



**Brain Injury Advisory Council Meeting  
Nebraska VR Office  
Lincoln, NE  
March 9, 2018**

*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, Shari Bahensky, Nancy Coffman, Tania Diaz, Mark Draper, Michelle Hawley-Grieser, Brett Hoogeveen, Dale Johannes, Kristen Larsen, Carla Lasley, ML Lehman, Heather Leschinsky, Judy Nichelson Peg Ogea-Ginsburg, Peggy Reisher, Frank Velinsky

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Brooke Murtaugh, Kilee Oetjen, Vaishali Phatak, Tom Reilly

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

**VISITORS:** Jerry Bryan

*The meeting of the Nebraska Brain Injury Advisory Council commenced at 10:05a.m. Public notification of this meeting was made on the Nebraska Department of Education web site.*

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Council members and visitors introduced themselves.

**APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup> MEETING MINUTES**

The minutes from December 15, 2017 were reviewed. A motion was made by Nancy Coffman and seconded by Mark Draper to approve the December 15, 2017 meeting minutes as submitted. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

The agenda for the day was reviewed. Keri Bennett stated she would like to add to the agenda a discussion of HRSA grant requirements, John Ferrone stated this could be added as part of his time this afternoon. A motion was made by Dale Johannes and seconded by Carla Lasley to approve the agenda as amended. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent**

**OPEN MEETINGS ACT**

Tiffany Armstrong announced that the meeting was an open meeting and the Open Meetings Law was posted on the side table.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

ML Lehman shared that ESU 16 will be holding an in-service March 16<sup>th</sup> which will include a break out session viewing *Forever Shaken* followed by brain injury information and discussion. Nancy Noha shared March is Brain Injury Awareness Month and provided table tents that can be used for members’ desks etc.

for awareness and outreach. Keri Bennett shared that Nancy was asked to create this by NASHIA. Judy Nichelson shared that the North Platte newspaper has contacted her and will be publishing an article this weekend regarding brain injury. Keri Bennett shared that there was a press release regarding the new Brain Injury webpage release.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Members must annually declare any conflict of interest. Tiffany asked members to make their declarations:

- Tiffany Armstrong declared Madonna Rehabilitation.
- Shari Bahensky declared the Client Assistance Program.
- Nancy Coffman declared no conflicts of interest.
- Tania Diaz declared no conflicts of interest.
- Mark Draper declared no conflicts of interest.
- Michelle Hawley-Grieser declared no conflicts of interest.
- Brett Hoogeveen declared Quality Living Inc.
- Dale Johannes declared no conflicts of interest.
- Kristen Larsen declared the Developmental Disabilities Council.
- Carla Lasley declared Nebraska VR.
- ML Lehman declared no conflicts of interest.
- Heather Leschinsky declared the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Judy Nichelson declared no conflicts of interest.
- Peg Ogea-Ginsburg declared no conflicts of interest.
- Peggy Reisher declared the Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska.
- Frank Velinsky declared CareTech.

Absent members will be contacted via e-mail for declaration of conflict of interest. Council members not in attendance at the March 9<sup>th</sup> council meeting reported the following conflicts of interests electronically.

- Brooke Murtaugh declared Madonna Rehabilitation.
- Kilee Oetjen declared no conflicts of interest.
- Vaishali Phatak declared UNMC/Nebraska Medicine.
- Tom Reilly declared no conflicts of interest.

### **PROPOSED MEETING DATES**

The dates of June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018, September 14, 2018 and December 14, 2018 were proposed for council meetings for the remainder of the year. No member conflicts were shared. Nancy Coffman moved to approve the meeting dates as proposed ML Lehman seconded the motion. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

### **ANNUAL NE BRAIN INJURY CONFERENCE**

Nancy Noha reported volunteers are needed to work the BIAC booth March 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Annual Nebraska Brain Injury Conference in Kearney. Nancy summarized what materials will be available for discussion at the booth and provided a sign-up sheet for booth volunteers.

