



NEVADA LEGISLATURE
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON CHILD WELFARE AND
JUVENILE JUSTICE
(Nevada Revised Statutes 218E.705)

SUMMARY MINUTES

The second meeting of the Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice for the 2017–2018 Interim was held on Thursday, April 05, 2018, at 9 a.m. in Room 4401, Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 3137, Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada.

The agenda, minutes, meeting materials, and video or audio recording of the meeting are available on the Committee's [meeting page](#). In addition, copies of the audio or video record are available through the Legislative Counsel Bureau's Publications Office (e-mail: publications@lcb.state.nv.us; telephone: 775/684-6835) and may also be available at <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/Granicus/>.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT IN LAS VEGAS:

Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno, Chair
Senator Patricia Farley, Vice Chair
Senator Pete Goicoechea
Senator Tick Segerblom
Assemblyman John Hambrick

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

Assemblyman Ozzie Fumo (Excused)

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU STAFF PRESENT:

Patrick Guinan, Senior Principal Policy Analyst, Research Division
Bryan J. Fernley, Senior Principal Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division
Michael K. Morton, Senior Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division
Julianne King, Senior Research Secretary, Research Division
Jan Brase, Receptionist/Research Secretary, Research Division

Items taken out of sequence during the meeting have been placed in agenda order.

AGENDA ITEM I—OPENING REMARKS

Chair Monroe-Moreno called the meeting to order.

AGENDA ITEM II—PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Monroe-Moreno called for public comment.

Denise Tanata, Executive Director, Children’s Advocacy Alliance (CAA), introduced two young adults who experienced the foster care system.

Alexis Nichols, former foster youth, shared her story of entering the foster care system when she was 12 years of age. She discussed her experiences as a foster youth and explained that she had endured multiple placements until she was adopted by her caseworker. Ms. Nichols expressed the importance of providing foster and adoptive parents with support groups and resources to both ensure their success as parents and help them connect their foster and adopted children with support programs. She stated there needs to be an increased awareness in the community regarding the need for more people to become foster and adoptive parents.

Jesse Fager, former foster youth, shared his story and his experiences with foster care, including his placement at multiple mental health facilities and the varying quality of foster parents in the system. He stressed the importance of potential foster parents and foster youth getting to know each other before being placed together in order to avoid the multiple placements of a child.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Fager and Ms. Nichols discussed the following:

- The preference for a two-parent rather than a one-parent household;
- The factors that contribute to a foster youth being placed multiple times;
- The amount of input foster children are permitted to have in the placement process; and
- The importance of mentors and the advertisement of foster youth support groups.

Chair Monroe-Moreno asked Ms. Nichols and Mr. Fager about their future plans and goals.

Ms. Nichols expressed her intent on entering the field of social work and her desire to help other foster youth gain their voices.

Mr. Fager discussed his goal of becoming a lawyer, so he can defend and help people.

Responding to a question from Senator Farley regarding access to support and resources to pursue their future goals, Mr. Fager and Ms. Nichols commented that both their schools and independent living workers aided in accessing these resources.

AGENDA ITEM III—APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 24, 2018

MOTION: Senator Goicoechea made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held on January 24, 2018. The motion was seconded by Assemblyman Hambrick and passed. Assemblyman Fumo was absent for the vote.

AGENDA ITEM IV—DISCUSSION OF PROGRAMS TO ASSIST COMMERCIALLY SEXUALLY EXPLOITED CHILDREN

Brigid Duffy, Director, Juvenile Division, Office of the Clark County District Attorney, and Kelly Wooldridge, Administrator, Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), discussed the Nevada Coalition to Prevent the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children ([Agenda Item IV](#)).

Ms. Duffy explained that Nevada's lack of housing options for commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC) often results in housing them in detention facilities, which conflicts with the idea that they are victims, not criminals.

In response to questions from Committee members, Ms. Duffy and Ms. Wooldridge discussed the following:

- The ways a child can be identified as a victim of commercial sexual exploitation and the subsequent processes;
- The issue of the revolving door and concerns over victims being repeatedly exploited;
- The desire for a treatment facility designed specifically for the CSEC population;
- The insufficient data on CSEC in Nevada due to the lack of statewide reporting requirements;
- The need for Nevada to comply with federal law; how the state is working toward compliance; and the amount of federal funding that Nevada will lose if it does not comply by 2019;
- The financial logistics of establishing a second Sierra Sage Academy campus in southern Nevada;
- The recent changes in record-sealing laws that make it easier for former CSEC to seal their records once they reach adulthood; and

- The process that is initiated if a child is being trafficked by a parent or guardian as well as the placement options for a child in that situation.

