

This report details efforts taken to facilitate a DHHS Citizen Review Panel, as required by CAPTA. The Young Adult Citizen Review Panel consists of youth and young adults with child welfare or/and juvenile justice system experience. This report describes projects for FY 2024-25.

# Young Adults Citizen Review Panel Year-End Report FY 24-25

Prepared by Nebraska Children

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This report addresses the actions taken to satisfy the scope of services for the facilitation of a Citizen Review Panel (CRP) as outlined in the agreement between the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. This report includes activities undertaken to facilitate and maintain a CRP as part of the duties of the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation Advisory Board. These activities are described in more detail below.

**Scope of Work: Provide administrative support to the Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) Citizen Review Panel.**

Nebraska Children provides staff support to facilitate all activities of the CRP. This support includes partnering with CRP members to arrange meeting locations, dates, times and agendas; and providing lodging, meals, and transportation, as needed. By working with CRP members to plan and facilitate meetings, young adults receive professional experience with meeting facilitation and leadership, in addition to the opportunity to share their perspectives as members.

The Youth Adult CRP is funded through braided public and private dollars, including those provided under this grant. This strategy maximizes the youth’s ability to apply their voice and experience without asking for too much travel and enhances the opportunities and supports that Nebraska Children can provide to remove any barriers to participation while staying within funding stream parameters.

Additionally, support staff provides informal coaching to young adult CRP members throughout the year. Areas of coaching include conflict resolution, disagreeing respectfully, meeting facilitation, presentation development, among other soft skills. Such support is provided via one-on-one conversations before, during, and after meetings; and, to the entire group during meetings, when needed.

Of final note is the number of CRP members who are parenting. To ensure that parenthood is not a barrier to participation, we provide a childcare stipend for members. Plus, the CRP meetings are open to children. If needed, additional support staff were recruited to provide childcare during meetings. By providing a safe, supervised space for children, CRP members were able to focus on the meeting agenda. We believe that these supports help ensure the panel is inclusive.

**Scope of Work: Provide support for meetings that occur at least once every 3 months.**

The Young Adult Citizen Review Panel (CRP) met monthly to help increase productivity and follow-through from meeting to meeting. While we encourage in-person meetings, we kept a virtual option for people to attend in case they encounter logistical issues.

<i>2024-25 Meetings</i>
October 20, 2024 – Lincoln
November 10, 2024 – Omaha
December 8, 2024 – Lincoln
January 12, 2025 – Lincoln
February 1-3, 2025 – Ashland
March 2, 2025 – Omaha
April 6, 2025 – Lincoln
May 18, 2025 – Omaha
June 29, 2025 – Lincoln
July 20, 2025 – Omaha
August 2-3, 2025 – Aurora
September 14, 2025 – Lincoln

The group's first meeting of the year happened on October 20 in Lincoln at the Nebraska Children offices. We kicked off the year by setting the table for the group. We reviewed the bylaws, talked about expectations and added a clause to encourage people to show up to meetings on time. The group met with two DHHS employees and discussed the statewide assessment plan. Finally, the group revisited the final recommendations before they were submitted to DHHS.

The second meeting happened on Nov. 10 at the Nebraska Children offices in Omaha. The group started the meeting with a team building activity to help with solving difficult challenges. They then began work on Legislative Days and divided up into work groups. They wrapped up the day with facilitation training to help them lead small groups at Legislative Days.

Our third meeting during the quarter happened on December 8 over Zoom. Because of limited attendance we switched to an online meeting. The group finalized details about Legislative Days and finalized roles for the event. They closed out the meeting by sharing lessons learned from the Jim Casey convening in November in Charlotte.

The group's first meeting of the second quarter happened on January 12 in Lincoln. The focus of the meeting was preparation for Legislative Days. The meeting kicked off with a discussion with DHHS about the CRP recommendations submitted in October. They provided more background and rationale for their recommendations. The group spent the rest of the meeting working on Legislative Days. They also made assignments on who would contact senators and invite them to the luncheon on Monday. They walked through the weekend and went over expectations for the members during the event. They followed up with a prep call on Jan. 26 to make sure the group was ready for the event.

More than 20 young people attended the annual Legislative Day from February 1-3. Those youth represented the young people from around the state that are part of the Connected Youth Initiative (CYI). The Youth Advisory Board planned and facilitated the event and aimed to connect youth from diverse backgrounds around civic engagement and provide an opportunity for them to have a voice. For the first time in three years, we hosted the event in-person

During the first day, the youth build connections between each other and attended training topics including the legislative process, public speaking, advocacy and bills currently in front of the legislature. They also participated in a leadership activity about teamwork, perspective and making sacrifices. Among all the skill development, youth discussed current legislation impacting young Nebraskans and selected five bills to capture in brief presentations. Members then created and practiced their presentations on Sunday. They also heard from a key note speaker from Appleseed who used her lived experience to find a career.

On Monday, the young people practiced their presentations before heading to Lincoln. They were recognized by the Legislature and checked out the capitol. The youth shared their bill presentations with senators' staff and NCFE partners over lunch and in an afternoon meeting with Governor Pillen. In addition, they met with Supreme Court Justice William Cassel. The group presented five bills about suicide awareness and training for child welfare workers, allowing eligible aliens to receive public benefits, changing eligibility requirement for SNAP benefits, changing rules around habitual truancy, and against lowering the age to charge young people about adults and other rules about detention and hearings. The full presentations and their supporting documents can be viewed here:

<https://www.nebraskachildren.org/what-we-do/connected-youth-initiative/2025-youth-legislative-day.html>

Our third meeting during the quarter happened on March 2 in Omaha. The group debriefed from Legislative Days and reviewed the evaluations. They selected two new members. In the afternoon, the group talked with Abby Phillips, a member of the Iowa Youth Justice Council (and DHHS employee) about how the two states could work together and learn from each other. They closed the meeting by reviewing the CYI report

The group's first meeting of the third quarter happened on April 6 in Lincoln. The group kicked off the meeting by welcoming two new members and going over expectations, best practices and the bylaws. They then did a team-building activity that focused on group communication and how to build off of what people say. After lunch, the group started planning for the LEAD the Summer event in August. They identified the theme of Building Community. The group then went over the CRP process and what all goes into it. The meeting closed with a field trip to play miniature golf to build team bonds.

On May 18, the group met in Omaha. They started the day with prep work for the LEAD the Summer event. We will be heading back to Aurora to host the event at the Leadership Center. They worked on the curriculum focused on building communities and all the communities young people are part of. In the afternoon, the group met with Felipe Longoria-Shinn to talk about RPED and other youth leadership opportunities. The group closed the afternoon with Citizen Review Panel work. They talked about their passion projects and work they were interested in.

The group met at the Nebraska Children offices in Lincoln on June 29 for the last meeting of the quarter. The meeting started a recap of the RFK Youth Justice Conference by Carissa and Nandi. The group then finalized the LEAD the Summer details and built a recruitment strategy. The group started the afternoon meeting with Brenda from NCFE's marketing department to work on updating biographies and photos for the website. They then talked about the CRP passion projects and brainstorming questions to ask DHHS when they come to our next meeting.

The group kicked off the fourth quarter with a meeting in Lincoln on July 14. The group started the meeting by reviewing the agenda and roles for the LEAD the Summer in a few weeks away. They then talked about the possibility of starting a social media account for the group. In the afternoon, they welcomed Kenny and Deanna from DHHS to talk about ideas for CRP recommendations. The group debriefed and then set future meeting dates.

The Advisory Board hosted the LEAD the Summer event on August 2-3. The event focused on creating community. The group learned the characteristics of a community, what communities they belong to, and did presentations on self-awareness, social communities and how they can be leaders in their community. The weekend also included social time like Tie-Dye and a campfire as the young people were able to build connections with each other.

The last meeting of the year happened on Sept. 14 in Lincoln. They started the meeting going over evaluations from LEAD the Summer and debriefing the event. They went over a youth questionnaire with Sarah May and Jackie Belcher from the NCFE evaluations team. The group spent most of the afternoon working on writing and editing the recommendations. They selected one new member to join the board. They wrapped up the day by celebrating the end of our year and everything that was accomplished.

The minutes for all the meetings are in Appendix A.

**Scope of Work: Assure that the Panel is composed of volunteer members who are broadly representative of the diversity in the state and include members who have expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect and may include adult former victims of child abuse and neglect.**

The Young Adult Citizen Review Panel consists of 16-26-year-old unconnected young people. These are young adults with direct experience in Nebraska's child welfare, juvenile justice and/or homeless systems. Members have experienced a variety of placements, services, permanency objectives and, in some cases, multiple state systems. Members serve at their discretion and cannot be required to participate under any case plan, court order or other obligatory order, making membership completely voluntary.

The group included of 13 members throughout the year who were selected via an application and represents the communities of Omaha, Lincoln, Fairbury, Beatrice and Columbus. Each of the young people serves renewable one-year terms. Membership is capped at 15 members, and they will seek new members in February and August.

