

U.S. Administration for Community Living
Traumatic Brain Injury State Partnership Program Mentor State Grant
Semi-Annual Performance Report

ACL Grant Award Number: 90TBSG0036-01-00

Project Title: Nebraska Builds a Statewide, Voice-Driven Traumatic Brain Injury Network

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Activities and Accomplishments

Nebraska's project goal is to increase state and national capacity to provide access to comprehensive and coordinated services for individuals with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and their families by building a statewide, voice-driven Network of individuals with TBI and their family members that are engaged and equipped to shape policies, programs and services.

1. What did you accomplish during this reporting period and how did these accomplishments help you reach your stated project goal(s) and objective(s)? Please note any significant project partners and their role in project activities.

Project objective #1 is to build the foundation for a statewide, voice-driven Network with the existing TBI support groups by providing leadership and capacity-building coaching to support group leaders and members in at least 10 of the 13 support groups during Years 1-3 of the project. A request for proposals (RFP) was released to solicit bids from qualified contractors for a three-year project to build voice-driven leadership capacity and stronger connections among the local support groups. The contracted work is anticipated to begin in February, 2019. The Project Director met with the support group leaders online to share project goals and objectives, and support group leaders provided input on the scope of work. The Brain Injury Advisory Council (BIAC) formed a Membership committee to revise their bylaws and membership requirements to reflect ACL TBI Program advisory board priorities. The committee will meet monthly until the revisions are completed. The BIAC added a representative from the statewide Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) who is also an individual with brain injury. Membership invitations were issued to the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and Independent Living Centers (ILC), however have not yet been answered. Grant staff and BIAC

members drafted a master work plan to meet TBI grant objectives and BIAC sustainability goals. The plan includes key tasks, due dates, responsible parties and status notations. The plan has been placed in a shared folder accessible to grant staff and BIAC committee chairpersons to ensure consistent progress is made on key tasks and that everyone is kept up-to-date. The BIAC is a significant partner in carrying out project activities under this objective. Council members have embraced their expanded role in reaching out to additional brain injury stakeholders to help build the foundation for the Network.

Project objective #2 is to equip the Network of people with TBI and their families to advocate for policy, program and service changes by making data, resources, tools and strategies accessible to leaders and members of all 13 support groups across the state during Years 1-3 of the project. Grant staff met with the Nebraska VR Marketing and Communications Specialist to explore options to facilitate document sharing and communication between the BIAC and support group leaders and members. A draft communication plan is in development with instructions and expectations for using the collaboration space when it is launched. All support group leader email addresses were added to the BIAC mailing list. Monthly support group meetings were added to the BIAC website calendar, and meeting agendas are posted when available. Members of the BIAC collaborated with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to add two TBI-specific questions to the 2018 National Core Indicators – Aging and Disabilities (NCI-AD) survey. The questions regarding access to information about brain injury, independence and daily living were included in the surveys for individuals with identified brain injuries. The data will be available in 2019 for use in advocating for policy and service changes. Grant staff partnered with the DHHS, Injury Prevention Program to add optional questions regarding life-time history of TBI incidents to the annual Behavioral Risk

Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey to be conducted in 2019. Survey data will be made available in 2020. These collaborations with DHHS represent significant steps in making data and resources accessible for Nebraska's Network of brain injury stakeholders.

Project objective #3 is to engage Network members from all 13 support groups in shaping policies, programs and services by providing education in advocacy strategies and offering opportunities to advocate during Years 1-3 of the project. The BIAC established a Public Policy committee to review introduced legislation and public policies that impact individuals with TBI, their families and caregivers, and make recommendations to the BIAC for action. Grant staff partnered with the Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska (BIA) to offer a free online presentation entitled *Most Effective Ways to be Heard by Your Legislators* for all brain injury stakeholders across the state. The first annual *Living with Brain Injury* needs survey was finalized and will be launched in January, 2019. Support group leaders and BIAC members provided significant input in drafting the survey questions, which will give individuals and families who are impacted by brain injury an opportunity to be heard. Survey results will be used to inform Network members and brain injury stakeholders regarding the unmet and insufficiently met needs of individuals with brain injury, their families and caregivers across the state. A planning committee was formed with BIAC and BIA members to draft the agenda for the first annual TBI Network Summit, to be held on March 27, 2019. The Summit venue has been secured and will offer remote access to event proceedings for those who cannot attend in person. A representative from the Association of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAA) joined the BIAC to help Network members connect with regional ADRC advisory committees in the future. These annual events will offer significant opportunities for all Network members and brain injury stakeholders to help shape and improve Nebraska's policies, programs and services for people impacted by brain injury.

