>2.1 Partner with DHHS in reviewing “Innovative Child and Family Well-Being Solutions” RFI to identify ways to increase service options and improve long term outcomes</p> <p>2.2 Identify funding sources to research & development of new, innovative in-home and community-based services</p> <p>2.3 Review equitable services used among court, non-court, and alternative response cases in Nebraska and neighboring states that create positive outcomes for stability</p> <p>2.4 Review preventative services related to mental/social/emotional health resulting from traumatic experiences to mitigate negative outcomes</p> <p>2.5 Increase family and provider input on how services could change for improvement.</p>	<p>3.1 Provide decision maker education on what resources are available to reduce gaps in preventative services</p> <p>3.2 Evaluate community involvement efforts in reducing isolation for families in need of assistance or services</p> <p>3.3 Review prevention resources available in communities across the state to determine gaps</p> <p>3.4 Review prevention services utilized in neighboring states</p>

Nebraska Children's Commission Operations

There are ongoing activities of the Nebraska Children's Commission that are outlined below:

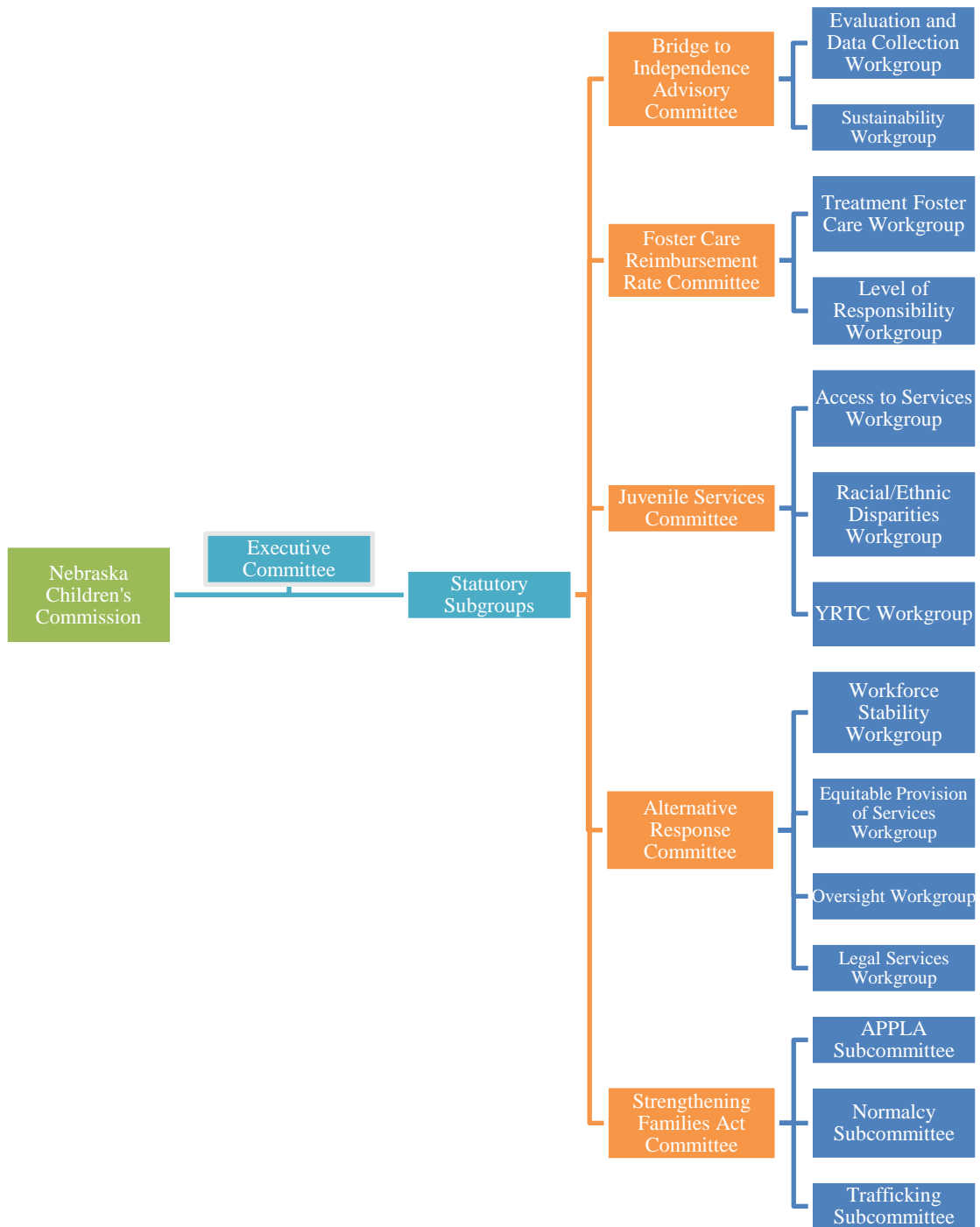
- Monitor Nebraska's child welfare and juvenile systems by assessing progress in achieving expected results and highlight unexpected impacts on
- Respond and provide recommendations on issues concerning Nebraska's child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- Provide oversight for and advocate for safe and healthy children, families, and communities by making recommendations to the legislative, executive, and judicial systems.
- Monitor the work of the following legislatively required subcommittees:
 - Juvenile Services
 - Alternative Response
 - Foster Care Rate
 - Bridge To Independence (b2i)
 - Strengthening Families Act