**Scope of Work: Inform the members and staff of the CRP that they shall not disclose to any person or government official any identifying information about any specific child protection case with respect to which the Task Force is provided information and shall not make public other information unless authorized by State statute. This assurance shall be documented by the completion of a confidentiality statement.**

The group signed confidentiality agreements for the 2024-25 CRP year. The CRP does not review individual child protection cases as part of their work. However, they do gather the feedback of their peers and utilize their own stories of system involvement. Confidentiality of the stories shared by CRP members and their peers or families during meetings is captured within the group's values of confidentiality and safe space. No personal stories are captured in meeting minutes or documents without the direct permission of the owner of that story.

**Scope of Work: Assure that the CRP provides for public outreach and comment to assess the impact of current procedures and practices upon children and families in the community to meet its obligations.**

As previously described, CRP members are involved in local youth leadership, youth-serving programs, and/or peer groups with other alumni or current participants of the child welfare system. They also reach out to groups that have specific expertise on their projects to capture additional perspective. Further, the CRP is open to any youth to participate. These strategies help provide the opportunity for additional feedback on CRP activities and recommendations.

**Scope of Work: Assure that at least one member of the CRP attends the annual Citizen Review Panel Conference.**

The National CRP Conference did not happen this year. However, the budget was modified to have two people attend a Juvenile Justice focused conference in June. They shared their thoughts with the group about the conference and the lessons they learned. Lincoln Arneal is serving on the committee to plan the 2026 conference.

**Scope of Work: Assure that the CRP examines the policies and procedures and practices of the State and local agencies and where appropriate, specific cases, evaluate the extent to which the State and local child protection system agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with state plan, the child protection standards and any other criteria that the panel considers important to ensure the protection of children, including a review of the extent to which the State and local child protective services system is coordinated with the foster care and adoption programs.**

The Project Everlast Citizen Review Panel (PE CRP) formulated four recommendations based on their lived experience as well as their interactions with other young people at Legislative Days and our LEAD the Summer event. The recommendations are also impacted by the current state of child welfare in the state and the discussions happening in the State of Nebraska.

After our discussions, the panel focused their work on four recommendations: providing moving supplies when foster youth change placements, addressing systemic biases in mandatory reporting, providing more education about healthy eating habits, and providing more options for Deaf and Hard of Hearing foster youth.

### **Recommendation #1 - Providing Luggage to Youth in Need**

The nature of foster care can be tumultuous and unpredictable, emergencies arise, and a system-involved youth can expect to jump around quite a bit. Often, children in state care are uprooted from one placement to another. The cruel reality children across Nebraska face is being handed a garbage bag and told to pack all their belongings and their identity in less than an hour. In the process, these children are left with trauma, feelings of instability, and doubts about self-worth. After all, your self-esteem would seem fit for the landfill if your possessions amounted to a bag meant for broken things too.

As of March 31, 2025, 4,142 court-involved children were in out-of-home care in Nebraska, according to the Department of Health and Human Services' quarterly report. Of those, 3,378 were in DHHS custody. We would like you to visualize what it means to expect youth in Nebraska to move with only a trash bag. The Nebraska state capital building is 400 feet tall. If you were to lay 3,378 standard kitchen trash bags end-to-end, the total length would be approximately 7,706 feet, which is almost **20 Nebraska state capital buildings stacked on top of each other**. These aren't just trash bags, though. Inside are real possessions and the belongings of thousands of foster youth. We are bringing this to DHHS's attention through our partnership because we believe we can do better than treating children like waste.

*All children deserve the dignity, respect, and support of luggage or totes rather than plastic sacks.* The solution doesn't have to be elaborate, and we think we could easily come up with a plan to make this happen. When we met with DHHS earlier this year, we asked, "Do all children in Nebraska still get a garbage bag to move between placements?" The response was that "Some good caseworkers go above and beyond to provide real bags or luggage." In our eyes, it shouldn't have to be dependent on the character or morals of a caseworker when all caseworkers should default to being "good." It should rely on the department created to help children and families in our great state. We believe this effort would be an excellent use of Chaffee funds and would like to see DHHS provide a compact bag for every caseworker's vehicle.

This initiative would also provide a valuable opportunity to collaborate more closely with local non-profits. Initially, when we researched organizations and websites that provided luggage to children in Nebraska, we expected to find tangible resources. However, we encountered errors and "Site could not be found" pages. DHHS provides essential services to youth and families in Nebraska, and we want to see this continue to be implemented to further prove this fact.

If local organizations are not on the table, Chaffee funds could be used to purchase Comfort Cases XL compact duffel bags. [On their website](#), they state that the Comfort XL is a 32-inch duffel bag that folds up, "and truly replaces the trash bag". They sell their bags in boxes of 25, and each box of Comfort XL's would cost about \$20-40, depending on shipping costs. If we bought an XL comfort case for the entire foster youth population of NE, it would cost between \$2,702 and \$5,404 (assuming every single child in care would need one).

Multiple states have already signed bills and codes to uphold this standard through law. In April of 2024, Oregon enacted Senate Bill 1016, which prohibits the Oregon Department of Human Services from using trash bags to transport foster children's personal belongings. The bill clarifies and strengthens a previous law by explicitly banning the use of trash bags and requiring DHS to provide annual reports on its luggage carrier inventory and any instances of their use. Maryland followed soon after with Family Law § 5-505.2, requiring its DHS to not only establish and maintain a decentralized supply of new luggage, but also to develop procedures for the storage and distribution of new luggage intended for children in foster care. These states aren't the only ones enacting legislation or code. In September of 2025, Texas passed House Bill 3765, establishing a luggage supply program for the belongings of children in foster care.

This issue boils down to dignity. Our goal with this recommendation is to give the children in Nebraska the dignity and respect we were denied. Change doesn't have to start with judges and legislators breathing down your neck; it can start with DHHS. Dignity is crucial for foster kids because it reinforces their sense of self-worth, stability, and personal value, especially after trauma and frequent moves. It helps build a strong cultural identity, which improves mental health, and ensures they are treated with respect, not as "trash." Providing basic needs, like proper luggage, is a tangible way to honor their individuality and potential.

### **Recommendation #2 - Addressing Racial Disparities**

Racial disparities and inequity are an ingrained systemic issue in the United States. We see fragments of these issues in the Nebraska Child Welfare system, inflicting harm to families, youth, and maintaining the status quo. We alone cannot change or solve every racial disparity that has plagued this country since its inception; However, we are witnesses and have control within our given fields, actions, and subliminal opinions and/or biases. Mandatory Reporting was a law enacted into Nebraska legislation, making it a lawful duty to report suspected child abuse from any person. This legislation was signed with good intentions in mind, but we have observed unintended consequences as a result. The Youth Advisory Board would like to ensure that Nebraska is aware of the harm that mandatory reporting can cause and work towards a solution that does not disproportionately affect minorities and vulnerable communities in our state, one that does not compromise the safety and well-being of children.

Under Nebraska Revised Statute 28-711, a person with an inkling or suspicion that a child is subjected to abuse is obligated by law to report the incident on a toll-free number. We acknowledge that any sign or indication of abuse must be reported. In contrast, this statute could cause substantial issues, including, but not limited to:

1. Over surveillance and policing, especially within Black, Latino, and Indigenous communities, that over-represent the child welfare system, not just locally, but on a national scale.
2. The overpopulation of the foster system, with little to no proper and safe housing or available placements.
3. Ignored or missed critical cases due to the overflowing number of calls, but not enough social workers or law enforcement to investigate these cases.
4. The ratio of youth in care due to poverty and lack of resources rather than abuse and intentional neglect.

With this statute and the issues that arise because of it, we as an institution that is focused on providing safe placement for abused and neglected youth begin to work against ourselves and our purpose when it comes to children and families.

While upholding the law, we should collaborate with experts in the child welfare system, advocates, and individuals with lived experience to implement protective and conscious practices that offset the negative impacts of Mandatory Reporting. Here are some recommendations made by the Jim Casey organization.

1. Start by routinely examining trends and research. Identify and acknowledge bias, disproportionality, and disparities; and identify effective alternatives.
2. Engage cross-system partners and people with foster care experience,
3. Develop reporter awareness, education, training, and tools
4. Re-examine existing funding and policy approaches,
5. Design better pathways for families to access support.

These criteria are crucial for addressing and implementing secure strategies regarding the repercussions of Mandatory reporting.

<https://www.casey.org/mandated-reporting-convening/>

### **Recommendation #3 - Focus on Nutrition for Foster Youth**

Currently, foster youth often face inconsistent access to nutritious, affordable meals because of frequent placement changes, limited caregiver training, and a lack of individualized nutrition support. Many foster parents and biological parents are not equipped with the knowledge to plan balanced meals, manage dietary restrictions, or maintain continuity in children's nutrition when transitioning between homes. As a result, youth may develop poor eating habits, have unmet dietary/medical needs, or feel disconnected from their cultural food preferences. Additionally, youth often have little voice in their own meal choices, which can negatively affect both their physical health and emotional well-being.

