

A decorative graphic consisting of several colored squares (purple, orange, yellow, green, blue, maroon) and vertical lines of varying heights and colors (grey, blue, red) arranged in a stepped, staircase-like pattern.

Nebraska Brain Injury State Plan

2023 – 2024



Introduction

Welcome to Nebraska's Brain Injury State Plan developed by the Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (Nebraska VR) and the Brain Injury Advisory Council (BIAC). This document outlines the goals and activities for 2023 – 2024. The State Plan is a living document, subject to change as goals are met and the needs and priorities in the community evolve. The Plan is intended as a guide to improve the state's system of services and support for people living with the effects of brain injury and their families.

Nebraska VR serves as the lead state agency for brain injury and administers the state's federal Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) grant from the Administration for Community Living (ACL). Grant funds are used for projects aimed at closing the gap of unmet and insufficiently met needs of Nebraskans of all ages who are impacted by brain injury, and to support the work of the BIAC. Throughout the Plan, activities related to federal grant priorities are highlighted with a star: ★

The BIAC acts as the forum for brain injury stakeholders in Nebraska to collectively identify unmet needs and service gaps, and to recommend policy- and service system-based solutions. Its members include individuals and family members directly impacted by brain injury, medical providers, service organizations, state agency representatives and advocates. The BIAC's mission is to **“engage, integrate and inspire brain injury stakeholders to help achieve the Statewide Vision for Brain Injury Policies and Services.”** The BIAC adopted the Vision in 2017. It inspires a better future, and better outcomes for Nebraskans impacted by this oftentimes devastating injury.

Statewide Vision for Brain Injury Policies and Services

- **Access to Services.** Nebraskans with a brain injury, regardless of geographic location or financial situation, will have access to the necessary resources that they require to pursue their recovery journey.
- **Build the Voice.** The Voice of people with a brain injury and their family members will exist as a unified Voice of solidarity and advocacy and will be engaged to shape policies and programs.
- **Connect to Resources.** All those in the brain injury service delivery system will understand their unique role as well as how they complement each other towards making the future of brain injury better, ensuring Nebraskans with a brain injury have an easier time navigating resources.
- **Shape Policy.** The Nebraska Legislature will be informed about the nature of brain injury and its ongoing impact on Nebraskans, and will be supportive of funding and policies to support the necessary statewide resources for those with brain injury.
- **Increase Public Awareness.** The complex nature of an injured brain and the recovery journey will be understood by everyone, such that misconceptions will be eliminated and the public will be more supportive of efforts to improve brain injury support and resources.

The goals in the State Plan represent tangible steps toward achieving this Vision. Nebraska VR and the BIAC do not expect to take these steps alone, but seek to actively engage *all* brain injury stakeholders in improving the state's system of services and support for people with brain injury and their families. To become involved or to learn more about brain injury, contact Nebraska VR and the BIAC by email at vr.infobiac@nebraska.gov or by phone at (308) 224-7571. You can also learn more about us at our websites:

Nebraska VR: <http://www.vr.nebraska.gov>

Brain Injury Advisory Council: <https://braininjury.nebraska.gov/about/about-us>

Access Services

Goal 1: Improvements to Nebraska’s system of care and community-based services for people with brain injury will be driven by the collection and analysis of meaningful data.

Primary Leads: Partners for Insightful Evaluation and Nebraska VR through Brain Injury Data Workgroup

VISION FOR PRIORITY

Nebraskans with a brain injury, regardless of geographic location or financial situation, will have access to the necessary resources that they require to pursue their recovery journey.

1. Conduct a needs assessment in early 2024 to identify gaps (including unmet or insufficiently met needs) and satisfaction with the brain injury service system in Nebraska. Data will come from existing sources, such as the TBI Registry, and by gathering feedback through surveys from individuals with brain injury, family members/unpaid caregivers, and service providers. The needs assessment will also solicit feedback on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and aim to capture input from unserved or underserved populations who have experienced a brain injury.
2. By August 2024, create a guidance document outlining how the needs assessment should be carried out in Nebraska. The document will describe data sources, key survey questions, suggestions on areas of analysis, and survey dissemination approaches to best reach underserved populations and culturally and linguistically diverse populations.
3. Create a data matrix (including data source, owner of the data, frequency of collection, etc.) by June 2024 with all current and potential data sources to better understand TBI prevalence and needs to inform improvements for the TBI service delivery system. Develop at least one handout by December 2023 summarizing data and information. ★
4. Through September 2024, compile and collect data as necessary related to the impact of COVID-19 on individuals with brain injury, family members/caregivers, and brain injury service providers. Information should also pertain to long-haul COVID symptoms to determine potential impacts on the service delivery system. Share information to inform key stakeholders and identify resource needs. ★

Goal 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.

