

ENGAGE. INTEGRATE. INSPIRE.

The mission of the BIAC is to engage, integrate and inspire brain injury stakeholders to help achieve the
Statewide Vision for Brain Injury Policies and Services.

Brain Injury Advisory Council (BIAC) Meeting

March 13, 2026 - 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. CT

Zoom information for connecting: <https://educationne.zoom.us/j/94166263913>

To Join By Phone, dial +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago) - Meeting ID: 941 6626 3913
Find your local number: <https://educationne.zoom.us/u/avQempuQZ>

Meeting Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT (and substitutes): Tiffany Armstrong, Emaly Ball, Jodi Bodnar, RaLynn Jacobsen, Sarvinoz Kadyrova, Kristen Larsen, Carla Lasley, Judy Nichelson, Zijian Qin (substitute for Peg Ogea-Ginsburg), Darsha Pelland, Michelle Ploeger, Jennifer Sexton (substitute for Peggy Reisher), Tamara Snider, Dennis Thompson, Shawna Thompson, Madison Wurtele

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jessica Coffey, Karen Houseman, Amy Levering, Terry Levering, Lisa McGuire, Brooke Murtaugh, Jennifer Swanson

STAFF PRESENT: Keri Bennett, Alexa Krueger

VISITORS/PRESENTORS: Andrew Ngochoch, Liz Gebhart-Morgan, Rachel Meier

10:00 – 10:25 am: ENGAGE

Call the meeting to order – Council Chair, Emaly Ball

The meeting of the Nebraska Brain Injury Advisory Council Commenced at 10:04 am

Approve December 12, 2025 meeting minutes and March 13, 2026 meeting agenda – Council Chair, Emaly Ball

The minutes of the December 12, 2025, meeting were reviewed. A motion was made by

Michelle and seconded by Carla to approve the minutes. There were no objections, motion carried by unanimous consent.

The March 13, 2025, agenda was reviewed. A motion was made by Michelle and seconded by Sara to approve the agenda. There were no objections, motion carried by unanimous consent.

Annual Council Member Conflict/Duality of Interest Declarations – *Keri Bennett*

The Conflict/Duality of Interest Policy in Article IV was reviewed. Voting members in attendance were asked to report any conflicts. Members absent for today's meeting will be contacted via email for their declarations.

Tiffany Armstrong- Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital

Emaly Ball- Mosaic

RaLynn Jacobsen- Area Agency on Aging

Sarvinoz Kadyrova- Parent of a disabled adult, and caregiver for a waiver program, and guardian.

Kristen Larsen- Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

Carla Lasley- None

Judy Nichelson- Brain Injury Support Group, We Get It

Michelle Ploeger- None

Tamara Snider- Goodwill Industries of Garden, Nebraska

Dennis Thompson- None

Shawna Thompson- None

Madison Wurtele- Disability Rights Nebraska

Peggy Reisher- the Brain Injury Association of Nebraska

Peg Ogea-Ginsburg- None

Karen Houseman- Employee of Department of Health and Human Services representing Aged and Disabled Waivers and Traumatic Brain Injury Waiver

Lisa McGuire- None

Jennifer Swanson- Land O Lakes

Amy Levering- None

Terry Levering- None

Jessica Coffey- None

Brooke Murtaugh- Madonna Rehabilitation Hospitals

10:25 – 11:10 am: *ENGAGE and INTEGRATE*

Brain Injury State Plan Revisions for 5-Year Plan - *Liz Gebhart-Morgan of Partners for Insightful Evaluation (PIE)*

Liz told the Council they are in the process of updating the 5-Year Brain Injury State Plan. Before getting too far along in that process, they would like to run everything by the Brain Injury Advisory Council to make sure they are not missing anything. Liz

explained in 2023 a small workgroup of the BIAC did a deep dive into the BI State Plan. The intent was to make it more user-friendly, clear, and actionable.