We recommend a two-part approach: nutrition education for foster parents and youth-centered nutrition support to address these challenges.

Foster parents and biological parents should receive structured training on affordable meal planning, grocery budgeting, and special dietary needs, with optional consultations from a nutritionist or dietitian. Online resources, templates, and peer networks can reinforce learning and provide practical tools. Since licensed foster homes are already required to complete foster care training to become certified, we recommend that this structured nutrition education be incorporated into that training and made a requirement for kinship homes as well.

We believe that a structured curriculum should include the following:

- Modules on basic nutrition, meal planning, grocery budgeting, and reading nutrition labels and dyes
- Highlight affordable, kid-friendly, and culturally appropriate meals
- Guidance for special dietary needs (e.g., allergies, POTS, diabetes, celiac disease)
- Consider having a nutritionist or dietitian present during training sessions
- Provide online modules or resource toolkits
- Provide meal-planning templates, sample menus, and shopping guides
- Emergency snack ideas and tips for days when children move between homes

Additionally, caseworkers should engage youth in regular, supportive conversations about their eating habits, ensuring that their preferences and needs are met. By involving youth in meal planning and

offering age-appropriate nutrition education, the system can promote both healthier eating and personal empowerment, leading to better long-term health outcomes for foster youth.

- Caseworkers (or foster care specialists) schedule periodic check-ins with foster parents to answer questions and offer refresher tips.
- Caseworkers (or foster care specialists) should regularly ask youth about their typical daily food intake, including snacks and drinks, to gain a comprehensive picture of their nutritional habits.
- Encourage youth to share what foods they like, dislike, or wish they could have more often, creating space for honest, judgment-free discussion.

In conclusion, we believe that focusing on nutrition and implementing structured training would significantly help youth feel more food secure and promote healthier habits. With consistent training, collaboration among caregivers and caseworkers, and active youth participation, foster care programs can ensure that every child has access to nourishing, enjoyable, and personalized meals that contribute to lifelong wellness.

#### **Recommendation #4 - Combatting Linguistic Neglect in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Youth in Care**

Currently, there is only one foster home in Nebraska that is able and willing to provide care to Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH) foster youth. According to DHHS, there are four *documented* D/HH youth in the Nebraska child welfare system. This presents a gap in the care D/HH youth need and the care they actually receive. This recommendation seeks to fill this gap by providing ASL interpreters, encouraging and facilitating language development in foster homes and ensuring that youth support is linguistically competent and accurate.

According to Lomas and Johnson (2012), Deaf and Hard of Hearing youth are considered to have a “low-incidence disability.” Yet, this population experiences approximately four times the abuse when compared to hearing children. Language deprivation can occur in D/HH youth when there is a lack of language development and access during the child’s formative years, leading to potential adverse childhood experiences and health problems (Humphries, 2019). Additionally, it is well known and documented that being removed from one’s biological parents is traumatic; this trauma is compounded in D/HH youth when their situation is not explained to them in their native language. Lomas and Johnson discuss the impact of uncommunicated transitions and life changes on D/HH youth. At times, the system is overwhelmed by its duty to place a child; they do not take the care necessary to explain what is happening to the youth, especially in cases of D/HH youth. It is the responsibility of DHHS to combat the linguistic neglect often suffered by D/HH who enter care. The following example is a case study from Lomas and Johnson:

Compounding the problems inherent in our child welfare system is a lack of appropriate foster care placements for children with hearing loss. If a child with a hearing loss is ordered to be removed from his or her caregiver, they are often placed in settings where communication is minimal or nonexistent, such as a shelter. This may lead to increased fear and anxiety for the child who is unsure what is happening to him or her. Often, the child becomes confused and blames him or herself for the separation from caregivers. The following case study from Lomas and Johnson illustrates a common experience for D/HH children in the CPS system:

#### **The Case of Sally**

Sally, a pseudonym, is an integration of multiple children with hearing loss, whom the first author served in the CPS system. She was 8 years old when referred to me. The caseworker informed me Sally was in foster care for nearly a year with no psychological services. Sally's abilities were unknown to the caseworker, as she inherited the case from another caseworker who recently left the agency. She indicated she wanted an informal assessment on Sally, as she was not sure if Sally was intellectually challenged. She reported that Sally was unable to speak and her fluency in sign language was unknown. As I prepared to see Sally, I reviewed CPS records that indicated Sally's parents had multiple reports of neglectful supervision. The documents indicated that Sally's parents used drugs, and often would leave her alone for multiple days as they binged on crack cocaine. In the most recent incident, Sally was found naked, roaming the streets of her rural town. She was found by a single, older male individual who alerted authorities. There was no indication she had been sexually abused, but because communication was difficult, CPS was unsure if the man who found her abused her before calling authorities. The court had removed Sally from the custody of her parents for neglectful supervision, who made no effort to see her during the year she was under the supervision of the state. Sally's foster parents reported no behavior problems at their home. They stated she was cooperative, though they were unable to communicate with her. They stated she attended school, but they knew nothing about the programming offered by the school as they did not attend her IEP meetings.

I took a puppet with me as I walked out to the waiting room to meet Sally for the first time. She sat quietly, and a caseworker assistant who knew nothing of Sally's situation sat with her. Sally was hesitant to follow me to my play therapy room, but the puppet put a smile on her face and helped her to build trust in me. In our first session, Sally began to talk using a signed English system. The native language of American deaf people is American Sign Language, not signed English. Thus, it was clear to me Sally had been in a public school and had been exposed to formal education, where she was taught signed English. We began to play on the floor with dolls and Sally adjusted her skirt to cover her legs as much as possible. I knew she had been taught manners and modesty in social situations. Sally spent 3 hours with me that day and returned for three more sessions that month. During those sessions, she reported to me that she was taken to a shelter and was very scared to be there. She indicated she was confused and was unsure why she was required to eat and sleep there for several days. She stated she was later moved into a foster care situation, which frustrated her greatly because she could not communicate with her caregivers. However, she cooperated and was hopeful she might be reunited with her parents in the near future. She stated that she had not seen her parents since before they left her at home alone many months ago. After the fourth session, the caseworker informed me that transportation to my office was a burden due to the distance, and I never saw Sally again. (2012)

The essential first step is for the child welfare and social services systems to explicitly acknowledge the persistent and widespread challenges faced by D/HH children and their families in supporting the linguistic development of children and their caretakers. A subsequent step in promoting change involves professionals cultivating a deeper understanding of signed languages, the cognitive and social benefits of bilingual and bimodal language acquisition, and the necessity of sustained exposure to both sign and spoken or written language throughout a deaf child's development and education. This commitment is especially urgent given that deaf children are expected to experience abuse at rates up to four times higher than their hearing counterparts.

In addition to recognizing this problem and furthering one's understanding of signed languages, this Citizen Review Panel recommends that DHHS provide a sign language interpreter (or interpreters, as required) for all meetings with D/HH youth and/or family members. We believe it is crucial for the system-involved young person to be recognized and for their experiences to be validated by those charged with their care. Whenever possible, contracting the same interpreter throughout the child's case builds

stability and rapport, enabling a deeper connection and a better understanding of the child's well-being. For case workers, foster parents, and even (at times) the systems-involved child, DHHS should facilitate and strongly encourage sign language learning. Linguistic neglect does not stop once a child enters the system if the child cannot communicate freely at home. Learning sign language can be done through community resources, community events, and online resources — most, if not all, offered at low or no cost.

## References

Humphries, T., Kushalnagar, P., Mathur, G., Napoli, D. J., Padden, C., Rathmann, C., & Smith, S. (December 2016). Avoiding linguistic neglect of deaf children. *Social Service Review*, 90(4). <https://doi.org/10.1086/689543>

Lomas, G. I., & Johnson, H. A. (August 9, 2012). Overlooked and unheard: Abuse of children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their experience with CPS and foster care. *The Family Journal*, 20(4), 376-383. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480712452708>

## Appendix A: Meeting Minutes:

**NCCF Advisory Board**

October 20, 2024

**Minutes**

10 a.m. Welcome and introductions- Lincoln, Chloe, Karolina, Julia, Grey, Rowan, Kyaire, Nandi, Khe'Yana, Nyayien, Carissa

10:30 a.m. Icebreaker – name, pronoun, community, what's going on in your world, fav scent:

- *Grey- they/them, quit smoking, Karma from Lush*
- *Nyayien- (sounds like Diane with an N) she/her, Hall County, got own apt. went to San Diego, CJA degree in school, Petrichor- Fresh rain earth smell and onions cooking*
- *Julia- she/her, Columbus/Platte County- Expecting in May! Hot cocoa/earthy scent*
- *Karolina- she/her- Lincoln- life is hard right now- scent- YSL black opium or vanilla*
- *Chloe- she/her- Lincoln, school-conservation bio most interesting class right now- switched to environmental science- vanilla and bakery sweets*
- *Lincoln- he/him- Lincoln- busy with Husker VB, bountiful garden harvest, popcorn*
- *Kyaire- she/her- Omaha- moving to San Diego in next few weeks- still be active member- vanilla bean noel from Bath and Body*
- *Nandi- she/her- Lincoln- exams, midterms, -MBA scent or sandalwood- by Jackie*
- *Khe-Yana- she/her- Omaha- growth time- honey- natural warm scent*
- *Rowan- they/them- Omaha- school- white pumpkin chai- Target sweet on the outside*