Primary Leads: Nebraska VR, Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska, Partners for Insightful Evaluation, VRC Brain Injury Core Competency Planning Committee, Nebraska Department of Education

1. Identify training needs among professionals through the needs assessment. Utilize results to develop a training plan (including target audiences and topics) by December 2024 to provide education and increase understanding of needs related to brain injury.
2. Develop five online modules as part of a competency training for Nebraska VR staff by May 2024 to improve knowledge and skills for serving and supporting individuals with TBI aged 16 and older who are seeking employment. ★
3. By October 2024, modify the online modules created for Nebraska VR as needed to use with supported employment providers and develop a plan for disseminating to ensure supported employment providers have access to resources to better serve individuals with TBI. ★
4. Develop a resource inventory by December 2024 that summarizes brain injury resources, materials, and trainings available based on specific demographics. This could include age-specific materials (youth, older adults, etc.) and by profession type (education, health care providers, law enforcement, assisted living facilities, etc.).

Goal 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.

Primary Leads: Nebraska VR, Brain Injury Advisory Council Members, Partners for Insightful Evaluation, Brain Injury Data Workgroup, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services – Injury Prevention Program

1. Participate in [workgroups or committees for the Olmstead Plan](#) to continue advocating for the needs of individuals with brain injury. Share updates as needed with the BIAC to keep members informed.
2. Identify data sources for nursing home and assisted living cost; as able, collect and summarize data by December 2024 to identify how to utilize the information to advocate for more supports to keep individuals with TBI out of institutions and support them in their homes and communities.
3. Participate in the [Nebraska Older Adults Falls Coalition](#) and share updates with BIAC members as needed to better align fall prevention efforts to prevent TBI and keep older adults in their own homes.
4. Develop a data collection plan by October 2024 for assessing needs among individuals with brain injury related to neurobehavioral treatment and residential options.

Goal 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. (HHS-wide Public Health Goal)

Primary Leads: Nebraska VR, Partners for Insightful Evaluation, Brain Injury Data Workgroup, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Public Health

1. Identify data sources and partners in Nebraska to explore the connection between opioid medication misuse and TBI; as able, summarize findings to the BIAC by October 2024 to determine how it should be addressed in the next iteration of the state plan.
2. By September 2024, compile materials (handouts, videos, pamphlets, etc.) utilized by other states or available through federal agencies related to the dangers of opioids and other medications that are not appropriate for individuals with TBI.

Goal 5: People with brain injury and co-occurring serious mental illness will receive effective treatment and community-based services to meet their needs. (HHS- wide Public Health Goal)

Primary Leads: Nebraska VR, Partners for Insightful Evaluation, Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska

1. By September 2024, compile and summarize data regarding needs that individuals with brain injury have related to mental illness and common services utilized or available to meet their needs.

Build the Voice

Goal 1: People with brain injury and their family members will have the resources and leadership capacity to effectively advocate for policy, program, and service improvements.

Primary Leads: Nebraska VR, Brain Injury Advisory Council Members, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services – Injury Prevention Program

VISION FOR PRIORITY

The Voice of people with a brain injury and their family members will exist as a unified Voice of solidarity and advocacy, and will be engaged to shape policies and programs.

1. Equip Nebraskans with brain injury and their families with data, resources, tools, and training – including through the Living with Brain Injury Summit – to support advocacy efforts on an ongoing basis. By September 2024, identify where to promote the materials and resources so they are easily accessible for individuals with brain injury and their family members.
2. Collaborate with the Nebraska Title V Maternal and Child Block Grant program to identify at least one training opportunity by October 2024 focused advocacy for parents of children with TBI that could be implemented during the next Brain Injury State Plan period.

Goal 2: The Brain Injury Advisory Council will be actively engaged and representative of the statewide population of people with brain injury.

Primary Leads: Nebraska VR, Brain Injury Advisory Council Membership Committee

1. Develop a BIAC member recruitment plan by September 2024 to ensure the BIAC is representative of the statewide population, including those representing culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and varying age groups (youth, adults, older adults).
2. Monitor the demographics of the BIAC to ensure 50% of the members are individuals who have experienced a brain injury. Share updates with BIAC on an annual basis and, using the member recruitment plan, conduct outreach to individuals who may be a good fit for the BIAC about opportunities to participate.

