



Meeting Minutes

North Dakota Children's Cabinet Meeting

Tuesday, January 16, 2024
 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Central Time
 Virtual Call through Microsoft Teams

Members in attendance

Russell Riehl, Parent/Private Service Provider	Janell Regimbal, Parent/Private Service Provider
Honorable Justice Lisa McEvers	Kim Jacobson, Director, Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone, Vice Chair
Kirsten Baesler, Superintendent of Public Instruction	Representative Michelle Strinden, Chair
Veronica Zietz, Director, Protection & Advocacy	Maria Neset, Designee for Governor
Representative Brandy Pyle	Senator Kathy Hogan

Members Absent

VACANT, Tribal Nations Representative	Shawn Huss, Parent/Private Service Provider
Sara Stolt, Interim Director of DHHS	
Senator Michelle Axtman	

Other attendees

Kelli Ulberg	Sara Kapp
Katie Houle	Cathy Ferderer
Christina Hemmer	Tim Gienger

Kayla Stastny	Shauna Eberhardt
Shannon Schutt	Abby Samson
Jim Collins	Melissa Markegard

Call to Order – 4:00 p.m. – Representative Strinden

Motion to Pass Agenda – Motion by Veronica Zietz, Second by Janell Regimbal. Unanimous Approval.

Motion to Pass Minutes from 11.21.2023 – Motion by Brandy Pyle, Second by Russell Riehl. Unanimous Approval.

Concept Paper – Tim Gienger

Representative Michelle Strinden introduced Tim Gienger from Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. Representative Strinden acknowledged the passing of Jim Vetter and the incredible impact he made with DBGR and in the service continuum. Representative Strinden expressed condolences to Tim and DBGR.

Tim Gienger, Senior Director of Residential Partnerships, thanked Representative Strinden. Tim spoke about Jim as deeply knowledgeable and great teacher to everyone at DBGR. The organization hopes to continue his legacy. Tim shared that they are being intentional about talking about Jim - telling stories and not forgetting about him.

Tim shared that the Concept Paper was an outcome of conversations that have been happening for years related to gaps in services for children in North Dakota. Tim discussed that the Family First Act shifted congregate/group home levels of care to Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs). DBGR also serves children through Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTF) level of care. Tim shared that kids should not be raised in congregate care.

The Concept Paper was developed following a meeting between Joy Ryan (CEO, DBGR), Jim Vetter (DBGR), and Cory Pedersen (CFS) in September 2023. There were conversations about “what do we do with these kids” – specifically children that fall through the gaps. Children and adolescents that cannot remain within inpatient hospitalization, are too acute for PRTFs, and do not meet any other current service.

Joy Ryan committed to researching and completing a concept paper by the end of October 2023. DBGR utilized research and models from other states and communities.

Tim shared that the Concept Paper is a potential solution but shared that it is an idea and wants it to spur conversation and considerations within the service continuum – whether it is delivered by DBGR or another entity.

Senator Kathy Hogan asked where Tim sees this service following on the children's behavioral health continuum. Tim shared that it would likely fall on either side of acute hospitalization.

Kim Jacobson expressed gratitude to have Tim bring this concept forward. Kim shared that historically the Children's Cabinet has wrestled to develop solutions for this population of children and adolescents. Kim shared the importance of family engagement and asked Tim how family engagement will be integrated into this treatment service?

Tim shared that similar to PRTF services, they would see that intensive family therapy would be integrated into the service. Tim acknowledged that they may have to consider virtual platforms to deliver intensive services.

Representative Michelle Strinden asked where conversations stood with the department, including Cory Pedersen? Representative Strinden shared that concern about these needs had been discussed in the Juvenile Justice Committee and asked if there has been any further engagement in legislation?

Tim shared that there was a group that was meeting with the Governor's Office in response to the Concept Paper. There has been no further conversation and engagement.

Janell Regimbal shared that when she was a residential administrator, she certainly experienced the scrambling that takes place to find an appropriate level of care. There are children with intense needs and no opportunity for placement. Janell asked if there are opportunities to de-centralize the service to ensure that it is not in one location but throughout the state. Janell acknowledged the importance of providing these levels of care closer to children's natural environments and home communities.

Tim shared that they have not focused on where and how this concept will be implemented. Tim shared DBGR does not own the idea and wants it to be a point of discussion and consideration.

Senator Hogan asked if the service would fit with filling the need for Assessment Centers? Senator Hogan shared that we often do not know the underlying issue that is leading to significant behaviors.

Tim responded that we could consider short- and long-term interventions. Tim shared that some kids require isolation, but we need to ensure that is for as short a time as possible.

Senator Hogan asked if Tim has had a chance to share this idea with Pam Sagness, Executive Director, Behavioral Health Division? Senator Hogan expressed interest in

understanding how this would interact with other goals related to Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs).

Tim responded that DBGR has not had a conversation with Pam. Tim shared understanding that she received a copy of the Concept Paper.

Representative Strinden expressed the need to get stakeholders around the table to discuss further. Representative Strinden asked what barriers Tim/DBGR could foresee for this level care?