Activity- Reverse Pictionary- favorite hobbies

11 a.m. Setting the Table for the year

- Bylaw Review –
  - Assess vs access on Article II Section D #2
  - Article 4 Section A: Arrive late or depart early stipend adjusted accordingly – 15-minute grace period will be allowed at start of meeting- (\$10 per 20 minutes)
  - Communication is key, and early so meeting activities can be adjusted for virtual attendance/hybrid/etc.
- Group Goal Setting
- Event Planning for 2025 (Legislative Days Feb. 1-3 or 8-10)
  - First weekend in February
  - Hoping for around 40 youth for next year-
  - Would we like the Dillion center again or Western Town- Western town preferred
  - Kearney would do one and then come together on Sunday and Monday

Noon Lunch

1 p.m. Children and Family Service Statewide Assessment Discussion with DHHS

- Deanna (program specialist), Angela (administrator), and Sheila (quality improvement)-- Children and family services review plan Statewide Assessment – every one across the nation is surveyed by the children’s bureau –
  - What type of involvement/engagement with them/young adults have they seen be successful in the past?
    - CASA volunteers, outside of team members was helpful, LEAP coach, Opportunity Passport, CSCP
  - How should we continuously engage them (the youth) in ongoing process to improve services and reach positive outcomes for youth and families?
    - Outside of counselor no one to talk to about things/involvement, broadcasting opportunities more, got moved right when got connected and lost access, so stopping and restarting services/therapy, continuation/consistency of services would help. Case worker turnover isn’t helpful. Programs for under 14 but not as many when you turn 14- or certain ones you have to be 14 or older for some programs and closed off access to things. Need consistent support and stability- someone to rely on- engaging and fun, hope and excitement. Missing out on B2i, ETV, and support documents because didn’t have document saying ward of state to qualify for services. Qualifications/stipulations prevented from participating. Told they would qualify but then didn’t
    - Didn’t know a lot of h.s. kids that were system involved so would have benefitted from them speaking at High School and speaking about eligibility. Having rep going to high schools about FASFA and opportunities and college opps. Guidance counselor talked about college in general but not specific to system involved youth and resources -details on the “HOW” it’s paid for and steps/more info
    - Possibility to come in the future: a statewide curriculum for youth moving across state to not lose credits when moving or have classes not count- (i.e. consistent “9<sup>th</sup> grade English”). System involved youth diploma – foster and probation as well.
    - Maybe assemblies at schools- required for students to attend and listen as they may not volunteer to attend otherwise and realize they are missing the information
  - What did you case manager do well that current managers should do to help youth and families reach positive outcomes? What do you recommend case managers do differently to better support youth and families?
    - If I mentioned an interest- in future meetings they would bring something up that made them feel heard or cared about that related to interest. Learning my humor, less formal
    - Training – cultural competency in all areas- deaf and disabled youth underserved youth

- Involved with Big Brother Big Sisters and helped did art together, something you could do with a case worker to connect – paint, draw, craft, board games,
- Lost language when told/force to speak English with case worker= find way to keep connection with culture and language – when removed from home, it would have been a way to keep that connection with their mom - feel more comfortable with someone who speaks same language/from your community
- Find more spaces than same 2 locations for caseworkers to meet with child – in community instead of gov. buildings- changing up sceneries
- When you were transitioning out of foster care what were some of the gaps/services programs that you were needing or would have benefitted you?
  - Cultural competency, check ins as you transition out, housing, job access, clothing, nonprofit closets, mental health screenings, assessments, counseling, emphasize privacy of youth- constantly sharing counseling session information even when not ‘in dangerous’ situation- needs same respect/trust
- Did you engage in your court proceedings/court process? Why or why not?
  - Emphasis positive things as well—need to hear good things in court. Benefited strengths, positive changes I made.
  - Having a positive response/interaction with a judge—really felt seen as a person-
  - Not involved enough with the process- didn’t understand what I needed to—more transitioning communication/education- for kids to be able to advocate more for themselves and really understand the process. The outcome was based on factors not communicated to me and not in a way a child could understand/grasp at the time.
  - Wish we were educated on process and what details needs shared. Not just ‘I don’t like the foster home’ but honest details about unsafe environments and communicate it so changes can be made.
  - Communication and training for casework/court so they know how to speak and communicate to youth and ages and what should and shouldn’t be shared.

2 p.m. CRP Recommendation finalization

- [2023-24 CRP Recommendations - Google Docs](#)

2:30 p.m. Teambuilding activity- ran out of time

3 p.m. Wrap up and dismiss

- Future Dates Advisory Board gatherings

- Nov. 10 (Omaha)
- Dec. 8 (Lincoln)
- January 12 (Omaha)

## NCCF Advisory Board

November 10, 2024

Nebraska Children Offices  
2610 Harney Street; Omaha, NE 68131

### Minutes

- 10 a.m. Welcome and introductions – favorite airport-
- In person: Chloe, Rowan, Julia, Nyayien, Khe’Yana, Nandi, Lincoln, Carissa, Grey
- Virtual: Dawn (10-1040), Emmitt (11-12), Kyaire
- 10:30 a.m. Vote on Bylaws- Approved!
- 10:40 a.m. Team Building Activity – Who’s On First- decision making activity- figure out roles that everyone plays-
- ~~11:30 a.m. CYI One-Pager Review & Video Creation~~
- Noon Lunch- Voodoo Taco
- 1 p.m. Legislative Days – Feb. 1-3
- Overview and expectations
    - o At Camp Carol Joy Holling in Western Town
      - Goal around 35 people – 7 people in group up to 5 groups
      - We are welcome crew, invite people, help them get settled
      - Inviting Camp Catch-Up, Beyond School Bells Advisory board
      - If your aren’t leading a session- you are in charge of a group of young people, keeping them engaged, learning the information, etc.
    - o **Prior to** – we will have some prep calls
    - o **Saturday’s** theme is **EDUCATION**- baseline of advocacy and legislative policy so everyone has the same base of knowledge
      - Public Speaking session- Grey- Rowan
      - Legislation 101 – Chloe- Julia
      - Advocacy overall- Nandi- Nyayien
      - Bill Overview – will chose different bills—Lincoln
      - Jeopardy- Rowan
      - Saturday evening- leadership and get to know each other/social time
      - **Everyone who participates will stay overnight and help work on it.**
      - There for the whole time, so **plan ahead** for energy drinks/needs/ may make one run for bedding and sheets.
    - o **Sunday** is **PREP DAY**
      - Communities time to get together and brag about what they are doing- Community Café (may cut for more time for prep if needed) but nice sharing session across the state

- Speaker (last year Lincoln City Council- Tom)
  - 3 hours of work time
  - Another speaker with lived experience who has made advocacy a career
  - Evening social time
- **Monday** is **DAY OF ACTION**
  - Run through presentations in morning, get feedback
  - Head to capital- a little tour/walk around
  - Lunch with senators and presentations
    - Need to plant questions so we have questions when ask the audience for questions and show off their passion and knowledge
    - Young people presenting can say what 3 questions they may want to answer-
  - Then speaker from the judicial branch
  - Then meet with Governor and give presentations for him
- SWAG items- usually a long sleeve shirt so if youth don't have dress outfit they can wear the shirt and look sharp
  - Additional item- last year joggers, tumblers, coffee mugs, notebooks, pop sockets, around \$10-15 per person
- What do we want to change?
  - Are there any events going on while we are there? Committee hearings?
  - Maybe a fire pit if weather works
  - Maybe invite a journalist to speak/present
- Work Group Work Time
  - First things to get done- line up keynote speakers, agenda,

2:30 p.m. Facilitation Training

- Even if not facilitating- your role is to keep everyone engaged and involved
- Facilitation activity

3 p.m. Wrap up and dismiss

- Future Dates Advisory Board gatherings
  - Dec. 8 with DHHS (Lincoln)
  - January 12 (Omaha)
  - Feb 3-5 – Legislative Days (Ashland & Lincoln)

## **NCCF Advisory Board**

December 8, 2024

### **Minutes**

Zoom meeting – Grey, Rowan, Julia, Khe’Yana, Kyaire

10 a.m. Welcome and introductions

1:30 p.m. Legislative Days – Feb. 1-3

- Went through Agenda to make sure understood roles
- To do list:
  - o Contact Senators
  - o Talked about
  - o Address on packet

2:30 p.m. Share out and Fears

1 p.m. Jim Casey Convening Share out

3 p.m. Wrap up and dismiss

- Future Dates Advisory Board gatherings
  - o January 12 (Omaha)
  - o Late January/February – Prep Call
  - o Feb 1-3 – Legislative Days (Ashland & Lincoln)

January 12, 2025

**Minutes**

10 a.m. Welcome and introductions (fav musical)- Dawn, Emmit, Khe'Yana, Julia, Chloe, Rowan, Nandi, Nyayien, Grey, Lincoln, Carissa, Deanna w/ DHHS

10:30 a.m. Meeting with DHHS on CRP recommendations

**1. Making youth court questionnaire mandatory-**

- a. Not a DHHS requirement yet, this would be helpful to improve youth's time in care. Easy to implement, already exists, some already get it, just make it mandatory for all. Ensure case workers and others are held accountable to how youth are treated.
- b. Any ideas of how to get it out- once given to youth how to make sure it gets to court? QR- could you digitalize as a google form and how to get it to the court from there? Worker take it to court—maybe seal in envelope until given to judge. Direct email to the court so it could be scanned or faxed? Provide multiple options for youth. Also making sure youth get to court, this is a way to get their voice there. She feels it's very doable and appropriate.