### **MEETING LUNCHESES**

Tiffany Armstrong shared that lunch can no longer be provided for council meetings due new VR policies and budget constraints. Tiffany asked members their preference for lunch in the future. Kristen Larsen suggested waiting to discuss lunch plans after today's lunch break of 45 minutes to see how it goes. Nancy Coffman shared she feels the time frame of 45 minutes to leave maybe too short.

Members discussed the lunch break at the end of the council meeting. Members shared the break seemed fine but it could be shortened to 30 minutes.

### **BIAC VISION SUBCOMMITTEE**

Tiffany Armstrong reported a subcommittee met to review the Draft BIAC Vision. Members were provided a copy of the draft and Tiffany summarized its contents. Tiffany shared the subcommittee decided to support the vision as proposed. Committee members Dale Johannes, Judy Nicholson, and Carla Lasley agreed there was a lot of thought and work on this vision, stating they highly support it.

### **HRSA GRANT REQUIREMENTS**

Kristen Larsen asked regarding the component of the vision to grow the council will there be funds to support that through the grant? Keri Bennett discussed the requirements of the new grant. Keri shared she does not see anything in the grant that would be inconsistent with the new vision of the council. Keri reported there is a very quick turn around on this grant application which is due April 16<sup>th</sup>. Keri summarized the grant requirements sharing there is a 2-1 state match and one full time employee working 100% on grant activities. Keri shared that the transition to a FTE working exclusively under capacities of the grant is currently being discussed with VR. Keri discussed one grant option is becoming a state mentor which would include a plan to specifically mentor a partner state which she feels Nebraska is a strong candidate for. Members discussed the likelihood of not qualifying as a partner state determining we would be a better fit as a mentor state. Frank Velinsky stated it should be looked at what the benefit of being a mentor would be for the state. Keri shared that being a mentor does not mean the state does not have things to improve upon and areas to grow. Keri shared priority areas of the grant which included a state brain injury advisory board, increasing membership of the council to 50% or more of individuals with brain injury, adding a state independent living council representative, and adding a member representing the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) if it exists. Heather Leschinsky clarified the role of ADRCs as an agency of information and referral which Nebraska currently does not have but there was a pilot program which is scheduled to end June of this year. Currently legislation to create a permanent ADRC has been proposed but it has not yet been voted out of committee and not been made a priority. Heather shared the creation of ADRCs will likely be amended to an alternative bill but their future is still undetermined. Kristen Larsen questioned if Nebraska is the last state in the nation to not have a “no wrong door” ADRC; members confirmed this is true. Keri shared these grant requirements for membership are not required to be in place at application time but requires an established plan to implement the requirements. Keri reminded council members that the grant is just one piece of the work of the council that it should not be viewed as all encompassing of the work conducted by the council. Keri summarized additional grant priority areas including, supporting HHS public health goals, TBI and co-occurring mental illness or childhood obesity and having a brain injury registry for data collection and getting out information to individuals who are newly injured. Keri reported mentor states will have the opportunity to work with ACL to develop training materials. A program sustainability plan for 3-7 years after federal funding ends is another grant requirement. Keri shared she is working on gathering measurable outcomes and data for the grant application. Keri stated broadly, ACL is all about independence and empowerment. Keri shared grant goals should maximize individuals independence, improve wellbeing and increase capacity.

Keri Bennett stated she proposes the broad concept of the grant to be creating a statewide network of the support groups creating a stronger network to those in rural parts of the state. Dale discussed increasing the network of brain injury individuals within the elderly population which is not recognized through the AAAs in those currently untapped locations. Frank Velinsky questioned if the lead agency of the grant would continue to be Nebraska VR, which Keri confirmed. Frank asked if there is a way to enhance collaboration and communication with agencies working in overlapping fields for example, those serving the aging population and those agencies supporting individual with disabilities whom also work with brain injury survivors. Keri discussed that there may not be a particular vehicle in this grant but this does not mean this can not occur and continue to improve. Kristen Larsen shared for example increasing the

membership to include representatives from ADRCs and independent living councils will increase the support and encourage additional collaboration. Mark shared he supports the centerpiece of empowering and uniting a statewide network of brain injury groups particularly in rural areas. Mark added he is disappointed that Nebraska has not created statute to support these one stop, no wrong door agencies sharing the council may need to additionally focus on that issue. Kristen stated focusing on underserved populations is a priority of ACL and rural Nebraska fits that vision perfectly.