Ms. Wooldridge added that the Unified Nevada Information Technology for Youth (UNITY) system is being worked on and should be completed by August of this year.

Ms. Duffy emphasized the purpose of the Coalition's Legal Subcommittee is to identify ways for Nevada to comply with federal regulations as well as improve the lives of CSEC victims. She expressed the Coalition's interest in returning to the next Committee meeting to provide members with the Subcommittee's findings.

AGENDA ITEM V—PRESENTATION ON THE EMBRACING PROJECT

Esther R. Brown, Founder and Executive Director, The Embracing Project (TEP), gave a presentation on TEP ([Agenda Item V](#)).

In addition to the presentation, Ms. Brown added the following: (1) social media is a popular recruitment tool for predators; (2) TEP will move to a new facility on April 30, 2018; and (3) access to childcare is crucial for victims of sex trafficking. She also recommended that the Committee look for creative housing solutions for this population.

In response to questioning from Chair Monroe-Moreno, Ms. Brown explained that it is challenging for a small nonprofit such as TEP to meet the financial requirements to apply for grants; therefore, additional financial assistance from the Legislature would be immensely helpful. She added that she would notify Patrick Guinan, previously identified, once TEP moved to its new facility and would be happy to provide the Committee with a tour.

AGENDA ITEM VI—PRESENTATION ON FOSTER YOUTH AND SECONDARY ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Kelly Venci Gonzalez, Esq., Team Chief, Education Advocacy Program, Children's Attorneys Project, Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada (LACSN), and Xavier Planta, Team Chief, Children's Attorneys Project, LACSN, gave an overview of foster youth and secondary access to education.

Ms. Venci Gonzalez suggested the following ways in which the Legislature could academically assist foster youth: (1) provide each child with an education decision maker appointed by the family court after the child's adjudication; and (2) attach a foster youth's attendance, credits, and grades to every court report filed by DCFS in order to provide objective information to those handling the child's case.

Mr. Planta referenced a fact sheet comparing the gap in secondary education outcomes between foster youth and nonfoster youth ([Agenda Item VI](#)). He discussed the various academic and nonacademic factors that present challenges to foster youth and contribute to this gap. Mr. Planta noted there are various programs and scholarships aimed at increasing access to postsecondary education for foster youth; he added, however, that they have limitations. He pointed out that

decision-makers at both the state and federal level can do a better job of providing foster youth with financial assistance for postsecondary education.

Discussion ensued among Ms. Venci Gonzalez, Mr. Planta, and Committee members on the following:

- The need to make information concerning postsecondary education programs more accessible for foster youth and their guardians;
- The process of a foster youth submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid;
- The available data on former foster youth who are now adults attending college;
- The lack of financial support programs in Nevada and how it prevents many foster youth from pursuing postsecondary education;
- The reasons for the high number of placement changes among foster youth;
- The training given to education advocates and foster parents; and
- The lack of incentive programs for foster parents to continue supporting a foster child once they have aged out of the system.

AGENDA ITEM VII—PRESENTATION ON PRIORITIES REGARDING FOSTER YOUTH AND EDUCATION

Denise Tanata, previously identified, gave a presentation on the CAA's priorities regarding foster youth and education. She reiterated the importance of: (1) providing more support for foster parents; (2) examining the funding structure of Nevada's child welfare programs; and (3) supporting youth empowerment programs. Ms. Tanata added that the CAA will potentially provide the Committee with recommendations regarding foster youth's access to transportation and driver's licenses at a later date.

Ms. Tanata informed members of the CAA's desire to revise its previous recommendation of completely replacing the UNITY system. She stated the CAA recommends the Legislature fund a study that would bring together child welfare representatives, private sector information technology specialists, and other stakeholders to improve the UNITY system.

Ms. Tanata stated another recommendation from the CAA is to establish a tuition and fee waiver program for former foster youth, and she emphasized the importance of including wraparound services with this program. She noted one recommendation is to have a liaison in each institution of higher education who works specifically with former foster youth. Ms. Tanata added the estimated costs of such a program would be forwarded to the Committee in the near future. She also encouraged the Committee to support a business tax credit for businesses who hire former foster youth, which is being discussed at the federal level.

Ms. Tanata gave a summary of H.R. 253 (Family First Prevention Services Act of 2017), 115th Congress, introduced by United States Representative Vern Buchanan (R-Florida) ([Agenda Item VII](#)). She expressed her concerns over various aspects of the Act.

