

Nebraska Children’s Commission
 Second Annual Retreat
 July 19, 2016
 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
 Wilderness Ridge Lodge
 1800 Wilderness Woods Place, Lincoln, NE 68512

I. Call to Order

The Nebraska Children’s Commission Chair, Beth Baxter, called the meeting to order at 9:17 a.m.

II. Roll Call

Commission Members present (9):

Karen Authier	Kim Hawekotte	Susan Thomas
Beth Baxter	Gene Klein	Janine Uchino
Vernon Davis	Mary Jo Pankoke	Paula Wells (9:22)

Commission Members absent (5):

Teresa Anderson	Jennifer Chrystal-Clark	Deb O’Brien
Holly Brandt	David Newell	

Ex Officio Members present (2):

Jeanne Brandner	Doug Weinberg
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Ex Officio Members absent (7):

Dr. Matthew Blomstedt	Sen. Patty Pansing-Brooks	Julie Rogers
Sen. Kate Bolz	Courtney Phillips	
Steve Milliken	Judge Linda Porter	

A quorum was established.

Guests in Attendance (8):

Bethany Connor Allen	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Amanda Felton	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Peg Harriott	Child Saving Institute
Dan Jenkins	Nebraska Legislative Council
Timoree Klingler	Nebraska Legislative Council
Joselyn Luedtke	Nebraska Legislative Council
Kevin O’Hanlon	Office of the Inspector General of Child Welfare
Gay McTate	Family Enrichment, Inc.

a. Notice of Publication

Recorder for the meeting, Amanda Felton, indicated that the notice of publication for this meeting was posted on the Nebraska Public Meetings Calendar and Nebraska Children’s Commission websites on June 7, 2016 in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. The publication will 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 on the table on the west side of the meeting room.

III. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by **Kim Hawekotte** and seconded by **Gene Klein** to approve the agenda as presented. There was no further discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (8):

Karen Authier
Beth Baxter
Vernon Davis

Kim Hawekotte
Gene Klein
Mary Jo Pankoke

Susan Thomas
Janine Uchino

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (6):

Teresa Anderson
Holly Brandt

Jennifer Chrystal-Clark
David Newell

Deb O'Brien
Paula Wells

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

IV. Consent Agenda

- a. *Minutes of the May 17, 2016 Nebraska Children's Commission Meeting*
- b. *Membership Appointments for the Normalcy Task Force*

Nominations for the Normalcy Task Force included:

- **Nathan Collier** – Young Adult Previously in Foster Care
 - Would serve as a youth previously in Foster Care in a voting capacity.
- **Nicole Paul** – Training & Special Projects Manager, Nebraska Families Collaborative
 - Would serve as representative from a child welfare service agency in a voting capacity

It was clarified that Nebraska Families Collaborative has requested that Ms. Paul serve in a voting capacity on the Task Force in lieu of current member, A'Jamal Byndon. Commission policy did not allow for more than one voting member from a stakeholder group on any of its subgroups. If approved, Ms. Paul would replace Mr. Byndon as a voting member. Mr. Byndon would then move to a non-voting, resource position on the Task Force to which he had agreed.

Kim Hawekotte moved to approve all items of the Consent Agenda as presented. **Mary Jo Pankoke** seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Roll Call vote as follows:

FOR (8):

Karen Authier
Beth Baxter
Vernon Davis

Kim Hawekotte
Gene Klein
Mary Jo Pankoke

Susan Thomas
Janine Uchino

AGAINST (0):

ABSENT (6):

Teresa Anderson
Holly Brandt

Jennifer Chrystal-Clark
David Newell

Deb O'Brien
Paula Wells

ABSTAINED (0)

MOTION CARRIED

V. Retreat Welcome

Chair Baxter took a moment to welcome members and guests. She introduced the new members of the group including Jeanne Brandner as an appointee of the State Court Administrator, Vernon Davis representing a former foster youth, Susan Thomas serving as a CASA Volunteer representative, and Janine Uchino who served in the Guardian Ad Litem position on the Commission. It was also at this time that Gay McTate was introduced as the facilitator for the day's events.

Ms. McTate thanked the Commission for inviting her to participate in their annual retreat. She gave the floor to Past Commission Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the Nebraska Children's Home Society, Karen Authier, to give a brief background on the work of the Commission. Ms. Authier discussed the previous privatization efforts that lead to a time of disorder within the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. From LR37, a study which identified gaps in the service delivery models for children and families, came the creation of the Nebraska Children's Commission. The Commission was to work with the three branches of government and other involved stakeholders to address reform for the two systems.