Mark Draper moved to support the proposed grant focus of establishing a statewide brain injury network which will position us to serve individuals in underserved and underrepresented rural areas, Dale Johannes seconded the motion.

Members discussed the vision of the council prior to voting on this motion.

Mark Draper called to question.

**VOTE:**

*Aye* – Armstrong, Bahensky, Coffman, Diaz, Draper, Hawley-Grieser, Hoogeveen, Johannes, Larsen, Lasley, Lehman, Leschinsky, Nichelson, Ogea-Ginsburg, Reisher, Velinsky

*Nay* – None

*Abstain* – None

*Absent* – Murtaugh, Oetjen, Phatak, Reilly

**The motion carried.**

**MISSION/VISION/JOB DESCRIPTION**

John Ferrone summarized the handout containing the mission, vision and job description that the council has been establishing. John shared this vision can seem overwhelming. Mark Draper stated that the information included in the vision document is not anything new but instead puts a timeline on the goals and work of the council up to this point. Kristen Larsen stated the document providing clarification and understanding of the Voice and the role of the council was very beneficial. John asked council members representing state agencies how they feel their agencies fit into this vision and if they are willing to advocate within their agencies to fulfill the vision of the BIAC. John asked if potentially a small committee of council members would be needed to approach these agencies or entities to align visions. Mark shared that in the Special Education realm this vision would greatly support and guide goals of the brain injury support teams across the state and increase clarity. Kristen Larsen shared that in her experience with the DD Council having stakeholders at the table with individuals living with disability greatly increases their voice. Heather Leschinsky shared agencies are on the council to advocate and they will continue to advocate but they can not always carry out all recommendations. John asked how large and how loud the voice needs to be to become priorities for agency change? Members discussed this question including agency obligations, the need for data and governmental directives. Heather discussed the value of collecting data and demonstration of gaps to enact change. John discussed the Governor's requirement of return on investment determined by data. John discussed the need for investment to collect that data. John stated we are not at the point to find funding for services but need to establish funding for establishment of an infrastructure and data collection which will only be granted to a loud "Voice". John emphasized if they do not get past the hurdle of data, goals can not be reached. Members discussed current and past data collection methods and their challenges. Members discussed establishing useful data collection and utilizing earlier models for change such as the disability community.

Members shifted focus back to the proposed BIAC Vision. Members discussed support for the vision but needing to work on plans to fulfill the vision. John stated to enact this vision the council will need to meet much more frequently than quarterly. Mark shared there would be a need for additional inter-department meetings and possibly additional subcommittees, but not necessarily additional meetings as a whole group council. Keri shared in her opinion adopting this vision is member commitment to accomplishing the work within the vision and the extra time that requires. Nancy Coffman stated approving this vision

gives a blueprint to establish a plan of action for the council but without the vision there is nowhere to start.

Members broke for lunch and will continue this discussion after the lunch break.

Draft vision discussion resumed. Tiffany Armstrong stated she has struggled going through the vision establishment process over the past months as often times it requires working in more abstract concepts. Tiffany stated she feels it is very important to adopt the draft vision to have something concrete for the council to move forward with.

Tiffany Armstrong moved to approve the vision as submitted, Dale Johannes seconded the motion.