Connect to Resources

Goal 1: People of all ages who have experienced brain injury will be connected to resources in their region of the state.

Primary Leads: Nebraska VR, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Public Health, Partners for Insightful Evaluation, Madonna Rehabilitation, Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska

VISION FOR PRIORITY

All those in the brain injury service delivery system will understand their unique role as well as how they complement each other towards making the future of brain injury better, ensuring Nebraskans with a brain injury have an easier time navigating resources.

1. As mailing lists become available from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health (NDHHS-DPH), continue sending TBI Registry mailings to all new individuals who are added to the TBI Registry, including a customized brochure with resources available in their geographic region.
2. By June 2024, identify at least two modifications that could be made to the TBI Registry follow-up brochures (such as additional languages, user-friendly and accessible design, etc.), to better resonate with culturally and linguistically diverse groups.
3. Disseminate customized brochures to organizations serving older adults and individuals with disabilities, including the eight [Aging and Disability Resource Centers](#), on a bi-annual basis to better connect their clients to brain injury resources.
4. As applicable, promote and refer individuals with brain injury to the BIA-NE's Resource Facilitation program to ensure people of all ages can get connected to resources in their region.
5. Develop materials and conduct outreach to at least three healthcare organizations by June 2024 regarding participation in the TBI Registry, highlighting the value of participating and reporting accurate data. ★
6. By April 2024, identify opportunities to improve outreach to individuals on the TBI Registry (i.e., checking address completion, piloting follow-up letters, etc.) and select at least one approach to begin implementing in 2024 as capacity and resources permit.
7. Pilot the *My Brain, My Self* project with 30 Nebraska VR clients through September 2024 to evaluate the impacts of integrating Resource Facilitation with surveillance-based support for individuals with brain injury. ★
8. Through September 2024, identify resources and support opportunities for individuals with brain injury related to COVID-19; share all resources with BIAC members and other partners to make the resources more widely available.
9. Utilize plain language when developing all materials and/or disseminating information regarding COVID-19 and brain injury through September 2024 to make the information and resources more accessible for the audience.

Goal 2: People with brain injury have access to trained Peer Supporters.

Primary Leads: Nebraska VR, Brain Injury Advisory Council Members, Partners for Insightful Evaluation

1. Define what peer support looks like in Nebraska, and by September 2024, develop a one-page summary of how Peer Support differs from and complements other services available in the state for individuals with brain injury.
2. Identify areas (primarily through the needs assessment) where Peer to Peer Supports may be needed by July 2024 and explore opportunities to increase the availability of evidence-based Peer to Peer Supports for individuals with brain injury and their families to connect with peer supporters. ★

Goal 3: Nebraska's statewide capacity to provide comprehensive and coordinated services to people with brain injury and their families will be enhanced through active participation in federal brain injury grant and technical assistance programs.

Primary Leads: Nebraska VR, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Public Health, Partners for Insightful Evaluation

1. Participate in at least two federal grantee workgroups (such as "Transition and Employment" and "Using Data to Connect People to Services") and other technical assistance opportunities through December 2024; share information with the BIAC and other stakeholders to increase Nebraska's ability to provide comprehensive and coordinated services to individuals with brain injury and their families.

Shape Policy

Goal 1: The Brain Injury State Plan will reflect the statewide vision and serve as a structured approach to communicate the needs of Nebraskans with brain injury and their families to the Legislature and other stakeholders.

Primary Leads: Nebraska VR, Partners for Insightful Evaluation, Brain Injury Advisory Council State Plan Revisions Workgroup

1. By January 2024, review all the Brain Injury State Plan activities and revise them as needed to ensure they are written as SMART goals. Develop process measures for each goal to assess progress and identify ways to share updates on activity implementation.
2. Host a virtual statewide meeting by the end of October 2024 for Nebraskans to learn about the 2023-2024 Brain Injury State Plan and provide input on the goals and activities being pursued. Use feedback to identify potential updates for the next state plan. Once the new plan is drafted, it will be shared for public comment.
3. Provide an annual update to the Brain Injury Assistance Act Oversight Committee and other groups, such as a state legislature, regarding the Brain Injury State Plan priorities, activities, and progress.