Three products ended up coming out of that workgroup, which includes the following:

- Public facing document
- Executive summary
- Working/internal document

Two of those documents are available on the Brain Injury Advisory Council website.

The workgroup reviewed activities and revised them to be:

- Digestible, clear, and actionable
- Written as SMART goals
- Removed* them if they were already completed

Through this revision process, they went from having 62 activities in the State Plan to 46.

The most recent State Plan available is a two-year plan. It runs from January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2024.

Last year, the Council agreed to transition it to a 5-year plan. The new plan will focus on efforts from January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2029.

Since moving to a 5-year plan, Liz, Keri, and Tresa have been working on the following:

- Priority 1 – Making initial updates to all activities.
- Meeting next week to:
 - Integrate feedback from BIAC
 - Start reviewing next priority
 - Set timeline for revision process
- Vision and Goals
 - Maintain the five priority areas
 - Access to Services
 - Build the Voice
 - Connect to Resources
 - Shape Policy
 - Increase Public Awareness
 - Keep the vision and goals for each priority the same

Liz shared an excel spreadsheet with the Council and explained the process of how they have been working on updating activities in the new 5-year plan.

She shared they currently have workgroup that is doing a deeper dive helping them review needs assessment results by priority area.

Liz then shared the 5 Priority 1 Goals and Key Activities with the Council.

Goals	Key Activities
1. Improvements to Nebraska's system of care and community-based services for people with BI will be driven by the collection and analysis of meaningful data.	Needs assessment
2. Paid caregivers and professionals in medicine and healthcare, education, behavioral health, law enforcement, vocational rehabilitation, and other disciplines will receive information, training, and education to understand and address the physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral needs of people with brain injury.	Training/Resources
3. People with brain injury and their family members will access affordable housing, and home and community-based service options in all parts of the state.	Olmstead Plan; nursing home and assisted living cost; Nebraska Older Adults Falls Coalition
4. People with brain injury and their family members will be made aware of the dangers of Opioid medication misuse and know where to seek assistance and treatment of substance abuse concerns.	Nebraska data; resource compilation
5. People with brain injury and co-occurring serious mental illness will receive effective treatment and community-based services to meet their needs.	Data/needs identification

Liz explained Goal 3 is an area where it would be helpful to receive feedback from the Council.

Council members were asked to break out into small group discussions to address the following questions:

1. Do you believe the process for updating the BI State Plan that Liz described is sufficient?
2. If not, what other input, data or information should we consider as we continue the process to update the BI State Plan?
3. What key activities or initiatives (if any) is your organization doing related to the five goal areas for Priority 1?

Group 1:

Question 1: This group stated the general process is tricky to gauge given we are already through 2025. There have been so many shifts in funding, priority, and service availability in the last year.

Question 2: This was not addressed.

Question 3: While there were members in this workgroup's agency who were a part of this, like the Olmstead Plan, they feel like there wasn't an easy way to connect the dots or know who should be sharing updates with the Council, or what the Council needs to be aware of. They also discussed if there are key things the Council needs to be doing within communities, or as specific action items. They also discussed topics of housing and behavioral health.

Group 2:

Question 1: They appreciate how the information is organized and believe it is sufficient.

Question 2: They asked what the process would be for the Council to be updated on the different data. They also hope they can see the tangibles on what's been accomplished. It's appeared and felt like in years past there's not been very many things accomplished. As a result, they are wondering how the Council (and public) be updated on these accomplishments? They also mentioned the idea of having both an annual public facing and internal document distributed every March for Brain Injury Awareness month. They would also like to see what is being done in the communities, and what those accomplishments are.

Question 3: This group asked about the status of housing access.

Group 3:

Question 1: They thought process was sufficient and thorough.

Question 2: This question was not addressed.

Question 3: They stated they felt the Council members' professional work matches closely to goals in Priority 1. Special emphasis was placed on goals 1 and 3 in their discussion.