**VOTE:**

*Aye* – Armstrong, Bahensky, Coffman, Diaz, Draper, Hawley-Grieser, Hoogeveen, Johannes, Larsen, Lasley, Lehman, Leschinsky, Nichelson, Ogea-Ginsburg, Reisher, Velinsky

*Nay* – None

*Abstain* – None

*Absent* – Murtaugh, Oetjen, Phatak, Reilly

**The motion carried.**

**DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR LEGISLATIVE PROCESSES**

Tiffany Armstrong discussed how support for legislative bills has been handled by the council in the past, typically through email discussion and opinion followed by possible letters from the council in support of or against legislative bills. Tiffany shared the council needs to develop a more structured process on how to handle legislative processes. Peggy Reisher shared that at her agency it works well for their board to have a designated legislative subcommittee to address legislative issues. Keri Bennett discussed the most recent legislative issue presented to the council was divisive bringing to attention the need for an improved plan. Kristen Larsen and Dale Johannes discussed another council they work with that has a committee that reviews all bills pertaining to them and they are able to review, research and determine a recommendation for the council's stance. Kristen shared it is very beneficial that the committee is able to be prepared and have time to address the bill. Members discussed the benefit of having an official roll vote when members are split on decision to have record for those opposing decisions. Nancy Coffman inquired if when legislation is to be determined if a bill summary and a pro/con list can be provided to members followed by some kind of council wide electronic vote. Frank shared he does not feel the legislative process needs to be complicated but it needs to be transparent. Members shared having an early February conference call or additional meetings around the legislative session would be beneficial. Tiffany stated discussing potential legislative bills at the December meeting for council information then a subcommittee follow-up and recommendation followed by an all council conference call or communication for the committee to provide its recommendations and finalize council stances. Members discussed what is required for a vote to pass based upon percentage as well as how increased membership of individuals with brain injury will affect voting representation. Members discussed how the council can inform and educate through letters and/or testimony but cannot lobby while receiving any federal funds. Keri stated a legislative committee should be formed not to just react to legislation but be proactive in the system. John stated the committee should also be working to create legislation to reach the goals and vision of the BIAC. John discussed that the council should be united in its vision. Michelle Hawley-Grieser shared that she was very disappointed that the council was not able to all come to the table and collaborate over the past legislation that was presented via email. Frank stated that he does not feel a system that requires unanimous decisions functions well as discussion with differing opinions and weighing the potential impact are needed to grow and make progress. Frank stated a council including differing opinions is necessary for a system that allows transparency. Members discussed the potential impact a legislative committee from the council could have while bills are being drafted to offer guidance. Members discussed having the written mission and vision to act as a filter for all support of legislation

through, where the committee will be able to determine if the bills fall into the council vision. Peggy shared historically BIA-NE has drafted legislation and not brought it for BIAC approval and in the future BIA-NE will need to continue to work with legislation as directed by their board but can listen to input from the BIAC or discuss potential legislation but will need to continue to follow their board's directives and mission while that could on occasion differ from the opinion of the BIAC. Members discussed their opinions and intentions regarding the earlier proposed bill. Members discussed that the council does not have to remove all support from a potential bill if there is a single point of contention within a bill it can be noted in the letter of support.

Nancy Coffman moved to establish a legislative subcommittee, Dale Johannes seconded the motion. Discussion determined that the subcommittee will outline its process and procedures and bring to the council next meeting for discussion and approval. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion passed by unanimous consent.**

Members volunteered for the legislative committee including: Dale Johannes, Kristen Larsen, Brett Hoogeveen, Tiffany Armstrong, Michelle Hawley-Grieser, Frank Velinsky, and Peggy Reisher.

### **VISION CAPSTONE**

John Ferrone shared that the vision is the beginning of the story that a salesperson uses to attract interest. John stated a vision is the anchor of a business plan which an interested person will ask for once he/she is interested in the Vision. The business plan explains how the vision will be achieved once leadership and capacity is acquired from investment in the vision. John discussed his project was to conduct sustainability planning, attracting investment. John stated sustainability is not about fundraising, it is a mindset of dependable revenue. Sustainability is not just about having the right cause, it's about having the leadership and capacity to implement the solutions to address that cause. John emphasized what investors want is total victory. John stated if, in response to a need worth addressing, an organization provides the required leadership and capacity to address that need, and it can tell the story that demonstrated these things, then it is investment-worthy, and funding will follow. John shared implementing these principles of sustainability will give BI survivors and family members the best chance they can hope for to achieve their vision and have their needs met. Mark Draper asked if currently any initiatives have been able to achieve self-sustainability following this outlined model. John discussed these public-sector principles and their success when taken to the public sector. Brett Hoogeveen shared his support of these principles and thinking bigger than approaches typically taken by non-profit organizations. John reviewed the need and leadership of the vision. John outlined the challenges in creating the capacity to achieve the vision. John summarized the clarification of roles between the Brain Injury Advisory Council and Brain Injury Alliance. John shared that this collaboration model has the potential if done well to be highly regarded and modeled after due to its success.