**2. Logging, analyzing and sharing data on Deaf and Disabled youth**

- a. DHHS did talk to data ppl and could poll how many have been entered with disabilities. In computer system we do list characteristics/diagnosis/disabilities, it is listed for foster home so they know all about child and if they can manage that, so there is a way to get that data. Could get a one point in time data report, won't be ongoing.
- b. Another challenge, not a lot of certified interpreters in Omaha, we have a list of them, but if not certified interpreters, they take someone who can sign that may not be certified- not legal, wouldn't stand up in court. So another challenge- across state.
  - i. Suggestion- app that you can facetime with an interpreter- video relay service - can do this with computer/tablet.
- c. Small population only one case worker who had experience with it, no one else had examples.
- d. Gather data to see first- next step – do we take that to voice of children to pull the data? Deanna will request the data be ran for a starting point

**3. Recommendation #3 - Addressing the needs of foster youth seeking employment and income security.**

- a. DHHS had lots of questions:
  - i. What is young adult—18-19? -- no 14 and up when they start working
  - ii. Having to pay bills- was that a relative foster home or registered foster home? (She was a distant cousin- who received funds from state and never used for her.)
    1. Did you feel comfortable talking to case manager about it- yes I tried reaching out to case manager and guardian ad litem. Was paying electricity, water and clothing her children as well.

- a. Some had to pay for their own hygiene items, etc.
  - b. Some relatives, some foster homes
  - c. When placed with relatives they may not get the same education and support—are we giving them enough support to understand what role is and expectations.
- iii. Relatives don't always get the education on foster parenting- so wonder if it's part of the issue.
  - 1. Everyone parents differently but where do we draw the line.... Do we provide any self-sufficiency requirements
    - a. Basic necessities should be a line – food, etc.
    - b. Need more of a consent for kids- working to much, can't handle work and school- be more monitoring/awareness
  - 2. Is there a court questionnaire for guardian youth?
    - a. No yearly review after granted guardianship
    - b. Never visited by case worker – youth wasn't
    - c. Went into guardianship under the age of 14 might make a difference- DHHS doesn't reach out to them for B2i, CYI if in before 14.
  - 3. When the situation happens- were you comfortable enough to talk to your work, did you want to have the convo with the foster parent- etc—
    - a. Youth court questionnaire could help with this
    - b. Didn't know it wasn't a requirement as a kid
- iv. Working on ensuring vital documents are being given when age out- credit report, birth cert, social sec. card, court report/therapy notes, immunization records, etc.
- b. What did you get from rec 3 and what is within DHHS's power?-- it's really BIG, all over the board on parenting styles, reaching out and staffing all 18.5 year olds before aging out- to see if employed, have documents, set up for housing, SSI, adult services, etc. Start staffing with a worker to help make successful transitions.
- c. Foster care bill of rights- maybe discuss it during this time as well to get that information out to youth that aren't required to fund basic care

Noon Lunch-Chipotle

1 p.m. Legislative Days – Feb. 1-3 –

- registration is due Wednesday- 11 signed up so far--
- Work Group Work Time
  - Maybe we should have a hand out with resources
  - Come up with questions to plant at luncheon to show off what they know, research, passion etc.
  - Go over Agenda and assign tasks

- DJs corner option (from FIYA conference- a room to decompress if overstimulated, etc)
- Prep call next week for attendees
- Bring pillow/blanket/supplies/etc
- Send Senators emails- everyone send emails to senators – google doc- everyone email 7 senators- separate emails- use template
- Prep call at noon on zoom on Jan. 26<sup>th</sup> – finalize transportation questions

2 p.m. Project Harmony Child Abuse and Neglect Training-

- Lincoln emailed out the training it says it takes up to 50 minutes to complete. Complete this prior to Leg days and send the certificate to Lincoln. All employees working with youth must complete this training.

3 p.m. Wrap up and dismiss

- Future Dates Advisory Board gatherings
  - Late January – Prep Call
  - Feb 1-3 – Legislative Days (Ashland & Lincoln)



Connected Youth Initiative  
nebraskachildren

IN MY ADVOCACY ERA | FEBRUARY 1-3, 2025

# Legislative Days 2025

## Saturday, February 1, 2025

- 10:30am Check-In

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- 11:00am Welcome and Community Agreement

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- 11:30am Icebreaker

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- 12:00pm Lunch

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- 1:00pm Large group icebreaker

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- 1:30pm Breakout Sessions
  - 1:30-2:10pm Session 1

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  - 2:15-2:55pm Session 2

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  - 2:55-3:10pm Break

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  - 3:10-3:55pm Session 3

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  - 3:55-4:35pm Session 4

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- Public Speaking, Legislation 101, Advocacy, Bill Overview

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- 4:45pm Regroup and recap

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- 5:30pm Free Time

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- 6:00pm Dinner

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- 7:00pm Leadership Activity

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- 7:50pm Sunday Overview

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- 8:00pm Free Time/Game Night/Gym Time/Movie Night

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- 11:00pm In Rooms

### To-Do List

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Sunday, February 2, 2025

- 7:30am Breakfast

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- 8:45am Energizer

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- 9:00am Review Legislative and Vote on Bills

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- 10:00pm Break up into groups and begin work

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- 12:00pm Lunch

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- 1:00pm Keynote Speaker: Brody Weber,  
Lincoln City Council Member

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- 2:00pm Presentation Work time

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- 5:00pm Keynote Speaker: Sarah Mitchell, Appleseed

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- 6:00pm Dinner

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- 7:30pm Free time/Finish Presentations

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- 11:00pm In Rooms

## Monday, February 3, 2025

- 7:30am Breakfast

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- 8:30am Pack up rooms and load cars

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- 9:00am Practice presentations

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- 10:30pm Drive to Lincoln

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- 11:00pm Visit Floor Debate

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- 11:30pm Prepare for Luncheon

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- 12:00pm Senator Luncheon

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- 1:15pm Judicial Branch Speaker: Justice William Cassel

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- 2:30pm Meeting with Lt. Governor Joe Kelly

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- 3:00pm Evaluation and Debrief

**NCFE Advisory Board**

March 2, 2025

**Minutes:**

Present: Grey, Julia, Khe'Yana, Nyayien, Nandi, Chloe, Carissa, Lincoln

10 a.m. Welcome and introductions-

10:30 a.m. Legislative Days Review and Recommendations-

- Great presentations, no one injured, successful event in general
- Takeaways from the report:
  - Wanted to tell more people about Leg Days
  - Breakout sessions-more can be done to be more helpful to participants-
    - Start presentation from scratch and make it their own presentation so they can connect with it, and more engagement activity within the presentation.
  - More group participation on report- they are responsible for that.
    - When team member struggling- take initiative and jump in and help them, don't leave them alone.
    - Size of group, divide up and check on other groups possibly
    - Split delegations into secret ballot votes, so they don't know what others vote for and spread them out so delegations aren't together
    - Break down items – target poster and research done by noon
    - Then reward with a break/gym
  - Making sure our team members aren't spread too thin
    - Returning participants – give them more leadership opportunity- help out ??
  - Board members engaged and present at event
    - As a board- we need to be even LESS tolerable of board members violating policies-
      - Send them home – have a zero tolerance
      - Makes Board look bad – sets standard
      - Liability for NCFE, YAB, etc
  - Overall team did great job
  - The bathroom situation- boys peeing on the floor and non-binary bathroom
  - No longer going to Western Town- bathroom situation it too much. Need to go back to Dillon Lodge and drive to meals.
    - Issue- bedroom issue- multiple people in rooms if they don't know each other- Fewer rooms at Dillon Lodge
  - Advisory board should meet each evening for a nightly debrief, and quick roundup in the morning before starting to share updates, ideas, struggles, etc.
  -

11:30 a.m. New Member Application Review

- Need to be stricter on the bylaws- participation, attendance, substance abuse
- Passionate about leadership
- 3 month probationary period for new members—would have to reflect in by-laws— 2/3 vote required-
  - Or extend to large event (like LEAD to see how they interact at large event)
  - 6-month probationary and then start year long term?
  -
- 2 applications- rubric
  - Tyeisha - ACCEPTED
  - Bailey- ACCEPTED

Noon

Lunch

1 p.m.

