



**Brain Injury Advisory Council Meeting
Nebraska VR Office
Lincoln, NE
December 6, 2019**

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, Nancy Coffman, Tania Diaz, Mark Draper, Kristen Larsen, Carla Lasley, Amy Levering, Brooke Murtaugh, Judy Nichelson, Zoe Olson, Vaishali Phatak, Peggy Reisher, Frank Velinsky

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jerry Bryan, Dale Johannes, Heather Leschinsky, Peg Ogea-Ginsburg

STAFF PRESENT: Keri Bennett, Ashley Hernandez, Terry Levering (attendant), Nancy Noha

VISITORS: Tim Burton, John Ferrone, Chris Stewart

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.

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 20TH MEETING MINUTES

The minutes from September 20, 2019 were reviewed. A motion was made by Frank Velinsky and seconded by Emaly Ball to approve the September 20, 2019 meeting minutes as submitted. There were no objections to the motion. Kristen Larsen and Peggy Reisher abstained. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

AGENDA APPROVAL

The agenda for the day was reviewed. Judy Nichelson stated she would like an update on the Brain Injury Trust Fund added to the afternoon following the State Plan Report. A motion was made by Emaly Ball and seconded by Peggy Reisher to approve the agenda as amended. 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 on the side table.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kristen Larsen shared she brought information from the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities including “The Power of Inclusion” that NCDD is very proud of. Kristen also shared copies of

“Intellectual Disability and Dementia: A Caregiver’s Resource Guide for Nebraskans” developed with UNMC Munroe-Meyer Institute grant work, stating this booklet is a great up-to-date resource. Kristen stated members are welcome to take these handouts and encouraged members to share them with others.

Zoe Olson reported she will be leaving her current position at the Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging. Zoe stated she will stay on the council as a survivor if the council approves.

No additional public comment was shared.

BIAC WEBSITE

Nancy Noha shared a sample of what could be added to the Brain Injury Advisory Council webpage for committee work and resources. Nancy shared members could logon to the webpage committee homepage instead of utilizing GoogleDocs which does not work well for some members. Nancy discussed committee members contact information could be accessed from the page as well as storage of minutes and documents as well as meeting recordings. Nancy stated the committee page would be password protected for member use. Nancy stated members cannot post and remove things themselves but can send her items and she will post and remove for committees. The committee page could be accessed at braininjury.nebraska.gov and at the bottom of the page clicking the “council restricted” link. Keri Bennett noted that GoToMeeting links do remain the same for each committee. Nancy showed members where GoToMeeting links will be located on the page. Members discussed in agreement that this page will be useful and a positive tool for committees. Nancy stated whatever committees need can be added to the website including general files, additional links and notes. Keri asked if there is the capability to create group emails for different committees and the council. Nancy and Keri discussed they will look further into creating group email lists and possibly adding them to the webpage. Keri stated if members think of ideas or tools that would be useful to please share those and they will try to accommodate those requests.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Keri Bennett shared as per last meeting’s request there has been time set aside for committee work. Keri discussed the challenge of committee member overlap. The Brain Injury and Co-occurring Mental Health Issues Committee and Public Policy Committee broke to meet for discussion and report back to the council. Following the initial committee session Mark Smith with UNMC met with the BIAC Mentor/New Member Orientation Toolkit Committee. Following the committee sessions members met in large group to provide committee updates.

Advocacy and Education Committee

Emaly Ball reported the Advocacy and Education Committee has met twice; reporting at the last meeting members discussed goals and objections of the committee and established a Google document to list conferences and organizations as potential partners for outreach. Emaly stated the group has established the founding objectives and will continue working to report more at the next council meeting.

Network Capacity Building Committee

Judy Nichelson reported the Nebraska Injured Brain Network (NIBN) has an employee identification number and is pursuing 503c status. Judy shared there is a lot of statewide interest in establishing additional groups. Judy discussed the North Platte group is an awesome group which is building a lot of friendships while building the organization. Judy reported the group meets twice a month sharing the first meeting of the month is a support group and the second meeting is a work group session. John Ferrone discussed the difference between the support group and NIBN chapter. John stated the support groups need to remain and their support work not encroached on by administrative work. John stated the chapters are utilized to give guidance and support from the statewide NIBN organization. The chapters will be networked with the statewide organization as well as the BIAC. Frank Velinsky asked if there are

any common threads of concern throughout the different chapters. John Ferrone stated he has seen many common threads including a recognition that so many individuals are isolated in rural areas. Nancy Coffman noted as for long distance meeting tools, she prefers Zoom over GoToMeeting for accessibility reasons. Frank Velinsky questioned how the BIAC Public Policy Committee could collaborate and hear input from the chapters for the upcoming state legislative session. John shared ideally in the future there will be a network or chapter contacts that could be contacted and share information directly from their chapters, stating at this time it is not yet established to that level of efficiency. Frank discussed the chapter individuals would be a great resource to directly contact their representatives across the state.

