



LB 1173 Reimagining Child Welfare in Nebraska

Workgroup Monthly Status Report

Monthly Accomplishments, Highlights, and Planned Activities

February 2023

Accomplishments

- February 8 meeting held at the Kroc Center in Omaha, NE, to kick off LB 1173's *Reimagine Child Welfare in Nebraska*; meeting began process of planning comprehensive transformation of child welfare system in Nebraska, including the development of a framework for practice and finance model addressing "all aspects of the system and strong partnerships among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government and community stakeholders." See attached Attendee List for full list of participants.
 - Over 100 attendees; morning, afternoon, and virtual sessions were held to maximize attendance. Attendees represented a diverse array of backgrounds and roles within the child welfare system, including tribal members, foster parents, law enforcement, housing officials, and many more
 - Attendees broke into smaller focus groups called "engagement sessions" to undertake iterative "Design Thinking" process. Engagement groups structured into three exercises: **Empathy**, **Ideate**, and **Imagine and Build** to identify current barriers in the NE child welfare system and envision a future state system
- February 9 virtual meeting held with "Bring Up Nebraska" and associated community collaboratives. Attendees discussed collaboration among community collaboratives and between the collaboratives and the state, CW areas that need improvement, CW financing issues, and needed changes to CW laws and policies.
- February 9 Nebraska Children and Families Foundation listening session with Lived Experience Stakeholders. About 16 Lived Experience Stakeholders attended the session and shared current system challenges and transformations they would like to see in the CW system.
- February 9 In person session with Donna Polk, CEO Nebraska Urban Indian Health Coalition. She provided insight on the challenges of support and access to resources and the distinct adverse impact of Social Determinants of Health on urban based v. reservation based Native Americans.
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Highlights (Summary Template Attached)

- **Most widely cited issues and challenges in the NE child welfare system included the following:** workforce, siloes between the many systems that touch families, children and youth, statutes that are antiquated and need of revision, removal of children due to poverty, a lack of services and resources for families, especially in rural areas, and outdated technology that inhibits the ability to effectively monitor performance and outcomes.
 - There is a "placement crisis," barriers to kinships placement, difficulty placing "high needs" children; Lack of services and resources for families in need, these needs are broader than what one agency can handle, judges are frustrated with the lack of services for families in need; Housing, transportation, behavioral health services all commonly cited resource gaps; System often is in "crisis" not a proactive prevention system; Resources are not distributed equally across the state; Western and Central areas of state lack language and culturally appropriate resources which delays and extends cases; Technology in the child welfare system is a challenge: outdated, issues with data transparency



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- **Key solutions ranked as high priority in imagining a future state NE child welfare system included the following:** Strategies that support integration and collaboration across agencies and community, enhancing primary and tertiary prevention services at the community level, addressing, and eliminating legal and policy barriers, for example law enforcement being in charge of child removals, support for workforce recruitment, retention and professional development, a call for flexible and braided funding across all agencies to impact family well-being, the need to educate communities on the trauma for children and families related to removals and funding for a new data collection system/replacing N-Focus
 - More training across agencies on CW issues, communication/data; Schools could play a larger role of addressing the needs of families, children, and youth in need or at-risk; Increasing IV-E plans and draw down; Enhanced technology that has a tie to all major stakeholders, user friendly/modern case management system, defining key data and performance metrics across all systems and use them to drive innovation and change; Re-direct resources to help support families: funding for services before an intake call, or if intake call screened out, support continuity of care for families receiving services; Mandatory family assessments; Families should be kept together whenever safe to do so -poverty or lack of resources not grounds for removal; Improvements can be made in reflecting CW families in the system; Increase longevity, stability, decrease turnover, increase diversity of staff; Better education and resources are needed for foster youth and families: challenges faced, resources available, better support for foster families
- **Items needing to change in the current system to achieve the new vision and future state included:** strategies that support integration across agencies, reforms in child welfare case management services, prevention services that build on the community collaboratives and infrastructure that has been built, promoting access to behavioral health and other community-based services, and promoting equitable services and access for *all* children and families.

Emerging Issues/Key Themes

Emerging Issues or Key Themes across all of the February 8th and 9th engagement sessions included the following: The need for more collaboration across agencies and community; the removal of legal and policy barriers – statutes “antiquated and prescriptive,” examples included statutory changes to definition of neglect to reduce unnecessary removals due to poverty, and changes in mandatory reporter laws; workforce improvements; better support for families – e.g. housing assistance spread across multiple agencies; the need for stability and a lasting structure for transformation; involving those with lived experience, focusing early upstream on prevention; more flexibility in funding; the need for better technology to ensure proper accountability and more effective outcome monitoring. Leveraging past work efforts, including the work of Nebraska Children and Families Foundation 22 Community Collaboratives, and the Nebraska Child and Family Well-Being Transformation Steering Committee which leveraged the experiences, expertise, and insight of individuals and organizations across the state committed to transformation.

Planned Activities for Next Month

- March 2nd presentation and listening session with Nebraska Children and Families Foundation’s 22 Community Collaboratives.
- March 14th meeting of the Intersectional Child Welfare Practice Model Workgroup (LB 1173 Workgroup) to discuss findings to-date, including community input and perspectives. The group will apply this information and discuss Vision, Values, and Practice Priorities for the LB 1173 Practice and Finance Models Framework. In addition, Title IV E Claiming and CW Finance will be discussed and information will be presented on these issues.



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- March 15th meeting with Tribal partners in Lincoln.
- Continued engagement sessions with various groups involving community-based agencies, such as Community Action Agencies, faith-based organizations.
- Continued outreach with stakeholders to include leadership and lived experience folks in communities of color to further explore disproportionality issues/barriers and solutions.
- Finance subcommittee workgroup meeting
- LB 1173 Child Welfare Practice and Finance Model Framework Vision/Mission and Priorities

Issues/Risk

N/A

Project Status

On track with the charter