Abby Phillips, Iowa Youth Justice Council

- Wants to start a Nebraska Youth Justice council
  - Had to contract out to YSS to pay the youth – to get around DHHS inability to pay stipends for youth
  - Important to have good adult leaders
  - Write out Talking Wall- (CEDARS) could list out questions then go back to head of board and these are the areas that need improvement, how can we go about making the change?
  - Nebraska currently doesn't compensate for board—there should be funding for this
  - Iowa meets at least once a month-(sometimes 2 times a month if we don't get through agenda)
  - Only 4 states, including NE don't have a Youth Justice Council
- Iowa goes to DC 2x a year—OJJP
- Reggie's Sleep out every year in honor of Reggie- [Why We Sleep Out: Reggie's Story-](#)
- Hosted Prom for those who couldn't attend one
- A lot of community events to get word out for Youth Justice Council and give back to current or former youth impacted
- Fight for basic human rights for youth in the juvenile justice system
- 16-28 for Youth Justice Council in Iowa – since they travel out of state
- YAB would be open to coming to one of Iowa's monthly meeting

2 p.m.

CYI Report Review &amp; Updates-

- played trivia- Chloe won- received the GOAT trophy
- Grey- won the Lincoln Lincoln Lincoln game- future prize to come 😊

3 p.m.

Wrap up and dismiss

- Future Dates Advisory Board gatherings
  - April 6 - Meeting (Lincoln)
  - May 18- Meeting (Omaha)

## April Meeting Minutes

### April 6, 2025

- 10 a.m. Welcome and introductions-Bailey, Karolina, Grey, Julia, Nandi, Nyayien, Khe'Yana, Chloe, Tyeisha
- 10:30 a.m. Bylaws and expectations review
- Making sure everyone is on our group messenger and emails
- 11:05 Compliance and policy completion through Project Harmony before LEAD the summer-
- [Project Harmony | Child Abuse and Neglect 101 \(Online Training\)](#)
    - o Have to sign in and 'purchase it' but it doesn't cost anything
    - o After completion send certificate to Lincoln
- 11 a.m. Leadership & Teamwork Activity-- But/And activity
- Planning Dream vacay and money is no object 😊
  - "No, But", or "No, And" or "Yes, And" "Yes, But"
- Noon Lunch - Sushi was a fail so we will do that next month- went to Agave
- 1 p.m. LEAD the Summer
- Date- August 2-3rd
  - Location- ?? Camp Fontenlle, Rivercrest, Not Timberlake, Aurora?
  - Theme-
    - o Ideas: Resource Fair, college Opportunities, skills building for adult life, community action, - look at community resources, opportunity passport, Statewide and different communities...research where they are coming from
    - o Theme: **"Creating Community"**
      - Intersectionality- connecting identities and how you perceive the world and how they intersect
      - Self-awareness
      - Work Community
      - Personal Community
      - Social Community
      - Opportunities to practice leadership in your community-
- 1:30 p.m. CRP Overview and Preview-
- Invite Deanna in June, then finalize recommendations in July, skip August for LEAD and then finalize recommendations in September
  - **Homework**- start thinking about things, talk to peers with system experience, work life what issues are coming up
- 1:45 p.m. Field Trip! Putt Putt Golf
- Ideas for future teambuilders: Axe throwing, Paint Me Silly, Rage Room, Pottery making
- 3 p.m. Wrap up and dismiss

- Future Dates Advisory Board gatherings
  - May 18 – Omaha
  - June 29 – Lincoln
  - July 20- Omaha
  - August- 2-3 is LEAD

## NCFE Advisory Board

May 18, 2025

Nebraska Children Offices  
2610 Harney Street; Omaha, NE 68131

### Meeting Minutes

10 a.m. Welcome and introductions- Julia had her baby!! Grey, Nyayien, Nandi, Bailey, Chloe, Karolina, Tyeisha

10:30 a.m. LEAD the Summer planning- don't have a signed contract but should be in Aurora at the Leadership Center again.

- 24 hour period: Agenda-
  - Name icebreaker-
- Curriculum- Karolina, Nyayien, Nandi
  - Theme: **“Creating Community”**
    - Intersectionality- connecting identities and how you perceive the world and how they intersect
    - Work Community
    - Personal Community
    - Social Community
    - Opportunities to practice leadership in your community-
    - Intro, overview, apply to own life, and then what it means to be in a Self-awareness- paper activity- Johari window
  - community
  - Presentation of what community is, define it, show examples, then go down the list of themes- interactive activity in the middle of presentation -team building/questions for education,
    - Karolina -Johari Window adj in reference to self, and others put them about you so your perception vs others
    - Nandi- opportunity of leadership in our community
    - Close with intersectionality – social/personal/work/self awareness ties together
- Social activities- Bailey, Tyeisha
  - Connections- yarn connections
  - Checkers game- liked the way we worked as a team- so something like that
  - Human Bingo
  - 2 truths and a wish- get your personality out there-
  - Energizer- Jenga interview write questions on every jenga block—
  - Activity- Name on puzzle pieces symbols/words/drawings- what they care about for community, connect pieces together
  - Tie Dye shirts
    - Lincoln has white tshirts- for tie dye- Foster Youth Voice event

- Save web for Sunday to wake up-
- Promotional & swag items—Grey, Chloe
  - Grey created a design with heart/puzzle pieces/hands- for shirts- color
    - Stanely cup style with logo
    - Shirt with color design- tank tops comfort color brand
    - Nicer quality swag items

Noon Lunch

1 p.m. RPED Overview and Feedback feat. Felipe Longoria-Shinn

- Identify high school youth to connect with coaching and leadership opportunities to encourage postsecondary/career goals
- Wants to develop a youth subcommittee
  - Bring this up at LEAD fits with our theme
  - Annie E Casey Narrative Change- how can we shift the way we think to improve something-
    - B2i program- if you age out of foster care 19-21 you get an independence coordinator and funding for transitioning out of foster care (extended foster care)
    - Barriers category if you can't do this things ( have to be going to school or working 20 hrs per week) written as a barrier—written negative instead of opportunity to improve the way they are talked about, engaged, and notes they take to be reframed.
      - COORDINATOR FEEDBACK
        - 1. Provide more training for generational differences- Agree
        - 2. Explore avenues of dialogue and different approaches to engage youth- Agree
        - 3. Be mindful with you are working with and if they have done it before
        - 4- agree
        - 5- agree
        - 6- agree
        - 7- agree
      - YOUTH FEEDBACK:
        - Explore more frequent check-ins than once a month- AGREE
        - Investigate rules and flexibility around housing stability requirements-
        - Follow up on experienced challenges – to better— more of a peer mentor approach instead of caseworker approach
        - Reach out beyond 5 p.m. –but know not to abuse it, needs boundaries- - possibly adding an on call phone for crisis situations

- Laying out expectations- more than once a month and personalized to texting/communication to meet the youth needs more frequently
- What is the training happening? Topics to work on and discuss- ensure it's uniform so not dependent on getting a 'good/engaged' staff member"
- Guardedness of IC makes young people feel a barrier of trust – need to be more flexible they are adults
- Could have used more guidance and financial literacy – not just wellness checks and a check each month—
- Multiple ICs for each youth with specialized areas- if funding wasn't an issue, but may not connect as well with multiples
- Get youth mental health assistance if needed
- Training and ensuring ICs are prepared to have conversations-
- Hands on training in a mock situation with lived experience before going out in to the field
- Video trainings of subtle signs

2 p.m. CRP Discussion

- Passion Projects:
  - Karolina- prison and jail reform -specifically past system involved youth- empathy and capacity with individuals that struggle with addiction or mental health-- and reentry programs to better self while in the system – rehabilitation -classes/prep for reentry
  - Nandi- social media documentation of involvement in YAB, programs working with – apprenticeships, juvenile justice- racial equity program and impact on minorities in system/areas, affects as an adult from foster care experience- i.e.—moved so much in foster care and now don't decorate as an adult—and statistics about foster youth, Goal to make people more aware of foster care system and encourage others to speak out. – [@yourtrulyimpact](#)- tiktok handle – collaborate with her on a video
  - Chloe- prioritize siblings living together- if not option – constant contact needed – and sibling bill of rights- and also conservation
    - Sibling bill of rights- needs living together unless one poses a threat – can we do supervise visitation or over phone is it mental/emotional/physical safe
    - Foster parents shouldn't be able to decide if you can see sibling- needs to be court ordered to hold them accountable to make the visits happen
  - Tyeisha- greater awareness and access to healthy food—understanding negative effects to your body from processed foods, present facts and evidence, recipe books for people on food stamps- whole foods, include information when you get food stamps about nutrition and health
  - Bailey- SNAP benefits fighting for them so everyone has food to eat
  - Grey- art installation called "Left Behind"- current and former foster youth something they lost while between placements- find similar item/or photo of

item and display it with their story -- awareness campaign of feeling left behind, leaving behind pieces of yourself and what is lost, and how it ties in to trauma- feeling 'left behind and leaving behind childhood, nostalgia and how it impacts you later in life—what do they stew on from time being system involved.