Project objective #4 is to connect newly-injured individuals with TBI and their family members to the Network and the existing system of services and supports in underserved, rural areas of the state by training a TBI Peer Resource Navigator from 6 of the 13 support groups during Years 2 and 3 of the project. A new contract was negotiated with the DHHS Office of Injury Surveillance (OIS) to fulfill Section 30 of Nebraska's Brain Injury Act of 2008. The law requires physicians, psychologists, hospitals and rehabilitation centers to report the names and other demographic information on individuals diagnosed with TBI to the state TBI registry. During this reporting period, more than 2,500 letters and brochures were mailed to individuals newly diagnosed with TBI. Per the new contract, DHHS now reports the names and demographic data on individuals sorted by age group (birth-21, 22-54 and 55+) and by region (western, central and eastern Nebraska). Customized brochures for each age group and region are nearly complete. The nine color-coded brochures will assist individuals and their families to locate age appropriate resources close to home. The brochures will also be distributed to the listed agencies and local support groups as resources to connect individuals with TBI and families to assistance in their area. Grant staff began listing the monthly local support group meetings and agendas on the BIAC website calendar to help increase attendance. Enhancing this process for connecting newly-injured individuals with TBI and their families to local support groups and nearby resources sets the stage for training TBI Peer Resource Navigators in Years 2 and 3 of the project.

Project Objective #5 is to increase national capacity to provide comprehensive and coordinated services to individuals with TBI by providing mentorship and technical assistance to Partner State Grantees in Years 1-3 of the project. Nebraska serves as a co-Mentor for the **Using Data to Connect People to Services and Transition and Employment** workgroups. Both

groups met in person while attending the NASHIA Annual State of the States in Brain Injury Conference in September, 2018. Since then, Nebraska's grant staff have provided administrative and technical support for online workgroup meetings and have been instrumental in maintaining the contact lists for each group. In both workgroups, initial time was spent on identifying Partner state needs and priorities for the year. The **Transition and Employment** workgroup members identified two directions to pursue; the transition for individuals with TBI from medical treatment, rehabilitation and/or institutionalization back to life in the community, and the transition to employment. As its first product, the group chose to develop a survey for state vocational rehabilitation professionals that addresses their educational and training needs, their perceived level of expertise and competency in serving individuals with TBI, and barriers they experience in helping individuals with TBI achieve their employment goals. The **Using Data to Connect People to Services** workgroup created a matrix to identify data resources and needs for each Mentor and Partner state as a tool to identify priorities and potential workgroup products. Nebraska also participated in the Mentor state workgroup to address professional **TBI Workforce Development**. The group collaborated with TBI Coordinating Center staff during monthly online meetings to begin identifying existing professional training materials and professional knowledge, skill and ability requirements for various professions. Nebraska's grant staff reported periodically to the BIAC on workgroup activities. These workgroups are excellent forums for states to share mentorship and technical assistance in order to increase national capacity to serve individuals with TBI.

2. What, if any, challenges did you face during this reporting period and what actions did you take to address these challenges? Please note in your response changes, if any, to your project goal(s), objective(s), or activities that were made as a result of challenges faced.

Nebraska experienced a slight delay in issuing the RFP for Network Capacity Building due to departmental procurement requirements. Depending on the chosen contractor’s proposed timeline for completion, this challenge may be overcome by either negotiating a shorter project timeline or requesting a no-cost extension at the end of the grant project period. Launch and coordination of three Mentor/Partner state workgroups during the reporting period required more staff time than anticipated and delayed completion of some key tasks, such as customization of the TBI registry brochures. Now that all three workgroups are operating, grant staff will have more available time to complete these tasks. No changes to project goals, objectives or activities were made during the reporting period due to these challenges.

3. How have the activities conducted during this project period helped you to achieve the measurable outcomes identified in your project proposal?