VI. Team Building Presentation

Ms. McTate prompted the group to think about a moment of exuberance from their childhood. She asked for members to consider the elements surrounding them that had allowed for those moments to occur. The discussion allowed the group to dissect what was necessary to provide youth and their families with the most normal childhood experiences as possible. The group listed elements such as a safe space, a sense of community, present family members, support for the youth and family, providing youth with a sense of trust and independence, and the teaching of life skills to help youth in the transition to adulthood.

The members and guest present were assigned the task of creating posters that outlined the achievements, barriers, and current momentum of the Commission currently. Participant broke out in to groups of 4-6 to work on their posters. The results of the activity identified several elements of each assigned area.

Achievements:

- Active subgroups with inclusive membership
- Progress of the Alternative Response (AR) initiative
- The passing of LB746 which implemented the Strengthening Families Act and extended the Commission
- The efforts towards appropriate rates from the Foster Care Rate Reimbursement Committee
- The respect that the Children's Commission has earned from stakeholders

Barriers:

- Lack of accountability for Commission subgroups
- Lack of clarification as to the roles of the subgroups
- The restrictions of the Open Meetings Act
- Competing priorities of the involved stakeholders
- Legislative Term Limits
- Political objectives
- Lack of accessible data

Areas of Momentum:

- Increased statewide participation
- Legislation has shown interest in the work of the Commission
- New membership providing fresh perspective
- The current Legislative Resolutions looking at issues relevant to the work of the Commission

VII. Outlining of Priorities and Strategic Planning

Ms. McTate led the members and guests forward in their discussion by reviewing the structure of the Commission and its subgroups. Policy Analyst for the Commission, Bethany Connor Allen, provided a summary of the twenty-three

active subgroups under the umbrella of the Nebraska Children's Commission. The members identified several complications regarding the subgroups. On such issue was the difficulty in promoting statewide membership while adhering to the Open Meetings Act. While select options were available to the group through web conferencing technology, the limitations on such were a barrier. It was suggested that one of the areas the group look to focus recommendations would be towards the updating of the Open Meetings Act in Nebraska to allow for wider accessibility of members and the public through technology.

This discussion prompted the members to discuss the potential of reforming the Structure Taskforce. The Structure Taskforce would communicate with each subgroup to identify barriers and complications. Their goals would include identifying a procedure to hold subgroups accountable for their assigned tasks, creation of guidelines for membership of the subgroups without statutory membership regulations, continuation of the requirement that all Commission members be involved in at least one subgroup, finding ways to promote communication between subcommittees to limit the duplication of efforts, identify procedures for hearing testimony provided by the Commission, and act as a Public Relations entity in addressing how the Commission could increase public awareness of their work.

The legislative staff present brought attention to the restrictions of Nebraska term limits, meaning that there would be an influx of new Senators. They also emphasized that many of the new Senators would be seeking education on the current status and history of the child welfare and juvenile justice system reform. The members discussed the potential for quarterly meetings with legislative members and their staff to aid in education of the past and current efforts.

Ms. McTate directed the group to examine the Vision Question Chart on page 4 of the 2013 Recommendation report. The group stressed the need to continue to make workforce issues a priority of the Commission. Components not listed on the chart that members felt should a part of the group vision included the addition of judicial system elements and a focus on education for system involved youth. The benefit of having a broad vision was expressed, keeping in mind that the intent was to be inclusive of all system stakeholders. The group felt the vision chart would be best utilized in a visual within the updated strategic report and that Chair Baxter would provide the System of Care visuals as an example to work from.

VIII. Lunch

The Committee recessed for lunch at 12:25 p.m.

The meeting resumed business at 1:15 p.m.

IX. Outlining of Priorities and Strategic Planning (Continued)

The Commission work resumed by examining the Environmental Scan chart from the 2014 Strategy Session handout. Positive movement was noted as many of the items that had previously only begun to gain energy were now considered status quo. Conversation moved towards identifying ideas and trends currently on the horizon or beginning to gain traction. These included the current pilot for Family Focused Case Management, the increase in trafficking awareness, the implementation of the Strengthening Families Act, and the shift to Heritage Health.

In reviewing the positive trends, the group also acknowledged the challenges that were emerging that may need to be examined by the Commission and its subgroups. Issues such as the increase in parental substance abuse, high numbers of suicides for system involved youth, gang affiliated shootings and violence, domestic violence, low graduation rates for system involved youth, and revenue shortfalls that could limit funding were given as examples.