Membership Committee

Carla Lasley reported the group met this morning and she has been appointed chair. Carla discussed the committee's main objective is to ensure the BIAC membership is composed of at least 50% individuals living with a disability. Carla shared names of possible applicants were discussed and will be reviewed. Carla reported the group has scheduled a meeting for January and will continue to pursue new membership.

Mentor/New Member Orientation Toolkit Committee

Keri Bennett stated this group does not have a chair and has somewhat stalled. Keri shared the project scope of work was initially offered to UNMC and Mark Smith shared with the committee that there was a snag and it did not appear the timeline would work with Munroe-Meyer. Keri discussed the committee is back to the drawing board to determine how to best move forward. Keri shared there is still the option to partner with UNMC, or a new RFP can be released, or the project can be handled in house. Kristen Larsen shared in her past experience working with the Munroe-Meyer organization she is not sure if there is enough capacity for them to complete the work. Kristen and Tiffany Armstrong discussed they believe the work could be completed in-house to better meet the need without using additional funds. Kristin stated she believes there are other avenues to address the person-centered objective. Peggy Reisher stated she would like to see the person-centered model in action with assigned mentee/mentor partnerships for onboarding new members. Nancy Coffman shared that any new power-points or handouts should be in partnership to the person-centered contact.

Public Policy Committee

Tiffany Armstrong shared the committee met today but will be most active when the committee meets again in January preparing for the legislative session and reviewing any bills that may pertain to brain injury. Tiffany asked members to inform the committee of any bills or legislative action they hear of that maybe of interest to the council and committee.

Co-occurring mental health

Emaly Ball reported the committee is working on compiling a list of mental health providers and resources. Emaly shared the committee will meet again next week. Emaly discussed the committee is reviewing the needs assessment and will be discussing any potential needed updates.

Opioid Committee

Judy Nichelson shared the committee had some very good discussion and incorporated a pain management physician out of North Platte. Judy reported there are recorded sessions provided by the physician which will be reviewed by the committee. Judy shared following the last council meeting, Davidson Wissing, stated he would like to be part of the committee. Judy reported a representative from behavioral health with DHHS will also be joining the committee. Judy stated they want more individuals to come onto the committee to ensure they are not reinventing the wheel, but instead collaborating and using available resources. Judy and Emaly Ball discussed the co-occurring mental health issues committee will later be partnering together with the opioid committee. Emaly shared her personal experience with opioids and the assistance she experienced with the herbal supplement, Kratom.

STATE PLAN FOR BRAIN INJURY SERVICES

Keri Bennett stated she wanted to check-in with members if there are any needed updates or changes to any goals or objectives of the state plan. Members discussed there is positive action with the committees and good representation of council members stepping up to complete committee work. Judy Nichelson noted the committees are getting council members more involved. Frank Velinsky shared he believes that to take a step forward and make the plan even more meaningful the council needs to begin putting dollars in place and setting a budget which will catalyze action. Keri shared that the objective moving forward is to set timelines, and noted that she is hearing the council would like to add funding to that as well. Frank discussed that committees can estimate financial needs for their objectives. Keri stated she will work with Tresa to build documents similar to the master plan adding in columns where committees could start documenting next steps, funding requirements, timelines and outcomes. Keri reported she will get this document up and running and send members a link. Keri asked if committees have been able to address the comments of the state plan. Committee chairs discussed they will discuss and address the public comments in coming meetings. Keri Bennett stated if committee members have a response for comments, they are able to provide those to commenters. Keri asked the council, "What kind of deadline would members be comfortable setting for having action steps documented?" Mark Draper shared the Advocacy and Education committee has created some action steps and established some timelines. Mark and other council members shared they do like utilizing a portion of quarterly meetings for committee work. Emaly discussed having a limited hour during council meetings does not seem like enough time to accomplish what needs to be done. Kristen Larsen discussed setting a timeline for committees to report on action steps at the March meeting. Carla Lasley stated it is important to meet in the interim but also have some time to get together face-to-face during quarterly meetings. Amy Levering discussed in her experiences with other councils and committees they do meet during quarterly meetings in person as well as technological meetings in between stating this works well. Nancy Coffman asked if some committees could meet before or after meetings as well as during the lunch break to utilize the council members' time together without too much overlap. Members discussed scheduling which committees will meet at a quarterly meeting by committee chairs communicating with the vice-chair, Tiffany Armstrong to coordinate needed meeting time. Peggy Reisher discussed council meetings can get very long asking if committees are actively working if it would be possible to shorten the report-out portion of the council meetings. Members noted some people need extra time as well as utilizing the time members spent to travel to the meeting. Members discussed it would be more useful to either do committee work at the beginning or end of the meeting so large group sharing occurs as well as committee work without having to switch gears repeatedly. Keri discussed they will schedule time at the March meeting prior to the meeting and shorten the quarterly meeting to end at two so committees can also meet following the quarterly meeting. Tiffany will coordinate with committee chairs to schedule which committees will meet when.