11:10 – 11:20 am – Break

11:20 – 11:45 am: *INSPIRE*

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) – *Rachel Meier LIMHP, LCPC, Clinical Services Administrator II, Division Of Behavioral Health, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.*

Rachel shared a PowerPoint presentation with the Council focusing on the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) implementation.

-Please see attached PowerPoint presentation for details.

11:45 am – 12:30 pm: *ENGAGE AND INTEGRATE*

TBI Registry Report for 2024 – *Andrew Ngochoch, Health Data Coordinator – Public Health, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services*

Council members had a chance to ask Andrew follow-up questions after his presentation at the December 2025 BIAC Council meeting.

Emaly noted we've seen an increase in TBI according to Andrew's presentation. She asked if this was because we're receiving more data, or if there are more incidents occurring?

Andrew noted that in 2017 there were 84 facilities that reported data. In 2024, there were 87 facilities. He also noted over the years they have been receiving more cases, so it seems as though there are more people who are being identified as being diagnosed with TBI. In 2017 they had approximately 11,300 cases and by 2024 they had about 16,800 cases. The number of facilities hasn't increased by much, but the number of cases that are being reported has increased by close to 40%.

Keri asked Andrew if this increase in cases has been seen across all age groups, or if it was seen in a specific age group?

Andrew told the Council it has been seen in individuals who are 65 years and above. The top cause of injury is in relation to falls.

Zijian added that one of the things from 2022 the CDC and CMS changed was the ICD-10 CM definitions, which added unspecified head injury code to the reporting system. This means for some patients, (especially elderly patients) when they go into in ED, and they're showing symptoms of potential TBI conditions, the nurse or doctor will put in a unspecified head injury in the code. That is one of the reasons nationally they have seen a significant increase of the TBI ED visits since 2021-2022. Therefore, they are seeing Nebraska's numbers aligning with the national trend.

Zijian noted this could be a hypothetical reason why we could be seeing an increase.

Andrew noted in 2021 there were 13,000 cases, and it increased to 16,800 by 2024 in Nebraska.

Carla asked if there is a way to see if the general population in Nebraska is aging?

Andrew confirmed he does use the age adjusted rates in part of his report.

Carla mentioned after Andrew's report in December there was discussion on when the helmet law was repealed, and asked him if the data takes that into account?

Zijian said The Nebraska Department of Education (NDOT) is behind on motor vehicle crash analysis, and motor vehicle TBI. But is hopeful this will be processed later this year.

Keri asked Andrew if he had information on what unspecified brain injury code examples he included in his data of what that might look like?

Andrew said he would send this information to Keri. Keri told the Council she will email the unspecified ICD-10 codes to the Council.

12:30 – 12:50 pm: *Working Lunch*

12:50 – 1:05 pm: *INSPIRE*

Federal and State Brain Injury Programs and Organizations – *Keri Bennett, Nebraska VR*

Keri told members she will email her PowerPoint presentation out to all Council members after the meeting.

Keri shared Federal and State Brain Injury Programs and Organizations with the Council.

US Dept. of Health and Human Services

- Administration for Community Living
 - Administration on Disabilities
 - Traumatic Brain Injury Partnership Grant Program
 - Protection and Advocacy TBI Program
- National Institute on Disability, independent Living and Rehabilitation
 - TBI Model Systems
 - Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - Traumatic Brain Injury Surveillance
 - National Concussion Surveillance System

Administration on Disabilities (AoD)

- Traumatic Brain Injury State Partnership Grant Program (TBISPP)
- TBI Technical Assistance and Resource Center (TBI TARC)
- Protection and Advocacy Program
- Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center (DETAC)

National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR)

- TBI Model Systems
- Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center (MSKTC)

Centers for the Disease Control, Prevention (CDC)

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- National Concussion Surveillance System (NCSS)

Federal Agency Research Initiatives

- National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- Department of Defense (DOD)
- Military Traumatic Brain Injury Initiative (MTB12)

Military Organizations

- Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence (TBICoE)
- Military One Source