Reporting period activities contributing to achievement of each measurable outcome are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

Measurable Outcome	Contributing Activities
1. At least 7 of 10 support group leaders and 15 support group members will report increased leadership skills in support group facilitation, outreach to individuals with TBI,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The TBI Network Capacity Building project RFP was released. The RFP includes development of the pre-post questionnaire and data collection plan

<p>families and caregivers, and building collaborative efforts among local TBI stakeholders, as measured by a pre- and post-questionnaire, documentation of outreach activities and an increase in support group membership numbers compared to Year 1 baseline numbers. The pre- and post-questionnaire will be developed in partnership with the project external evaluation contractor.</p>	<p>with the external grant evaluation team as a contract deliverable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All support group leader email addresses were added to the BIAC mailing list, ensuring each group will receive timely invitations and updates on the project.
<p>2. People with TBI and their family members will report increased advocacy activities at the local, regional, state and national level compared to Year 1 baseline levels, as measured by the Advocacy Activity Survey (AAS), and documentation of the number of advocacy and educational presentations reported each year. The AAS is a validated questionnaire which measures involvement in a range of advocacy activities, developed by James F. Malec, Ph.D., L.P.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant staff collaborated with the BIA to present <i>Most Effective Ways to be Heard by Your Legislators</i> in September 2018. The event was promoted to support group leaders and members and other TBI stakeholders. • The <i>Living with Brain Injury</i> annual needs survey was drafted and will be disseminated after January 1, 2019. Survey data will inform development of the Annual TBI State Plan and advocacy efforts at all levels.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first annual TBI Network Summit is scheduled for March 27, 2019. • The BIAC Public Policy Committee was formed to make recommendations to the BIAC and other TBI stakeholders on legislative and policy issues impacting individuals with TBI and their families. • The TBI Network Capacity Building RFP includes administration of the AAS with the support groups as a contract deliverable. • When available, the NCI-AD and BRFSS survey data will also inform advocacy efforts at all levels.
<p>3. The number of individuals with TBI and family members from rural areas joining the Network will increase by 20% of Year 1 baseline numbers in Years 2 and 3. Baseline Network membership numbers will be based on Year 1 support group membership numbers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new contract with DHHS, OIS was negotiated. Names of newly-injured individuals with TBI are now reported by age group and region so individuals with TBI and family members may be connected to local support groups directly. • More than 2,500 letters and brochures were mailed to individuals newly diagnosed with TBI. The brochures

	<p>include information on how to join the Network mailing list.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>Living with Brain Injury</i> annual needs survey includes an invitation to join the BIAC mailing list.
<p>4. People with TBI and their family members receiving assistance from a TBI Peer Resource Navigator will report increased access and reduced barriers to needed services and supports as measured by the Mayo-Portland Adaptability Inventory (MPAI-4) and data on the numbers of individuals needing, referred for, and receiving services. The MPAI-4 is a tool used to understand long-term outcomes from brain injury. It is currently in use by the BIA Resource Facilitation program to identify unmet needs and barriers to needed services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant staff requested and received technical assistance from the TBI Coordinating Center on “Disability Peer Navigators” that will inform development and implementation of Nebraska’s TBI Peer Resource Navigator model. • The <i>Living with Brain Injury</i> annual needs survey will provide region-specific data on the needs of individuals with TBI, their families and caregivers, including barriers they experience in accessing needed services and supports.
<p>5. Designated Partner State Grantees will report an annual increase in their capacity to provide employment services for people with TBI, as measured by annual benchmarks in their work plan. Partner State Grantees will</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant staff launched the Transition and Employment workgroup with co-Mentor state, Indiana.

<p>report an annual increase of 5% from Year 1 baselines in the number of successful employment outcomes for individuals with TBI.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The workgroup chose to develop a vocational rehabilitation professional survey/questionnaire as its first product. • Nebraska participated in the Mentor state TBI Workforce Development workgroup.
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4. What was produced during the reporting period and how have these products been disseminated? Products may include articles, issue briefs, fact sheets, newsletters, survey instruments, sponsored conferences and workshops, websites, audiovisuals, and other informational resources.

Nebraska produced and disseminated three products during this reporting period. All products will be uploaded to the Max.gov website. Grant staff collaborated with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), Office of Special Education to update the *Return to Learn: Bridging the Gap From Concussion to the Classroom Booklet, 2nd Edition*. The booklet was originally created under a previous TBI grant in 2014. It is an excellent resource for school personnel to use in supporting the return of children and youth to the classroom after experiencing a concussion or TBI. The resource was distributed via NDE’s Office of Special Education, BIAC members, the BIA and the Nebraska Concussion Coalition. The online presentation titled *Most Effective Ways to be Heard by Your Legislators* was promoted to all TBI stakeholders, including support group leaders and members via the BIAC and BIA’s email lists.

The *Living with Brain Injury* annual needs survey was drafted and will be disseminated widely online in early 2019. An appendix of these products appears on page 12 of this report.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Return to Learn: Bridging the Gap From Concussion to the Classroom, 2nd Edition

Appendix B: Most Effective Ways to be Heard by Your Legislators, promotional flier

Appendix C: Living with Brain Injury Annual Needs Survey (PDF of online survey)