BRAIN INJURY TRUST FUND UPDATE

Peggy Reisher updated the council on the Brain Injury Trust Fund. Peggy reported in July 2020 trust fund dollars will become available. Peggy stated they have looked how other states and councils have worked and established by-laws. Peggy shared UNMC has been helpful and they hope to have a draft of by-laws to present to council members to work with when coming onto the committee. Peggy shared applications for the Brain Injury Trust Fund Committee can be found on the governor's website. Peggy stated the Governor has said they will be identifying committee members in May.

Peggy Reisher shared with collaboration of grant funds from the DD council they have been working with student inmates at the juvenile justice center completing screenings which will be followed by trainings. Peggy shared the majority of the screens are positive.

ACL & TBI GRANT UPDATE

Keri Bennett reported ACL put out in the federal register they looking for input on data collection, sharing the annual plan will be pushed back to January to submit data. Keri shared that data can be sent out via-email. Keri shared she will need to report data on activities that utilize grant dollars which helps on reporting. Keri shared the Schmeckles are working on the data. Keri shared there is a new contract with Human Services Research Institute which is contracting with NASHIA to establish the Technical Assistance Center. Keri stated there will be a webinar December 10th for those interested in learning more about the Technical Assistance Center. Nebraska as a mentor state is involved in leadership for the workgroup Using Data to Connect People to Services; Keri reported this workgroup is working on registry data and putting together best practices on registries to assist other states. Members discussed Nebraska's Brain Injury Registry noting that the information is only mandated to be added to the registry from an emergency room but not doctors' offices or clinics. Members stated they would like to get an update of Nebraska's brain injury mandate requirements and reporting. Members also discussed diagnostic codes used by physicians also can cause individuals not being reported for the registry as well as eliminating some false positives. Members requested to have an update from Andrew Ngochoch, DHHS regarding the registry at the March meeting. Keri shared DHHS completes an annual report at the end of December of compiled data from the registry which he can review at the March meeting. Amy Levering discussed individuals who do not want to be labeled or put on a registry stating we need to advocate for both sides. Members discussed the issues of stigma and discrimination in regards to a possible brain injury label. Amy requested the council could review a copy of the brain injury letter to see if any improvements need to be made. Keri shared the Employment and Transition workgroup have drafted proposed VR Counselor competencies and input and comments will be gathered. Keri shared the competencies developed by the workgroup maybe useful for the advocacy and education committee.

2020 TBI AWARENESS DAY PLANNING

Judy Nichelson shared Congressional TBI Awareness Day has been scheduled for March 4, 2020 in Washington, D.C. Keri Bennet discussed Nebraska Representative Don Bacon is co-chair of the task force. Keri shared Nebraska maybe highlighted for their work on traumatic brain injury. Nancy Coffman shared reaching out via social media and thanking Representative Bacon on social media platforms would be beneficial. Peggy Reisher said Representative Bacon has a strong interest in veterans' issues and that could be a great commonality and advocacy partnership. Mark Draper discussed if veterans treated for brain injury would be a great update and discussion for individuals treated by the VA. Keri shared having council member contacts with NASHIA who are planning the day could be beneficial. Peggy Reisher discussed the veterans task force has made a lot of improvements for access to healthcare services for veterans. Peggy Reisher shared that Proclamation Day in Nebraska with BIA-NE will be March 12th. Keri stated as more information for ACL and NASHIA becomes available she will continue to inform council members and keep everyone up-to-date. Peggy stated it would be helpful to develop a council policy brief specific to Nebraska to share with our representatives at the federal level. Keri shared Nancy Noha has been working with NASHIA on the Awareness Day theme.

2020 BIAC QUARTERLY MEETINGS SCHEDULE

Meetings for the 2020 quarterly were scheduled as follows:

- March 13, 2020
- June 19, 2020
- September 11, 2020
- December 4, 2020

ADJOURN

The next meeting is scheduled for, March 13, 2020, in Lincoln. The meeting adjourned at 2:30p.m. with

a motion made by Mark Draper and seconded by Frank Velinsky. There were no objections to the motion.
The motion carried by unanimous consent.