Nebraska State Agencies

- Department of Education, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (Nebraska VR)
- Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, Injury Prevention Program

Key National Non-Profit Organizations

- The Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA)
- The National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA)
- The North American Brain Injury Society (NABIS)
- Brain Trauma Foundation, Brainline.org, National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome, Bob Woodruff Foundation, Wounded Warrior Project (WWP), Invisible Wounds Foundation, The Headstrong Project

Nebraska Non-Profit Organizations

- Brain Injury Association of Nebraska (BIA-NE)
- Disability Rights Nebraska (DRN)

1:05 – 1:15 pm: *INSPIRE*

1:05 am – 1:20 pm - Updates: *ENGAGE and INSPIRE*

Committee and Contractor Reports (written reports)

Public Policy – (written and oral report) - *Tiffany Armstrong*

The Department of Education which Nebraska VR and the BIAC sits under, revised their public policy. As a result, Council members are asked not to advocate to the legislature on behalf of the Council. The BIAC Public Policy Committee has updated their policy to reflect this change. Members can still follow legislation related to Brain Injury and inform the small Public Policy Committee. The committee can still urge members to take action. However, BIAC members are asked to take action as individuals and not on behalf of the Council. Members may state that they are members of the BIAC, but that they are submitting comments or testimony as individuals, not as representatives of the BIAC. The Public Policy Committee clarified the Committee operates on a volunteer basis and has a volunteer Chair.

The Committee will still meet and go through proposed legislation together. Tiffany shared the chart she created and all the bills that are currently being tracked with the Council.

Tiffany informed the Council these revised changes would need to be officially approved by the Council. Darsha made a motion to approve. Carla seconded. No objections were made. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

Membership – (no report) – *Carla Lasley*

Carla told the Council Jodi, Shawna, and Madison's terms are expiring at the end of the quarter. All three members have agreed to serve an additional 3-year term. She reminded the Council they are always seeking new members who have a lived experience with BI.

Contractor reports and ACL Workgroup Updates (written report only) – *Keri Bennett*

Keri told members the current grant cycle ends July 31, 2026. As a result, they have been tying up loose ends while they are waiting to see if new funding application will be released to start on August 1, 2026.

Upcoming required compliance of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Final Rule – *Keri Bennett*

Keri informed members that as a part of the recent final ruling on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 it has been ruled that all government websites and content need to be made fully accessible for individuals by April 24, 2026.

She said she and Tresa have been and will continue to be working hard to make sure all written and electronic materials on the BIAC website are accessible for individuals with disabilities.

1:20 – 2:00 pm: *ENGAGE, INTEGRATE AND INSPIRE*

Unfinished (Old) Business (if any)

None

Roundtable Discussion: *All Members*

Jennifer shared a couple of upcoming events with the Council.

On Tuesday, March 17th, Governor Pillan is Proclaiming it to be Brain Injury Awareness Month. This event will be held from 8:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. at the Nebraska State Capitol.

On Thursday, March 19 and Friday, March 20, 2026, the Nebraska Brain Injury Conference will be taking place in Kearney Nebraska. Registration is still open.

Carla told members that Kristen wanted to ensure everyone is aware that they are currently accepting comments on their Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities State Plan. You can go to their website and submit comments about their plan.

Keri told the Council Nancy Noha of ATP has retired. Keri shared she will be sending a card to Nancy on behalf of the Council.

Keri also informed members Ashley Davis has stepped away from the Council. Keri will also be sending her something on behalf on the BIAC as well.

Tiffany shared the Cognitive Rehab Bill (LB1222) will stay in committee. Hopefully next year they can move this bill further along. Tiffany told members if they have questions about the bill, they can contact Peggy or reach out to her as well.

New Business (if any)

None.

Adjourn

A motion was made by Michelle and seconded by Darsha to adjourn the meeting. No objections were made. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:42 pm.

Next Meeting Date: June 12, 2026