



**Brain Injury Advisory Council Meeting  
Online via ZOOM  
September 11, 2020**

**MEETING MINUTES**

*Public notice of upcoming meetings will be available on the Department of Education website under “conferences & meetings” at least 10 days prior to each meeting.*

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tiffany Armstrong, Emaly Ball, Jerry Bryan, Penny Clark, Ashley Davis, Tania Diaz, Mark Draper, Cindy Hoffschneider, Karen Houseman, Randall Jones, Kristen Larsen, Carla Lasley, Amy Levering, Brooke Murtaugh, Judy Nichelson, Peg Ogea-Ginsburg, Vaishali Phatak, Peggy Reisher, Larry Roos, Shawna Thompson, Frank Velinsky

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Tim Burton, Dale Johannes, Sarvinoz Kadyrova, Zoe Olson

**STAFF PRESENT:** Keri Bennett, Ashley Hernandez, Nancy Noha

**VISITORS:** Joni Dulaney, Jo Gunderson, Chris Stewart

*The meeting of the Nebraska Brain Injury Advisory Council commenced at 10:03a.m. Public notification of this meeting was made on the Nebraska Department of Education website.*

**APPROVAL OF JUNE 19TH MEETING MINUTES**

The minutes from June 19, 2020 were reviewed. Frank Velinsky requested an amendment to his public comment correcting Medicare requirements to Public Health Licensure Requirements impacting Medicare AD waiver requirements. Kristen Larsen noted a spelling error to be corrected for the name, Mark Friedman. A motion was made by Mark Draper and seconded by Carla Lasley to approve the June 19, 2020 meeting minutes as amended. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

The agenda for the day was reviewed. A motion was made by Karen Houseman and seconded by Frank Velinsky to approve the agenda as submitted. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

**OPEN MEETINGS ACT**

Judy Nichelson stated that the meeting was an open meeting and the Open Meetings Law was posted.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment was shared.

## **COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP**

Judy Nichelson thanked Mark Draper for his service to the council over the past couple years and wished him well in the future. Mark thanked the council sharing he enjoyed his time and hopes the special education group continues to be represented and considered. Mark shared Jo Gunderson will likely be continuing on in the special education department council role. Judy announced Kristen Larsen will be turning over her membership to Joni Dulaney. Judy thanked Kristen for her time on the council. Kristen thanked the council sharing they have seen great collaboration and she looks forward to future partnership. Kristen shared she thinks Joni will be an excellent addition as an individual living with an injured brain.

## **NEW MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS**

Judy introduced new council member Randall Jones as the Director of Aging Partners. Randall introduced himself to the council. Jo Gunderson and Joni Dulaney introduced themselves to the council.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Judy Nichelson discussed committee written reports which were provide via email. Judy asked if there were any questions regarding the reports. Keri Bennett made an addition to the peer support committee report stating the request for proposals is to be released on the website by 1:00pm this afternoon.

## **BRAIN INJURY TRUST FUND UPDATE**

Keri Bennett shared Peggy Reisher advised there has not been much update as they are still awaiting the Governor's appointment of the committee as he is still within his 90 days to do so.

## **2020 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

Tiffany Armstrong reported there were no additional updates from this committee sharing the committee will reconvene in a few weeks.

## **LIVING WITH BRAIN INJURY STATE PLAN**

Keri Bennett discussed the current state plan is a year old and committees have been working towards goals of that plan. Keri shared she would like to take a close look at the plan with the council in the near future to address the status and progress of the cohesive plan in-depth. Keri proposed the council as a whole have a few meetings to look over the plan in-depth moving forward. Keri stated a representative from NASHIA could possibly facilitate these discussions. Keri stated she would like to submit an updated state plan in December with the ACL report. Carla Lasley asked for clarification what type of group is needed, small group or whole council. Keri shared she would be open to either. Karen Houseman asked how far along the process of updating the plan is. Keri stated the plan in some areas has been updated as it goes along and other areas need more attention. Karen shared she could allocate an hour to work on this. Kristen Larsen discussed that some plan goals are going to be behind due to the Covid-19 pandemic stating that should be addressed in the plan. Keri discussed the majority of TBI grantee states will be requesting no cost extensions and ACL has been very understanding. Emaly Ball, Judy Nichelson, Frank Velinsky, Shawna Thompson, Peggy Reisher, Cindy Hoffschneider and Carla Lasley stated they will participate in a committee or meeting to work on the state plan. Keri stated if anyone else would like to work on this to please email her and they can be added, noting she will include the technical assistance center as well.