Tim shared that there are funding limitations due to the current levels of care and what is being paid for children and youth with high acuity. Tim shared that we used to have a state hospital for adolescents and there appeared to be more flexibility based on state funding and reimbursement models for hospitalization. Tim does not know if implementation would be done as a state-run facility vs private provider or a combination of both. Tim shared that DBGR does subsidize treatment services with non-profit and foundation funding. The Concept Paper and related services would be outside the realm of DBGRs ability to pay for those services under current funding model.

Veronica Zietz asked about the potential length of stay and how a child would transition to less intense services.

Tim shared that it is hard to answer questions about length of stay because what they have learned is that it is individualized and based on child need. The goal would be to make the stay as short as possible and to transition to other systems of care in the state and into home community.

Veronica Zietz shared that she has concerns that facilities and providers are focused on facilitating the shortest stay but due to workforce issues and lack of services are getting stuck in that level of restrictive care.

Tim shares that concern but acknowledges the impact that is experienced when children are bouncing around to different placements. Tim feels there is pain and anguish being experienced by children that we can fix.

Forum for Youth Investment – Maria Neset

Maria Neset updated the Cabinet that they have met with and received a cost proposal from Forum for Youth Initiative (FYI). Maria shared that they have experience working in other states and would support the Children's Cabinet to develop a coordinated strategic plan.

Maria has completed three meetings with FYI. FYI has shared exemplar examples of other states and the mission, vision, and strategic planning with those state entities.

These state examples were shared with Representative Strinden and will be shared out with the Cabinet.

GEER, Covid relief funds, are given out at the discretion of the Governor. Maria confirmed that we can cover the cost of these services to develop a strategic plan and receive technical assistance.

Maria recognized that Kelli Ulberg is going above and beyond her scope and everyone in the Cabinet has important day jobs and responsibilities. FYI services could assist in moving us forward.

Representative Strinden read the FYI Vision – “The Forum for Youth Investment envisions a world where all young people reach their fullest potential – in education, work, and life.” Representative Strinden to share documents with the Cabinet to read through other states strategic goals and vision.

Senator Hogan asked if there are any funding streams through Title IV-E or Title IV-A dollars to support the Children’s Cabinet?

Maria responded that other funding has not been considered but worth talking with DHHS.

Kim Jacobson shared she is pleased to hear this discussion. She shared that in the 90s one of our dreams was to have an Office of the Child that would bring everyone together.

Maria confirmed that she will share out the draft scope of work and state examples.

Regional Children’s Services Coordinating Committee (Region 5) – Becky Bakke

There have been continued conversations regarding the history of Children Services Coordinating Committees (CSCCs). Representative Strinden introduced Becky Bakke who was a part of the Region V Children’s Services Coordinating Committee.

Becky shared that CSCCs were written into law in 1991. There was a state-wide group of stakeholders that served at the state level like a Children’s Cabinet.

There were regional and tribal groups. The groups served to plan and coordinate with parents, policymakers, and service providers. The group provided advocacy and support for children’s services. The groups would talk about what they were doing and how children’s services could work together, efficiently, and effectively, across the region.

The groups developed vision and values together. They would do refinancing, and time studies and funding would go directly back to juvenile justice, special education, public health, and other child-serving entities.

Each of the CSCCs ran independently – most met monthly, some quarterly.

The committees talked about how to best help children and discussed financing to bolster supports. The entities gleaned ideas from one another.

Steering committee – public health, 20-24, how can we best help children. Finance dollars to bolster, gleaned idea off each other,

The CSCCs dissolved due to lack of funding. Dakota Medical Foundation was involved to help continue the coordination of these groups.

Representative Strinden asked if local leadership values this type of meeting? It appears that there are challenges in keeping these committees going because we need local buy-in. Representative Strinden shared that this was attempted through Mindsparks in Williston. Shawn Huss who is not here today may be able to share more when he is present.

Janell Regimbal shared that the CSCCs were sunset when federal money went away, and the initiative was not supported by policy and law.

Representative Strinden shared that we need to get communities together in a way that it is productive and builds connection with one another.

Maria Neset shared that it should be an expectation for these leaders to come to the table and collaborate on behalf of their organizations and children they serve.

Senator Hogan agreed with Maria that it has not been an expectation as it is no longer in law that leaders collaborate. The law went away, and the behavior stopped. There is turnover in leadership, and it is seen as another meeting and not mandatory.

Membership Update – Maria Neset

Maria shared that Tribal Nations Representative for the Cabinet has been filled by Daniell Breland from Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. Thank you for the recommendations from the Cabinet.

Administrative Support Update – Kelli Ulberg

Kelli shared that Administrative Support for the North Dakota Children's Cabinet contract was awarded to Clearwater Communications. Kelli introduced Shannon Schutt and Jim Collins from Clearwater Communications.

Shannon Schutt is the President of Clearwater Communications. Jim Collins will be the primary point of contact for administrative support beginning in February.

Senator Hogan and Representative Strinden expressed gratitude to Kelli Ulberg for all she has done to support the Cabinet and going above and beyond her scope of duties.

Next Meeting – February 20, 2024, 4:00-5:00pm

Adjourn – 5:03PM

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