Strategic Plan Implementation Structure and Operational Support

Activity	Timeframe	Person(s) Responsible	Purpose	Documentation
Statutory Committee Meetings & Workgroups	Frequency of meetings varies depending on the Committee and statutory requirements	Chairpersons and Subgroup leads	Work groups gather to 1) Create Action Plan 2) Report progress; 3) Identify barriers and solutions; 4) Adjust the action plan as needed; 5) Produce the work of the Action Plan 6) Advance recommendations to the Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan • Meeting notes • Quarterly updates and Performance Management • Recommendations
Nebraska Children’s Commission	Quarterly meetings; Annual retreat	Commission members	1) Discussion of statewide child welfare and juvenile justice activities and events. 2) Assign work to Committees, Subcommittees and workgroups 3) Review Performance of Committees and Workgroups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting notes • Strategic Plan • Annual Report
Membership Appointments	Every two years, unless otherwise determined by statutory Committee	Commission Members	1) Review Applications 2) Appoint members according to statutory requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications • Confirmation letters • Roles and Responsibilities for new members
Annual Report	Period of review is the state fiscal year (July 1 to June 30 th) Submitted September 1 st , annually	Commission Personnel	1) Provide an annual report of activities, priorities and recommendations. 2) Update on strategic plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report
Strategic Planning	Annual	Facilitation as provided in statute, Commission Personnel	Provide guidance, structure and scope for the work of the Nebraska’s child welfare and juvenile justice systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan • Operations Plan
Biennium Budget	Budget cycle, every two years,	Executive Committee, Commission Personnel, FCRO Administration	1) Fund the operations of the commission using the Nebraska Health Care Cash Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Narrative Report, • Budget • Administrative, Membership Expense Documentation and • Reimbursements
Operational Support	Duration of Commission’s existence	Personnel- Administrative Assistant & Policy Analyst; FCRO Administration	1) Administrative support 2) Policy Analyst duties as prescribed in statute 3) Commission documentation, reporting, scheduling and maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above mentioned documentation in all categories.