Goal 2: Nebraska VR will serve as the state's lead agency, providing administrative leadership for the Brain Injury Advisory Council, and collaborating with brain injury stakeholders and other state agencies to build and sustain a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated system of brain injury services.

Primary Leads: Nebraska VR

1. Nebraska VR will serve as the state's lead agency by providing continual support through match funding and full-time staff for the TBI grant administration.
2. Provide bi-annual updates to the Nebraska Department of Education Commissioner and State Board of Education regarding BIAC and TBI grant activities to maintain internal departmental support for BI system development.
3. Develop a letter of commitment template by April 2024 and encourage BIAC members and/or their agencies to submit a voluntary letter by June 2024 describing how they will support the Brain Injury State Plan.

Goal 3: The Brain Injury Advisory Council's messaging and advocacy plans will be based on meaningful data that drives ongoing voice-driven advocacy efforts.

Primary Leads: Nebraska VR, Brain Injury Advisory Council Members, Partners for Insightful Evaluation, Brain Injury Data Workgroup

1. Compile data (from needs assessment and reporting from DHHS) by September 2024 to identify barriers that individuals with brain injury experience in accessing community-based services under the Medicaid waivers. Utilize information by December 2024 to identify potential next steps to help minimize barriers.
2. Review needs assessment data and other sources to identify at least two advocacy and/or public policy priorities by October 2024.
3. Provide quarterly progress updates on Brain Injury State Plan activities to the BIAC, including measures as applicable and appropriate.

VISION FOR PRIORITY

The Nebraska Legislature will be informed about the nature of brain injury and its ongoing impact on Nebraskans, and will be supportive of funding and policies to support the necessary statewide resources for those with brain injury.

Increase Public Awareness

Goal 1: Ensure that families receive information, education, and support to address their financial, social, and emotional needs associated with caring for someone with brain injury.

Primary Leads: Nebraska VR, Brain Injury Advisory Council Members, Partners for Insightful Evaluation, Brain Injury Data Workgroup

VISION FOR PRIORITY

The complex nature of an injured brain and the recovery journey will be understood by everyone, such that misconceptions will be eliminated and the public will be more supportive of efforts to improve brain injury support and resources.

1. By July 2024, use data from the brain injury needs assessment and input from attendees at the Living with Brain Injury Summit to identify at least three training, education, or resource needs for family members and caregivers for individuals with brain injury. Collaborate with partners through December 2024 to determine how to best address those needs and, as able, begin compiling relevant materials.
2. To better reach and connect with families who may be impacted by TBI, collaborate with at least two churches, faith-based organizations, and/or community centers in less populated and/or underserved areas by October 2024 to identify how to work in partnership with similar entities in the future to provide education, materials, or support to families they serve. Identify lessons learned and assess to what degree this is an impactful approach for getting families connected with information.
3. By March 2024, compile a list of state and local caregiver networks, including contact information. Reach out to at least two networks by October 2024 to identify ways to that the BIAC can more effectively provide information and education to families about TBI.
4. Explore opportunities and requirements for public service announcements (PSAs); prioritize topics and target audience(s) for PSAs by October 2024 and work with marketing specialists to draft messaging for one of those topic areas.

Goal 2: The Brain Injury Advisory Council will be seen as a credible statewide leader, and the forum for all brain injury stakeholders to pursue the statewide vision.

Primary Leads: Nebraska VR

1. Create a public awareness/outreach plan by December 2024 regarding the BIAC. In developing the plan, identify key messages or outreach needed and the best ways to carry to conduct the outreach (virtual, website, in-person, etc.).
2. By December 2024, identify potential funding streams or revenue opportunities to sustain BIAC efforts in the event federal TBI grant funds are not available.

Acknowledgements

Nebraska's Brain Injury State Plan was developed by Nebraska VR and the Brain Injury Advisory Council. The plan represents a collaborative effort among [members of the BIAC](#) and stakeholders from across the state.

Nebraska VR and the BIAC are especially grateful to all those who shared insights from their personal journeys with brain injury. This includes all individuals and organizations who have participated in surveys, focus groups, interviews, and public comment periods. Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences and opinions with us!

To comment on the *Living with Brain Injury State Plan for 2023-2024* contact Nebraska VR and the BIAC by email at vr.infobiac@nebraska.gov or by writing to us at Nebraska VR/BIAC, 315 W 60th Street, Ste 400, Kearney, NE 68845.

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