The group concentrated on identifying areas of focus for the next year. Through their conversation the Commission members identified four priority areas. They encompasses the System of Care initiative, workforce issues, technology and data sharing, and prevention efforts.

- *System of Care Initiative*

The group discussed the complications that would arise if the Commission formed a System of Care (SOC) plan without communication with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Behavioral Health. Rather than create two separate, parallel groups, the Commission would work to meld the SOC Workforce as it previously stood with the group being established by DHHS to establish a collaborative plan. Having a report out to the Commission on a regular basis would also aid in this process. Sherri Dawson would be contacted to see if she or a representative would be willing to attend meetings to provide the updates.

Another goal of the SOC Workforce would be to investigate performance based contracting requirements for service providers in order to comply with statute.

- *Workforce Issues*

While the statute outlined specific areas to research, it became clear that there would be many steps needed before a solution was found. There was a consensus that information should be gathered on the work already being done by DHHS and Probation to strengthen their workforce. The Commission and its Workforce Workgroup would assist in establishing a timeline for progress as well as a baseline of data to work from. Efforts would be made to involve the Nebraska Association of Public Employees (NAPE) and the Department of Administrative Services in the Workforce Workgroup in order to identify the necessary steps in updating job descriptions and positions. Other recommended membership additions to the Workgroup included private sector experts with experience in workforce reform and caseworker representative.

- *Technology and Data Sharing*

The need for consistent and measurable data was expressed as an ongoing need in the work of the Commission. While there were steps in place such as the data warehouse study, LR265, additional measures needed to be taken. A partnership with the University of Nebraska was suggested as a helpful resource for information gathering. Other goals included examining the current data being collected on child well-being, identifying the data to be collected over the next 5-10 years and the process to do so that would allow for system-wide trends to be analyzed, utilize the Data, Technology, Accountability, and Reporting (DTAR) Workgroup to gather and provide information to the Commission and other subgroups upon request, and encourage a system that functions on data driven decision making.

- *Prevention Efforts*

While part of the work of the Commission was to provide the best life possible to youth within the systems, conversation also emphasized the importance of the prevention of system involvement all together. Mary Jo Pankoke informed the members of the work of the Community Ownership of Child Well-Being (COCWB) Workgroup and the efforts within the communities. Work still needed to be done included addressing legislative funding barriers and investigating grant funding opportunities. Goals outlined for the COCWB Workgroup included enlisting the communities to gather data on their efforts over the last year, identifying new communities that should be brought into the movement, research recommendations for state level policies to support the community efforts, and work to see a decrease in the number of substantiated calls to the Adult and Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.

After identifying the main priorities the conversation shifted to review of each sub group to ensure that they had a clearly defined scope and tasks for the upcoming year.

- Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee
 - This Committee would focus efforts on their Juvenile Justice Extension Taskforce. After LB866 did not pass in the last legislative session, it was planned that the Taskforce re-examine the issue and gather additional data. There were hopes to propose the extension as a bill during the next legislative session.
- Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee
 - Would look into data on the foster parent numbers throughout the state as they relate to the foster parent reimbursement rates.
 - Work with the SOC Workgroup to share information on Treatment Foster Care options and rates.
- Juvenile Services Committee
 - Continue the work of their four Workgroups to create recommendations for the annual report.
- Normalcy Task Force
 - The efforts and research being done by the five subcommittees will contribute not only to their annual report but aid in the work of LB529, which examines the ongoing implementation of the Strengthening Families Act.
- Psychotropic Medication Committee
 - The work of this committee will aid in the workforce education efforts towards medication procedures.

- Community Ownership of Child Well Being Workgroup
 - This Workgroup would center their efforts on the issues mentioned under the Prevention Effort priority.
- Data, Technology, Accountability, and Reporting Workgroup
 - The attention of this Workgroup would include the items outlined in the Technology and Data Sharing priority.
- System of Care Workgroup
 - The collaborative efforts noted in the System of Care priority were to be the focus of this Workgroup.
- Workforce Workgroup
 - This Workgroup would focus on the issues previously mentioned within the Workforce Issues priority.

X. New Business

There was no New Business to discuss.

XI. Closing Remarks

Chair Baxter thanked the members and guests for their time and input. She indicated that she would provide a brief overview of the topic discussed at the retreat the next day at the Commission meeting for members who could not make the retreat.

XII. Adjournment

It was moved by Mary Jo Pankoke and seconded by Susan Thomas to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 4:44 p.m.

8/2/2016

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