



Meeting Minutes

North Dakota Children's Cabinet

Tuesday August 20, 2024
4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Central Time
Microsoft Teams Virtual Call

Call to Order: 4:02 p.m. – Kim Jacobson, Chair

Roll Call: 10 – Present, 4 – Absent, Quorum met.

Members in Attendance:

Kim Jacobson	Maria Neset
Superintendent Kirsten Baesler	Justice Lisa McEvers
Wayne Salter	Veronica Zietz
Representative Brandy Pyle	Russell Riehl
Daniell Breland	Janell Regimbal

Members Absent:

Representative Michelle Strinden	Senator Michelle Axtman
Shawn Huss	Senator Kathy Hogan

Other Attendees:

Melissa Markegard	Cathy Ferderer
Kelli Ullberg	Sara Kapp
Kayla Stastny	Shauna Eberhardt
Katie Houle	Tim Gienger
Shae Stober	

Staff:

Jim Collins Jr.

Approval of Agenda

Motion: Veronica Zietz moved to approve the agenda as written.

Second: Russell Riehl

Motion approved.

Approval of Minutes

Motion: Riehl moved to approve the minutes as corrected.

Second: Representative Brandy Pyle

Discussion: Collins detailed two corrections that were suggested.

Motion: Zietz moved to approve the suggested amendments.

Second: Janell Regimbal

Motion Approved.

Original motion Approved.

Kim Jacobson welcomed Lisa Bjergaard, Chair, Juvenile justice Commission.

Presentation 1: Juvenile Justice Commission Update

Presenter: Bjergaard Lisa J.

Key Highlights:

- The Juvenile Justice Commission is a 16-member group working on juvenile justice reform, currently in the 4th of its 5-year mandate, set to end in August 2025.
- **House Bill 1137 (2021):** Amendments and clarifications were made regarding delinquency referrals, particularly for school-based infractions and misdemeanors, effective August 2023.
- **Collaboration with Schools:** A workgroup was formed to assist schools in creating action plans to handle school-based infractions, and this work has concluded.
- **Focus on Collateral Consequences:** The Commission identified conflicts between juvenile and adult criminal codes, recommending policies addressing collateral consequences rather than rewriting the entire juvenile code.
- **Sunset Date Discussion:** A meeting is scheduled to discuss whether the Commission's work should continue beyond August 2025.

Key Efforts from 2021-2023:

1. Amendments to the Juvenile Justice Reform Bill.
2. Support for schools dealing with infractions.
3. Proposals addressing collateral consequences.

Questions:

- **Justice Lisa McEvers:** Asked about collateral consequences affecting juveniles who commit crimes that are considered felonies if committed by adults, specifically concerning firearm possession restrictions.

- **Maria Neset:** Inquired about the group's recommendations on continuing work beyond the sunset date and the implementation process for schools.

Summary: The Commission's focus was on improving policies and supporting schools. There's a need for ongoing discussion about extending the Commission's work beyond 2025.

Presentation 2: Children in Need of Services (CHINS)

Presenter: Lynn M. Flieth, RSR Human Services

Key Highlights:

- **CHINS Overview:** Established as a result of juvenile justice changes, the program focuses on children exhibiting specific behaviors such as truancy, running away, or ungovernable behavior.
- **Preventative Focus:** The CHINS unit aims to divert youth from the justice system by connecting families to services before formal court involvement.
- **Referral Process:** Referrals are assessed, and specialists follow up with families based on severity.
- **Challenges:** Variations in community standards and services, and lack of emergency response capacity. The unit has faced challenges due to limited resources and inconsistent services across the state.

Data Presented:

- **Referrals:** Primarily for running away and truancy.
- **Geographic Coverage:** Eight specialists covering different regions.

Summary: The CHINS unit focuses on preventive work to avoid deep system involvement for youth exhibiting concerning behaviors.

Presentation 3: Dual Status Youth Initiative

Presenter: Heather Traynor, Court Improvement Program Coordinator

Key Highlights:

- **Dual Status Youth:** Youth involved in both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system. Weekly cross-referencing ensures coordinated efforts.
- **Family Centered Engagement Meetings:** Designed to involve families in decision-making, showing promising results.
- **Demographics:** Males make up 53% of dual-status youth, and 40% of these youth are American Indian or Black, reflecting disproportionate representation.

Guardian ad Litem Program:

- **Top Recommendations:**

1. Regionalizing full-time GALs by judicial district.
2. Establishing a maximum caseload.
3. Ensuring specialized GALs for Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) cases.
4. Introducing post-disposition monitoring.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) Data:

- Issues related to TPR filing timelines were discussed, with delays noted between zone submissions and state attorney filings.

Summary: Significant work has been done to address the unique needs of dual-status youth, but challenges remain, particularly regarding race equity and timely legal processes.

5. Discussion & Closing

- **Kim Jacobson** thanked all presenters.
- Attendees were encouraged to contact presenters directly with additional questions.
- Meeting adjourned following a motion by **Brandy Pyle** and seconded by **Russ Riehl**.

Motion: Representative Pyle moved to adjourn the meeting.

Second: Riehl

Motion approved.

Meeting adjourned: 5:00 p.m.