Group	Subgroup	Membership Requirements	History	Meeting Requirements	Number of Subgroups	Reporting
Children's Commission		<u>28 Members</u> 17 Appointed by Governor 9 Ex-Officio Non- Voting Members	Est. 2012	Min. of 4 mtgs/yr.	9 Subgroups; 13 3 rd Tier	Annual Report
Statutory Subgroups	Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee	Minimum of 9 18 Current members	Est. 2013	Min. of 2 mtgs/yr.	2 Subgroups	Annual Report
	Foster Care Rate Reimbursement Rate Committee	minimum of 11 voting and 5 ex-officio; 13 Current members	Est. 2012	None	4 Subgroups	Report due 2024
	Juvenile Services Committee	19 Current members;	OJS Est. 2012; Merged OJS Committee and NCJJ 2017	None for OJS, 2 mtgs/yr for NCJJ	3 Subgroups	Annual Report
	Alternative Response	14 voting members	Est. 2020	None	4 Subgroup	No Annual Report
	Strengthening Families Act Committee	16; minimum 13 voting and 3 Ex-Officio	Est. 2015	None	3 Subgroups	Annual Report

Nebraska Children's Commission Structure 2022



Nebraska Children's Commission Membership

Member Name	Member Type	Title and Organization	Representation
Jarren Breeling	Voting	Voice and Choice Advocate, DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services	Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System
A'Jamal Byndon	Voting	Stakeholder	Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System
Vernon Davis	Voting	Young Adult, Young Adult Previously in Foster Care	Young Adult previously in Foster Care
Kathy Dinkel	Voting	Adoptive Parent	Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System
Misty Flowers (Chair)	Voting	Executive Director, Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Coalition	Representative of a federally recognized Indian tribe residing within the State of Nebraska
Rachael Folds	Voting	Foster Parent	Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System
Ron Giesselmann	Voting	Executive Director, Masonic-Eastern Star Home for Children	Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System
Richard Hasty	Voting	Superintendent and Special Education Director, Plattsmouth Community Schools	Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System
Sara Hoyle	Voting	Human Services Director, Lancaster County	Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System
Terri Knutson	Voting	Parent	Biological Parent currently or previously involved with the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System
Melissa Nance (Vice Chair)	Voting	Vice President of Service Delivery, CEDARS Youth Services	Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System
Felicia Nelsen	Voting	Executive Director, Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association	Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System
Lana Temple- Plotz	Voting	Chief Executive Officer, Nebraska Children's Home Society	Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System

Member Name	Member Type	Title and Organization	Representation
Susan Thomas	Voting	Court Appointed Special Advocate , Nebraska CASA Association	Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System
LaShawn Young	Voting	Attorney , Young & Young Attorneys at Law	Stakeholder of the Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice System
Jeanne Brandner	Ex-Officio	Deputy Administrator of the Division of Juvenile Services , Administrative Office of Probation	Appointed by the State Court Administrator
Jennifer Carter	Ex-Officio	Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare , Office of Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare	Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare
Sen. Jen Day	Ex-Officio	Senator, District 49 , Nebraska Legislative Council	Designee of the Chairperson of the HHS Committee of the Legislature
Sen. Myron Dorn	Ex-Officio	Senator, District 30 , Nebraska Legislative Council, District 30	Designee of the Chairperson of the Appropriations Committee of the Legislature
Monika Gross	Ex-Officio	Executive Director , Foster Care Review Office	Executive Director of the Foster Care Review Office
Judge Roger Heideman	Ex-Officio	Separate Juvenile Court Judge , Lancaster County Separate Juvenile Court	Appointed by the State Court Administrator
LaDonna Jones-Dunlap	Ex-Officio	Systems Involved Youth Specialist , Nebraska Department of Education/Nebraska Children and Families Foundation	Designee of the Commissioner of the Department of Education
Vacant	Ex-Officio	Director , DHHS, Division of Behavioral Health	Director of Behavioral Health Division of DHHS.
Vacant	Ex-Officio	Vacant , Nebraska Legislative Council	Designee of the Chairperson of the Judiciary Committee of the Legislature
Vacant	Ex-Officio	Director, Division of Children & Family Services , DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services	Director of Children and Family Services Division of DHHS

