



Meeting Minutes

North Dakota Children's Cabinet Meeting

Tuesday, November 21, 2023
 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	Senator Michelle Axtman
Shawn Huss, Parent/Private Service Provider	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
Sara Stolt, Interim Director of DHHS	Senator Kathy Hogan
Representative Brandy Pyle	

Members Absent

VACANT, Tribal Nations Representative	

Other attendees

Kelli Ulberg	Sara Kapp
Katie Houle	Kayla Statsny

Melissa Markegard	Tim Gienger
Sara Mitzel	Lucy Fredericks
Abby Samson	Lisa Jahner
Shae Stober	

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

Motion to Pass Agenda – Unanimous approval.

Motion to Pass Minutes from 10.12.2023 – Motion by Russ Riehl, Second by Senator Kathy Hogan. Unanimous Approval.

Membership Update – Maria Neset

The Children’s Cabinet is fully appointed besides our tribal representative. Maria is hopeful to receive recommendations from cabinet members on a tribal appointment.

Maria shared that Shawn Huss has joined as a member and brings a special education perspective. Shawn has experience in community engagement work through the Mindspark initiative in the Northwest region.

Russ Riehl will serve another term.

Kim Jacobson will serve another term.

Janell Regimbal will serve another term.

Lighthouse Project Summary/Update

Maria introduced the Lighthouse Project and outlined that the group is in Phase One of the project.

Maria shared an infographic that demonstrates that the data systems for child-serving entities are siloed and not intersecting for families that are engaged in multiple systems. For example, for children that are entering Kindergarten, schools are not aware of the structures and supports that child and family has been receiving for years 0-5. If schools did understand those intersecting agencies, they could be a better partner in planning for supports for that child and family.

Maria shared that the Vision for Data in North Dakota is to create a data-driven culture. The infrastructure to develop these data systems are expensive and will require broad,

cross-system engagement. The aim is for the data to be predictive, responsive, and children and family centered.

Superintendent Baesler shared that over the last 10-12 years she has heard similar conversations locally, regionally, and state-wide regarding the multiple systems (school, human services, child welfare, homeless services, etc.) that may be engaged with a single family based on their circumstances. Superintendent Baesler offered a metaphor reflecting that as a family grows, they build more rooms in their house as needed – bedrooms, additional bathrooms, and so on. If the house does not have a foundation, this growth is not sustainable and well supported.

The Lighthouse Project is an attempt to build that bottom row and foundation of data-driven culture within North Dakota. Superintendent Baesler shared that DHHS and DPI have been the initial partners to start building the foundation and focus on data intersections. The project is in phase one and \$10 million dollars has been appropriated to support this work. \$5 million has been dedicated to the STARS modernization work within DPI.

Sara Stolt shared that each Division and entity already has access to their own individual data, but the project would be to see where these intersect. There were some steps back in changes in leadership and ownership of the project. Sara confirmed that they are in phase one of the project.

Senator Hogan shared that in 2021 they wrote for the child welfare data infrastructure, and asked if this is related to the project.

Sara Stolt affirmed that the 2021 efforts was for FRAME, the case management and payment system for child welfare. Sara updated that they are working to finalize the scope and requirements and have not yet released an RFP. The updated child welfare system could assist in accessing child welfare specific data.

Senator Hogan recognized that there have been concerns that FRAME has not moved forward, but this foundational data infrastructure work could explain some of these barriers.

Maria and Representative Strinden talked about the benefit of having NDIT to present to the Cabinet. Sara Stolt shared that Kim Weis, Director of NDIT, would be willing to share key milestones.

Senator Hogan asked if other states have done this work and what we can learn from their initiatives. Superintendent Baesler confirmed that they are learning from North Carolina and other states. These states have robust systems, and we will continue to learn from their work.

Children's Funding Project – Maria Neset and Sara Stolt

Sara shared the following links in the chat:

<https://www.childrensfundingproject.org/national-trends-in-state-funding-for-children-and-youth>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aw4EBMMAzP4>

The Children's Funding Project is working to create a map of the funding for children's programs. It assists in painting a picture of the anticipated outcomes based on investment. Sara spoke about drawing connections between quality services and investments. Sara spoke about targeting what outcomes can be attributed to state funding into children's programs.

Sara and Maria have an inquiry form for North Dakota to be a part of the project. Sara outlined that they are still waiting to learn the cost to engage in the project and if procurement will be required. The initial states that have engaged in the Children's Funding Project were part of an initial pilot.

Sara drew connection to the Children's Cabinet recent efforts to develop a mission, vision, and focus on areas of impact in children's services.

Representative Strinden encouraged others to watch the webinar ([\(544\) National Trends in State Spending for Children and Youth - YouTube](#)). The initiative takes a cross-system view on the local, state, and federal level. It helped to identify key gaps and silos which aligns with what the cabinet is hoping to accomplish as a group.

Sara Stolt gave an example of eligibility programs doing this data analysis already. North Dakota was found to be the 4th most expensive state in the country to implement the SNAP program. This analysis helped drive the redesign of the program, implement policy changes, and focus on timeliness and higher quality for North Dakota citizens. Sara shared that human service zones have a new dashboard that provides real time information on program standards related to child welfare and economic assistance.

