



May 27, 2020

Mary Pinker
Family Caregiver Voice Citizen Review Panel
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 200
Lincoln, NE 68508

RE: Annual Report and Recommendations

Dear Family Caregiver Voice Citizen Review Panel Members:

The Division of Children and Family Services (CFS) would like to thank the Citizen Review Panel (CRP) for your work over the last year. CFS reviewed the 2018-2019 Annual Report and appreciate your efforts. It is especially helpful to have differing perspectives from young parents in the Omaha, Norfolk, and Lincoln communities.

The following recommendations were made by the Omaha and Lincoln Caregiver Voice CRP which focused on parenting and pregnant young people:

- Enhance the Foster Care Bill of Rights.
- Update the Standards of Care for pregnant or parenting youth in care.
- Involve family voice in the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA).

Based on your feedback, CFS added the following three provisions to the Foster Care Bill of Rights:

- I will have a voice in who will be my informal supports.
- To be provided the same rights and opportunities if I should become pregnant or a parent as any other individual who is not in foster care.
- If I am parenting or become pregnant, CFS will connect me to resources and supports available to young parents.

In addition, CFS is working on developing a Standard Work Instruction for staff on supporting pregnant and parenting youth in care. Finally, CFS values the family and youth voice and has been in contact with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation to ensure the family and youth voice are represented on FFPSA workgroups.

The following recommendations were made by the Norfolk Caregiver Voice CRP:

- Implement Medicaid expansion.
- Strive to use clear language in all communications with those using services.
- Expand Mental Health Services offerings.

The Department's Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care is implementing Medicaid expansion on October 1, 2020 (applications will be accepted on August 1, 2020).¹ In addition, CFS agrees that we need to strive to use clear language in all communications with those using services. In August 2019, CFS hired a youth with lived experience to fill a new Voice and Choice Advocate position. This teammate will help ensure agency policy, procedures, and processes reflect and support the consumer voice and choice philosophy. Finally, CFS is a partner in Nebraska's System of Care and efforts to expand mental health service offerings across the state. This is especially critical, right now, in light of the challenges facing families due to COVID-19.

We look forward to the continued collaboration and recommendations this coming year. Thank you again on behalf of the children and families of Nebraska.

Sincerely,



Stephanie L. Beasley, Director
Division of Children and Family Services
NE Department of Health and Human Services

¹ For updates, please visit: <http://dhhs.nc.gov/Pages/Medicaid-Expansion.aspx>.