- Nyayien- Language access for all not just specific groups- they need to know what is going on when encountering the system. More intensive background checks and check ins on foster care families and mental health access

3 p.m.      Wrap up and dismiss

- Future Dates Advisory Board gatherings
  - June 29, Lincoln
  - July 20, Omaha
  - Aug. 2-3, LEAD the Summer, Aurora

## NCCF Advisory Board

June 29, 2025

Nebraska Children Offices  
215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 200; Lincoln, NE 68508

### Meeting Minutes

10 a.m. Welcome and introductions- Nandi, Nyayien, Tyeisha, Rowan, Karolina, Chloe (until lunch), Bailey, Grey, Julia

Question of the day: If you had to appear on a game show- what would you choose?

10:30 a.m. RFK Justice Conference Report – Carissa and Nandi

- Judges, Juv Justice Workers, not a lot of youth
- Brainwaves of youth curriculum
- Importance of lived experience
- Changing narrative of juvenile justice youth
- Wish more youth were there but it was good “motivation doesn’t last but either does bathing that’s why we do it daily”
- “A child not embraced by his village, will burn it down just to feel it’s warmth”
- Nandi is feeling motivated in the work after attending

10:45 a.m. LEAD the Summer work time

- Curriculum Details
  - Check group chat
  - Nyayien, Nandi and Karolina will work on presentation
  - Try to include interactive activities so it’s not just a lecture
- Assignments
  - Bailey will bring Jenga set
  - Karolina- Johari window
  - Rowan- Yarn game
  - Tyeisha & Bailey- Tie Dye
  - Shirt design decision-
- Recruitment

Noon Lunch

1 p.m. Biographies and Website Update with Brenda

- YAB tiktok channel
  - Central Gmail account to run it and use for google docs
  - Next meeting- discuss next steps for TikTok account
- Brenda Weyers - [bweyers@nebraskachildren.org](mailto:bweyers@nebraskachildren.org)- You can send your bio/photo - or feel free to set up an appointment with me to do a headshot photo.

1:30 p.m. CRP Discussion and Themes

- Don't feel they provide support when you are in the transitional age
- How to bridge that gap- need to speak to current youth if the issues are still happening or if B2i has helped.
- Would it be more conducive to get things done if we expanded it from deaf and hard of hearing to disability in general
- Would like a demo on N-FOCUS
- For 4 can we continue to focus on racial disparities – overrepresented in foster system-
- Can we survey younger youth? Or may at LEAD to get a better pulse
- Do we want to write a reply? Kenny will be coming to a meeting to visit.
  - Ask Kenny to show us N-FOCUS
  - Provide Kenny questions ahead of time about our passion projects:
    - What is the standard work instruction
    - Are children still being given a trash bag between placements? Or has this changed? Lost/left behind items that held memories.
    - Data on youth involved in juv. Justice and then as adults- juvenile youth that age out and become offenders – recidivism – lack of support
    - Reintroduce 319- (passed and vetoed by governor)
    - What is DHHS doing to address the racial disparities?
    - Nutrition program
    - How do they track credits across school districts?
    - Tapping into community orgs for language assistance/cultural assistance to connect youth with their background culture within their community—what is currently happening?
      - Could you give a brief overview of what community outreach looks like?
      - When someone comes out as LGBTQ to their caseworker and being bullied? Do they know where to connect them and resources?
    - What is happening to undocumented youth within Nebraska Foster Care system?

Survey our YAB going forward to collect research and data about impact of leadership

3 p.m.          Wrap up and dismiss

- Write bios, Work on LEAD curriculum and events, Recruit for LEAD

Future Dates Advisory Board gatherings

- July 20 - Omaha
- Aug. 2-3: Aurora



July 20, 2025  
**Meeting Minutes**

Nebraska Children Offices - 2610 Harney Street; Omaha, NE 68131

10 a.m. Welcome and introductions Best road trip you have ever been on?—Grey, Nyayien (zoom), Karolina (zoom) Tyeisha, Rowan, Bailey, Lincoln, Carissa, Nandi (zoom), Julia (and baby Eddy 😊)

10:30 a.m. LEAD the Summer final prep time

- Saturday:
  - 10:30 a.m.- arrive and check in
  - 11 a.m. Welcome and icebreaker- Jenga Bailey & Tyeisha -
  - 12 p.m.- Lunch
  - 1:00 Group Energizer- 2 Truths and a Wish
  - 1:15- Creating Community overview- - Nyayien (45) minutes
  - 2:00 Break
  - 2:15 Self-awareness- Karolina- 1 hour (personal community and work community) Johari window activity
  - 3:00 Tie Dye- Bailey, Tyeisha, and Julia
  - 4:00 - Social community- Rowan- 45 minutes
  - 5:00- Dinner
  - 6: 00- Opportunities to practice leadership in your community- resources – Nandi- 30 minutes
  - 7 social activity
  - 9 camp fire
- Sunday
  - 9 breakfast
  - 930 Yarn Activity
  - 10:00 Open share- what's going on in your community, what fights are you fighting, input for future events, CRP, etc. resources- Grey
  - 1030 pack up and depart
- Nandi- send out doc for everyone to share – switch to PowerPoint or google slide or Canva- not keynote. Nyayien will create a new one and share it out.
- Time frames--- who is taking how much time.
  - Bailey- has jenga set
    - Work on questions block:
      - Get to know you; Passions; and Ask Someone Else
  - Karolina- Johari window- SUPPLIES paper, markers, pipe cleaners, stickers, sections
  - Rowan- Yarn game – Rowan bringing yarn (2 balls)
  - Tyeisha & Bailey- Tie Dye

11:15 a.m. Social Media discussion and setup

- Goals of social media account: make like posts for Lead the Summer, make videos during the event, with only meeting once a month, how much content can we get, and what directions,
- How much do we all want this
- Account login so anyone can make a video and posts- or each makes something during the month
- Advocacy is the goal—still need to push out content
- Sharing our group (not personal opinions) – resources, statistics, etc.
- Opportunities could be posted- things Lincoln shares
- Worries about the social media account is more so about social media consent forms, with participants at events, need consent, not exploited anyone, how to delegate who can handle those accounts, I post this at this time, and you post here, who is monitoring it/who’s fielding the posts before they go out, - public perceptions – making sure accounts are how we want to be represented. Challenging without full time PR person navigating this.
  - 19 and under would need parent/guardian consent waiver
  - FB or Insta to share info/resources and advocacy, but minimal pictures of the board
  - Waivers could go out with the other waivers, red dot on the nametag- if not allowed to be in photo
  - A lot of management required for this—reviews, generating content, a lot of work.
- Make calendar and present to rest of board and approve beforehand, then share out
- Next Steps:
  - Put on paper to see what this looks like
  - Who wants to be a part of this—time outside of normal hours-
    - Big commitment
    - Meet with a group that has account that runs
    - We can send material to NCFE marketing to send out—
    - Doing for free on own time

Noon Lunch-- Omaha Tap House (Bailey doesn't recommend the mac & cheese)

1 p.m. CRP Discussion with Kenny and Deanna

- Intro, passion project summary (Grey- Deanna suggested- Foster Heart & Hope)
- What is the standard work instruction? (in the CRP response)
  - The dept. agreed to make commitment on standard work instruction for the youth court questionnaire on how to ensure everyone has access and how to utilize it and when. Not mandatory currently.
  - YAB likes the idea of making it mandatory to bridge gap between youth and court and adult supporters/case workers. What would be the hurdles to this?