Kim Jacobson as a Zone Director shared that anecdotal information and assumptions are made about service data that are not always accurate. The dashboard work allows to identify the source or root of key issues. Kim Jacobson is looking forward to the data analysis work moving forward.

Maria Neset provided an update on behalf of the Governor's Office and shared that there are GEER discretionary funds from covid-19 that could be utilized to support this important work on behalf of children, and children and family services more broadly. The funds need to be obligated by September 2024 which creates challenge in selecting a vendor who can work within that timeline and is the right match for the right purpose. For example, The Governor's Taskforce for Teacher Retention and

Recruitment was recently launched. That initiative will use these discretionary funds and that report will be due by September 2024.

Maria is working to identify an experienced and appropriate consultant. Maria and Representative Strinden spoke about aiming to identify a good fit for the project that can work within the federal funding guidelines by the end of the year. Maria highlighted the importance of this work and considering sustainable funding sources to support this work moving forward.

Representative Strinden shared that she is continuing to collaborate with Maria on this process and hopes to provide updates during the January meeting. Representative Strinden affirmed finding the right mechanisms for continuity. Representative Strinden referenced the resource from the Aspen Institute - [Strong and Sustainable Children's Cabinets](#).

Senator Hogan updated that she met with Pat Trainer to identify local, cross-system groups that could function as coordinating councils. Senator Hogan shared that they are interested to learn about the work in the Northwest region of the state. Senator Hogan shared that Cass County Public health is facilitating some cross-system work for the region.

Sara Stolt provided feedback that cross-system coordinating councils are only as effective as the individual entities that are engaged in the process. Sara has some concern that the entities need to work independently and internally before engaging in coordinating councils.

Representative Strinden acknowledged that the group is continuing to assess what is happening and referenced work that may already be happening in Devils Lake, Cass County, and the Northwest region of the state.

Family Engagement Survey – Lucy Fredericks and Sara Mitzel

Superintendent Baesler introduced Lucy Fredericks, NDDPI Director Indian/Multicultural Education, Family Engagement Core Team Lead and Sara Mitzel, NDDPI, Assistant Director of Assessment, Adult Ed. Program Manager/Adult Ed. Lead, and Family Engagement Core Team, who are leading efforts for DPI's Family Engagement portfolio ([website](#)). Superintendent Baesler shared that she developed a close working relationship with Dr. Steve Constantino who shared with her that "families are the first and most influential teachers". Families are not always the best equipped and it is integral for schools to work in true partnership with them to support their child(ren).

Lucy Fredericks shared that DPI has recognized that families are an integral foundation for the health, safety, and education of their students. The Family Engagement Cabinet began in Spring 2019 and there were 24 members to start. They are currently seeking new members for the 2024 cabinet. The members meet quarterly at the capital or an offsite location.

Lucy outlined that Dr. Steve Constantino has assisted developing goals for the Family Engagement Cabinet and outlined his model of true, authentic family engagement. Lucy talked through the differences between family involvement and family engagement.

Dr. Steve Constantino wrote a book called, *Engage Every Family*, and Superintendent Baesler wrote the forward to the book. Lucy shared the five simple principles of creating partnerships between schools and families.

Due to time, Sara Mitzel focused on the conclusions found from the Family Engagement Survey that was completed in collaboration with Gallup. Sara encouraged the group to review the rest of the power point presentation (<https://www.hhs.nd.gov/cfs/childrens-cabinet>) and encouraged the group to review the report (<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Aascds%3AUS%3A2f9d221e-f04c-472f-abfd-f590799e16bb>). Sara provided a brief overview of the conclusions that came from the survey. DPI provided [Family Engagement Grants](#) to 13 North Dakota Public School Districts in 2023.

Representative Pyle asked how the survey was conducted.

Sara Mitzel shared that there were 3,000 respondents to the survey. They were sent the survey via mail, and it was available in both English and Spanish. There were respondents from all 8 regions.

Representative Pyle shared that they often hear from parents and families that schools are failing children and the data suggests a very different, more positive outcomes as it relates to family engagement work. Representative Pyle asked how this information is being marketed.

Superintendent Baesler acknowledged this is a great question as it is important to market these important, positive results. She shared that there are limitations in marketing and media budgets, but they are working to push out these results to communities.

Representative Pyle recommended that school districts share these results to parents, caregivers, educators, and students.

Sara Mitzel updated that the information was advertised in the school blast and teacher's edge communication that is sent across the state. Sara updated that it was shared with DPI's Student Cabinet and Family Cabinet as well.

Superintendent Baesler recommended to Maria that this information be integrated into the work of the Teacher Retention and Recruitment initiatives as the image of public education is going to impact educator shortage.

Superintendent Baesler shared that she is a part of Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and attended the Summit on Modernizing our Education System. Superintendent Baesler shared a video from the summit regarding family engagement and the work of Learning Heros.

Wrap Up – Representative Strinden shared that the December meeting has been taken off the calendar and there will be focus on identifying a consultant during this time. Representative Strinden thanked everyone to all for sharing and expressed gratitude for the work and members of the ND Children’s Cabinet. Happy Holidays to all.

Next Meeting – January 16, 2024, 4:00-5:00pm

Adjourn – 5:15pm

DRAFT