## **2020 LIVING WITH BRAIN INJURY NEEDS SURVEY UPDATE**

Keri Bennett updated the council sharing, following the stakeholder meetings in May and June they have been working with the Schmeekles who created a survey draft for comment. Keri shared they have incorporated as much of the input on the survey as possible stating an updated draft is available which will largely be available online. Keri reported they will be meeting next week to discuss disseminating the

survey in physical copy as well. Keri discussed she is very happy with the new draft and thinks it will be an excellent resource.

### **2020 LIVING WITH BRAIN INJURY SUMMIT UPDATE**

Keri Bennett reported summit planning is in process sharing they have had a few planning meetings. Keri discussed they are looking at a virtual summit this year with several short sessions over a few days versus one long meeting. Keri shared they received a proposal from NIBN (Nebraska Injured Brain Network) to co-sponsor the summit stating they will be meeting soon to discuss what they can offer to the summit. Keri stated they are now looking at early November for the summit noting the Kearney ESU will be offering technical support for those utilizing ZOOM. Keri noted the Brain Injury Conference held last week via ZOOM was very successful. Emaly Ball shared as the NIBN president they are very excited to co-sponsor this event.

### **COVID-19 RESOURCES & CHALLENGES**

Judy asked if any members had any recent Covid-19 challenges or new Covid-19 related resources for those with brain injury. Chris Stewart shared as a resource facilitator the number one resource they refer to are the support groups, noting there are virtual meetings occurring regularly. Chris discussed some support groups are still able to meet in-person with social distancing stating peer support is their focus. Frank Velinsky asked if HHS has any experience with Covid-19 being a challenge for service providers. Karen Houseman stated there have been some flexibilities written into the waiver but officially she does not work with these services in-person on a daily basis. Carla Lasley shared from her perspective with Nebraska VR, providers have an increased rate to cover PPE and other costs affiliated with Covid-19. Carla stated day programs can be served in-home if they are not able to be out in the community. Carla stated that at VR as individuals are coming off the waiting list many are not ready to be in the workplace due to health concerns, but they are working to prepare them for when they are able to safely pursue employment. Randall Jones shared there has been reduced access to individuals in care facilities noting limited access to some service providers such as physical therapy. Randy shared some of those restrictions have loosened noting assessment in care facilities was also a struggle. Kristen Larsen shared there is technological outreach and Covid-19 has shown that people needing services need access to technology. Karen Houseman shared there is flexibility withing section K of the waiver. Amy Levering discussed her in-laws in a nursing facility experiencing a great impact of isolation due to Covid-19 restrictions. Amy discussed the give and take of Covid-19 safety and the need for service providers. Amy stated as a person with an injured brain she has seen a great impact on her access to services. Keri Bennett discussed the assessment of risk and no ideal situations. Carla Lasley discussed an individual choice can be a choice for many. Frank Velinsky asked, what have we learned from this situation and what do we need to do in the future. Randall Jones discussed we need to continue assessing the physical impact of the mental and social implications of isolation. Amy Levering shared she has lived with the experience of isolation for many years and shared we all need to have compassion and find an insight for everyone. Chris Stewart discussed this has also been empowering for those living with a brain injury finding empathy from others who are also experiencing these challenges. Emaly Ball asked if the BIAC could advocate for more flexibility in the workforce for those with disabilities discussing how often companies have not wanted employees working remotely, if they could work toward more workplace inclusivity that would benefit those with injured brains. Carla Lasley shared there is a lot of discussion about work from home opportunities and the potential benefits for those who are unable to be in the workplace. Keri discussed technology for these opportunities is also a barrier for those with brain injury noting vision issues and perception issues for example can be challenging when working from home with technology. Ashley Davis shared they are finding out there are a lot of mental health issues coming to light due to isolation for those with no previous issues. Cindy Hoffschneider discussed being online is not the same as being in-person and shared her personal experience struggling with only seeing providers virtually. Karen Houseman discussed what is being lost in virtual meetings is all of the non-verbal communication which creates personal connection. Shawna Thompson stated she believes individuals living with brain injury

have coping skills for isolation which the average individual does not causing those with brain injury to manage much better than the average due to these coping skills. Judy Nicholson stated she agreed those with injured brains have developed very useful coping skills.

**ADJOURN**

The next meeting is scheduled for December 4, 2020. The meeting adjourned at 11:23a.m. with a motion made by Frank Velinsky and seconded by Vaishali Phatak. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**