- Every youth receives it (not every youth may complete it) but ensuring they get it and it's reviewed with them—that is the hope of the standard work instruction – Deanna asked if each community could have email addresses attached to where they could send it in the county to ensure it gets to the judge/court
- Are children still being given a trash bag between placements? What is provided to them when they change placements?
  - Experience- didn't even get to pack themselves, the foster parent or worker just threw stuff in bag
  - Yes it does still happen—dependent on situation. If you know you are moving/placement changing we should have bags, it's the emergency situations that still happen in trash bags. P1 vs P2 (Priority 1 -respond in 24 hours; P2- within 5 days respond) If identify situation as safety threat, not leaving the kid and have to remove immediately so may require trash bags to make it happen.
  - Maybe a better way to explain that to the children so they understand it better? Hard with children, but with older teenagers possible, but hard to get them to accept it in that moment
  - Do your coworkers commonly have duffle bags/boxes? -In between, some go above and beyond, comes down to available resources – workers don't have a state car to just buy stuff for that- brand new workers just learning ropes may not know who to ask for resources or when it's going to be an emergency removal and to come prepared with bags.
  - Boxes or bags to just leave in cars for workers in case immediate removal?
  - Discussed using Chaffee funds if they could purchase items like that – just starting to look into this
  - Law enforcement involvement may limit access to grab items as well
- What is DHHS doing to address the racial disparities of foster youth in the system?
  - Doesn't have a lot of control of who comes into HHS, prevention side of the house is working with Casey Comm Partners about racial disparities as well as statewide community collabs.
  - Standardized assessment for calls- so recommendations based on scores. Just looking at safety
  - Trying to dig on the B2i side at who is coming into B2i vs who aren't to hone in on if we are missing something
  - Based on what county attorney thinks- whether they file cases or not
  - Child abuse doesn't discriminate
  - What does equitable and intentional care look like for people of color?
    - We have standardized operating procedures – this is how you case manage
    - Do you try to hire more diverse people to fit the graphic you are serving?
      - State of NE has standardized questions, and you are scored by how you answer that question- doesn't look at race or ethnicity (does look at military).
      - Would love to try to match race/ethnicity with families but depends on who is on team and workforce
      - Falls on workers to- they may prefer not to work with them due to community ties they may have and personal conflict of interest-
- Are foster youth involved in a nutrition program?

- Foster parents don't get SNAP
- Could do a better job of nutrition education and wellness
- Should treat foster kids same as own daughter- talk to case worker so they can advocate with foster family for youth
- Maybe case worker asking kid what they are eating throughout the day, are you getting enough
- They get free and reduced lunches and WIC
- With new SNAP bill – young adults will be required to work to keep SNAP benefits
- Parents get SNAP awards only for children still in the household
- Curriculum for foster parents to include nutrition and healthy eating
  - Healthy and affordable meals to feed children/families
  - And training for parents when kids come back into the home
- Foster homes being educated on existing medical conditions (like POTS for instance)
  - Document any known dietary/disability and foster care agency finds families that can handle that need
- How do they track academic credits across school districts?
  - The bill is for system involved both juv justice and foster care- in planning stage now but have made connection with HHS folks. They have identified some staff for the planning
  - We work closely with schools on where they are at, and grad credits and creativity
- What is happening to allow foster youth to tap into community orgs for language assistance/cultural assistance to connect youth with their background culture within their community?
  - Do you have a service contract with interpreters for the hard of hearing and deaf youth? Is there only one foster mom in the state that qualifies—what is being done to encourage language access?
    - We have contracted service for all languages (or most all) 4 or 5 ASL of different proficiency – we utilize that every time we meet with them, or we have open contract market if one of those contractors aren't available.
    - Education- school brought in ASL for the youth
    - Not a lot of foster homes with ASL proficiency- placed with siblings that could communicate with her but would be ideal to have more foster ASL. This foster mom went above and beyond to learn.
    - Patience is key, so sometimes we have to type it out if we can't get interpreter
    - Number of youth with identified hearing impairment:
      - 2023- 13
      - 2024-11
      - 2025 (to date)- 4
    - Are resources being connected to those youth about community events/engagement opportunities? Not 100% sure. It comes down to the Caseworker doing research and education
      - Kenny could send out info to all state caseworkers and supervisors, but not specific hub—could go in weekly email
        - Video Remote Interpreting- good resource- iPad or video phone

- Can you cover cost for foster parents who want to learn ASL? Maybe foster agency might not sure. Would have to get back to you on that.
    - Could you give a brief overview of what community outreach looks like?
  - When someone comes out as LGBTQ to their caseworker and being bullied? Do they know where to connect them and resources?
    - Workers should always be respectful and address how they want to be addressed. Whatever therapist recommends we try to make available and reach out to community resources and advocates for guidance. Put on the common referral too so the foster homes know and they have a situation to best meet their needs.
    - In B2i, we can do more work to assist with name changes and guide them more on legal choices they can change.
    - Courts will go with legal names and medically we have to state biological sex but still list preferred pronouns
    - System is just male female so no line in system to list this –
      - Add it to case notes (he/she/they) at the top of notes
      - We would manually add preferred name/pronouns isn't currently a line in N-SERVE system
      - Could a CRP be add preferred name to system?
        - Using preferred name builds trust with youth
        - Creates interpersonal connection
        - Helps them build identity and feel more secure in themselves
        - Help them heal
        - Helps them feel seen and heard
        - Case workers will be doing that but central office may get confused and not understand connection of the names when reviewing notes.
  - What is happening to undocumented youth within Nebraska Foster Care system?
    - We usually know when they come into system. required to treat the same as citizen but can't get medical. We would pay state dollars for medical, can't use any of our money to help them become a citizen. Older youth that need independent living skills- can't use federal funds for this- they have a pathway for citizenship so ensure that starts to happen in B2i, start staffing with them because can't get coaching through foundation or CPCS so what's in the community to tap into. Use contracts to help them get independent living skills

2:30 p.m. CRP debrief and topic determination

- Went well and chose topics

3 p.m. Wrap up and dismiss

- Future Dates Advisory Board gatherings
  - Aug. 2-3: Aurora
  - Sept. 14, Lincoln

Discuss opportunity at next meeting



## NCCF Advisory Board

Sept. 14, 2025

### Minutes

10 a.m. Welcome and introductions—Late start 10:30ish:

Tyeshia, Bailey(Zoom), Grey, Julia, Jackie, Sara, Lincoln, Carissa, Nandi (11:15)

-What is one thing you would camp out or wait in line for hours in person to be part of??

10:30 a.m. LEAD the Summer Review & Recap

- Evals from LEAD:
  - Tie dye – ask them if they’d like to bring an item- they could bring their size/accommodating
  - More focus on leadership skills –
  - More fun incorporated- but we thought a good mix this year
- Our thoughts:
  - Good group- small and evened out workload-
  - Participants seemed to enjoy it
  - Felt good about this year
  - Saw a lot of participation from participants –
    - A lot of returners so that helped
    - Some took on leadership roles and helped them stay focused
    - Personnel issues:

11:00 a.m. Evaluation & Survey Time with Jackie Belcher and Sarah May

- Review feedback to questions
- Our YAB state level would take as well as our chapters across the state
- Why have separate if questions are the same for state and collab level
- There would be a stipend involved for participation in this
- Overall satisfaction at the end= to end on note of improvement- using survey as reflection tool
- Once or twice a year: once a year would be ok- aligns with other surveys so don’t want redundant,
  - Might be worth mentioning we know you take other surveys-
  - Maybe once a year plus exit survey – or march and September are last meetings due to terms ending—
  - Survey covers goals and objectives well
  - Question about if the youth feel they are making an impact- page 9 asks do you believe you can, add question do you feel you did make an impact- page 5 starts there- but go deeper what I did in this leadership made a difference in my community.
  - Do I feel like my participation is achieving “anything”
    - Do I feel like I’m making actual/tangible change

- Training question- would that be for local chapters or drop those and leave state specific? Or policy change?
- Email/text vs group: email not in setting where I'm actively involved so not influenced -time to sit and reflect and not influenced – remind in group setting to complete- but encourage to do at home- email to reach more people- how to guarantee – send out through word of mouth, text/etc,

Noon Lunch

1 p.m. CRP Topic Selection

- Review July minutes about CRP discussion
- Luggage would be a great push- could Chafee funds cover this?
  - Measures to avoid disrespecting a child's dignity, ensuring a worker has a go bag on hand to limit the trauma inflicted on a person
  - Why can't DHHS implement this for all case workers, doesn't have to be cluttered vehicle with boxes, foldable compact duffle bags, like Comfort Cases or Foster Love, cheap foldable, and can stay in case worker cars.
  - Not even getting to pack their bags-
  - Set protocol for this – training guidebook for newbies with resources so they can learn the ropes and know what can help the youth-
- Curriculum for foster parents and parents with kids coming back into the home to learn about nutrition and healthy eating –
  - Elaborating on 3 meals a day- develop curriculum that dives into affordable, healthy meals, and holding case workers accountable and asking what they eat during the day—daycares have regulations on what they have to feed their children.
- Homes being educated on the existing medical conditions –
  - Deaf/hard of hearing—ASL interpretations – language accessibility – foster parents who know Spanish.
- Addressing the overrepresentation of minority population (mandatory reporting)

1:30 p.m. CRP Writing Time

- Grey- Luggage
- Nandi- Overrepresentation
- Tyeshia- Nutrition
- Bailey- Nutrition
- Julia- Nutrition
- Rowan- Medical condition/language accessibility

2:30 p.m. Other Items:

- Presentation about youth voice- a few questions about youth voice- to be recorded if you don't mind: only need one or two of you to do it.
- New member- accepted Alex

2:40 p.m. End of the Year Celebration Time- Carissa's Treasure Toss

3 p.m.      Wrap up and dismiss—still need to discuss dates for meetings-

- Future Dates Advisory Board gatherings
  - Oct. 5/26 – Omaha
  - Nov. 16/23 – Lincoln
  - December 7/14 – Omaha