John shared his recommendations to the council moving forward. John stated VR and other state agency representatives on the council need to step up and act as the lead agency holding itself and the council accountable. John recommended an objective survey be conducted for client feedback. John stated the BIAC has been disengaged and needs to hold each other more accountable. John recommended the council increase frequency of meetings, how it manages itself with a leadership team and what it expects of its members. John stated follow through is a key consideration for the future of the BIAC. John stated there is a lot of work to be done as the council is no longer a group of people advising how to spend grant funds. John stated the council's new role is to be the convener of all stakeholders towards pursuing the Voice Vision.

John shared in the short term these things need to be done:

- Make immediate changes to increase capacity.
- Use the VGSV as the focus of your selling, and to build consensus
- Engage stakeholders statewide.

- Create a committee to collaborate with the BIA to get involved with the VGSV.

John shared tangible next steps are to consider the vision and job description, and break them down into priorities, then approaches, then work plans, and then create task forces/committees to get the work done.

John shared the BIA is in a difficult place because it has molded itself to be a service provider but it was created to develop the statewide grassroots voice which should be its top priority. John stated the entire effort to elevate brain injury as a statewide priority and achieve sustainable funding depends on engaging, supporting, and empowering the statewide Voice of Brain Injury Survivors and their Family Members must be the BIA's first priority.

Keri Bennett asked the council if they feel it would be worth investing in funding leadership establishment. Nancy Coffman shared she feels if the council does not begin implementing the vision and begin the work, it will lose steam. Tania Diaz suggested additional small committees be established to meet in between current quarterly meetings. Members discussed the availability of video conferencing equipment in VR offices across the state. Mark Draper discussed that further in-depth work should be conducted by the executive committee between meetings to work out issues and then present to the council. Kristen Larsen discussed the need for a point person to guide the council moving forward as John has been doing developing the VGSV. Tiffany shared she feels she needs additional help facilitating the direction of the work of the vision to help lead the council. Mark shared he has a lot of confidence in individuals working in committees and trusting their work for review and approval by the large group with Keri acting as a facilitator between committees and council. Nancy asked what committees need to be established and how will members determine where they can best serve. Members discussed the executive committee should work to establish needed committees and bring to the council. Keri Bennett suggested if there is funding availability to establish a facilitation leader to help move this forward and create those committees to establish sustainability. Members supported utilizing available funds for a council facilitation leader. John discussed he will be submitting a final report to the council after it is reviewed by VR. Kristen suggested the council setup a meeting possibly online or phone prior to the June council meeting to review John's final recommendations when the report is received and to establish next steps. Members discussed the ACL grant application and award decision scheduled for June 1.

Nancy Coffman moved to utilize remaining no-cost extension funds to establish a leadership facilitator for the council, Dale Johannes seconded the motion. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion passed by unanimous consent.**

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Peggy Reisher shared the Brain Injury Alliance is holding a run/walk titled *Blazing Trails for Brain Injury*, June 10<sup>th</sup> in Omaha and they would appreciate support. Peggy noted additional information for the event can be found on the BIA-NE website. Peggy shared that as part of the BIA Annual Conference they will be unveiling a statewide project, *Unmasking Brain Injury*, display created by brain injury survivors. Peggy shared they BIA has been able to continue resource facilitation beyond its May 31<sup>st</sup> deadline and there will be more information on resource facilitation to come.

#### **ADJOURN**

The next meeting is scheduled for, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018, in Lincoln. The meeting adjourned at 2:58p.m. with a motion made by Frank Velinsky and seconded by Dale Johannes. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**