AGENDA ITEM VIII—OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS SUPPORTING CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH

Cara Paoli, Deputy Administrator, Children’s Mental Health, DCFS, DHHS, and Kevin McGrath, System of Care Grant Manager, DCFS, DHHS, provided the Committee with an overview of programs supporting children’s mental health ([Agenda Item VIII](#)).

In response to questions from Chair Monroe-Moreno, Ms. Paoli and Mr. McGrath discussed the following:

- Data regarding mobile crisis response teams;
- Various avenues for recruiting children’s mental health care providers to work in the state’s rural areas;
- School partnerships with behavioral health providers;
- The process for ascertaining certification as a specialized foster care provider; and
- Staffing levels and program development at the Summit View Youth Center.

AGENDA ITEM IX—PRESENTATION ON 2018 SERVICE PRIORITIES OF STATEWIDE CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH CONSORTIUMS

Chris Empey, Chair, Washoe County Children’s Mental Health Consortium (WCCMHC) and Nevada Children’s Behavioral Health Consortium (NCBHC), gave an overview of the NCBHC and its goals. He then gave a presentation on the 2018 service priorities of the WCCMHC ([Agenda Item IX A](#)) and updates to the WCCMHC’s 10-year plan ([Agenda Item IX A-1](#)).

Amber Reid, Member, Rural Nevada Children’s Mental Health Consortium, gave an overview of the Consortium’s service priorities and 10-year strategic plan ([Agenda Item IX B](#)).

Dan Musgrove, Clark County Children’s Mental Health Consortium, gave an overview of the Consortium’s service priorities and 10-year strategic plan ([Agenda Item IX C](#)).

Chair Monroe-Moreno noted that at a recent roundtable discussion she attended, many children, especially from communities of color, discussed the stigma associated with having mental health issues and requested help convincing their parents that mental health issues should be taken seriously.

AGENDA ITEM X—PRESENTATION ON PROGRAMS TO ASSIST HOMELESS YOUTH

Arash Ghafoori, Executive Director, Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth (NPHY), gave a presentation on programs that assist homeless youth ([Agenda Item X A](#)).

Responding to a question from Senator Goicoechea, Mr. Ghafoori explained that the yearly operating budget for NPHY was \$2 million.

Mr. Ghafoori submitted two informational handouts regarding homeless youth in Nevada ([Agenda Item X A-1](#)) and ([Agenda Item X A-2](#)) for the record.

AGENDA ITEM XI—PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Monroe-Moreno called for public comment; however, no testimony was presented.

AGENDA ITEM XII—ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 1:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Julianne King
Senior Research Secretary

Patrick Guinan
Senior Principal Policy Analyst

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno, Chair

Date: _____

MEETING MATERIALS

AGENDA ITEM	WITNESS/ENTITY	DESCRIPTION
Agenda Item IV	Brigid Duffy, Director, Juvenile Division, Office of the Clark County District Attorney; and Kelly Wooldridge, Administrator, Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)	Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item V	Esther R. Brown, Founder and Executive Director, The Embracing Project	Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VI	Kelly Venci Gonzalez, Esq., Team Chief, Education Advocacy Program, Children's Attorneys Project, Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada (LACSN); and Xavier Planta, Team Chief, Children's Attorneys Project, LACSN	Fact Sheet
Agenda Item VII	Denise Tanata, Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Alliance	Overview of The Family First Prevention Services Act
Agenda Item VIII	Cara Paoli, Deputy Administrator, Children's Mental Health, DCFS, DHHS; and Kevin McGrath, System of Care Grant Manager, DCFS, DHHS	Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item IX A	Chris Empey, Chair, Washoe County Children's Mental Health Consortium (WCCMHC) and Nevada Children's Behavioral Health Consortium (NCBHC)	Strategic 10-Year Plan
Agenda Item IX A-1	Chris Empey, Chair, WCCMHC and NCBHC	Report
Agenda Item IX B	Amber Reid, Member, Rural Nevada Children's Mental Health Consortium	Report
Agenda Item IX C	Dan Musgrove, Clark County Children's Mental Health Consortium	Report
Agenda Item X A	Arash Ghafoori, Executive Director, Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth (NPHY)	Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item X A-1	Arash Ghafoori, Executive Director, NPHY	Informational Handout
Agenda Item X A-2	Arash Ghafoori, Executive Director, NPHY	Informational Handout

The Summary Minutes are supplied as an informational service. Copies of all meeting materials are on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, Carson City, Nevada. You may contact the Library at www.leg.state.nv.us/lcb/research/library/feedbackmail.cfm or (775) 684-6827.