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# DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES  
*Helping people. It's who we are and what we do.*



Cindy Pitlock, DNP  
Administrator

## Nevada Children's Commission Child Welfare Committee Meeting Minutes

**DATE:** Friday, September 15, 2023

**TIME:** 12:00 P.M.- Adjournment

**VIDEO CONFERENCE:**

[https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting\\_ZDQyNGZkYTYtOGY1Mv00NjJhLWI0OTctMTdlYjRhMjgwOTY0%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22e4a340e6-b89e-4e68-8eaa-1544d2703980%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22be58909a-421c-4f56-857e-c5f7d4ef6f7f%22%7d](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_ZDQyNGZkYTYtOGY1Mv00NjJhLWI0OTctMTdlYjRhMjgwOTY0%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22e4a340e6-b89e-4e68-8eaa-1544d2703980%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22be58909a-421c-4f56-857e-c5f7d4ef6f7f%22%7d)

**TELECONFERENCE LINE:** 1-775-321-6111

**CONFERENCE ID:** 213 782 974#

1. **Call to Order** – Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks  
The meeting was called to order at 12:04 p.m. by Megan Miller.

2. **Welcome and Introductions (Roll Call)** – DCFS Staff  
**Members Present by Video:** Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks, Judge Paige Dollinger (joined after roll call)

**DCFS Staff:** Elvira Saldana

**Public:** Elyse Monroy-Marsala, Cadence Matijevich

3. **Public Comment and Discussion**  
Elyse Monroy-Marsala stated she is with Belz and Case Government Affairs. They represent the Children's Advocacy Alliance, and she is present on their behalf.
4. **For Information:** Welcome and Introduce Community Stakeholders- Megan Miller  
There were no introductions.
5. **For Possible Action:** Meeting Minutes June 14, 2023 – Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks  
Megan Miller asked committee members if there were any corrections to the meeting minutes.

No recommendations were made.

**Action:** A motion was made by Shelia Parks to approve the minutes, seconded by Megan Miller, and carried to approve the minutes of June 14, 2023. Judge Stephanie Charter abstained.

**6. For Possible Action:** Discuss and Identify Top Child Welfare Priorities – Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks

- Discuss and identify new and emerging trends of concern in child welfare.
- Discuss and identify top priorities for change and impact in child welfare.
- Vote and approve top priorities for the committee.

Megan Miller stated a request was received from the Co-Chairs to provide a list of the top priorities for the committee to work on the next year. Megan Miller hopes the committee can identify two to three priorities. Previously there were topics discussed such as placement being an ongoing concern. At the last meeting, Ms. Honodel brought up the idea of exploring the independent living program. Megan Miller opened it up for committee members to provide any other topics for discussion.

Ryan Gustafson stated he likes the idea of the committee having a focus on extended foster care. It will be a big lift for the child welfare regions. Ryan Gustafson suggested having this group do some planning around that on how to ensure the regions can get it implemented.

Judge Stephanie Charter asked for clarification on the purpose of the committee.

Megan Miller stated the overarching purpose of the committee is to report back to the Nevada Children's Commission. That purpose is to umbrella all the different committees and get everyone under one roof. This committee addresses the child welfare aspects and reports back to the other committees. It is a big picture of what the committee sees as the top concerns for child welfare in Nevada that they wish to take back to the Commission as a whole.

Judge Stephanie Charter stated the dual wards, kids who are both dependency and delinquency, are a huge issue they deal with. They need guidelines for dual wards.

Shelia Parks stated she agrees with Judge Stephanie Charter. It is a growing and emergent issue in Clark County. It should be a priority the committee should look at. Children are falling through the cracks and their best interest is not being represented on either side.

Megan Miller stated originally on the first workplan, how to better share and coordinate information between different courts was discussed. Megan Miller would be in favor of it, as a topic. Megan Miller asked Ryan Gustafson if he had any thoughts on the impact and if it is an issue they are seeing in the North.

Ryan Gustafson stated it is an issue. They have cross population in Kids Kottage.

Megan Miller stated they are typically seeing the crossover children being in the older population. Perhaps it is a question of, for children in foster care how they are being setup for success and ensuring they have support after aging out of foster care but also ensuring they do not enter the adult criminal system.

Shelia Parks suggested the committee identify and agree on two to three key priorities. Shelia Parks stated there is an issue with placements in child welfare across the board and thinks it is a priority as well.

Judge Stephanie Charter stated she agrees. The other component of the placement issue is siblings are being separated contrary to the statute. Judge Stephanie Charter thinks the separation of siblings should be addressed under placement.

Megan Miller stated placements is going to be a big topic. Megan Miller asked committee members if they have ideas as to how to categorize one or two priorities, and within those address the specific action items. Currently, the committee has three identified priorities: independent living, dual wards, and placement. Megan Miller wants to ensure the committee can devote time to each of them.

Ryan Gustafson stated placement can be a category and perhaps, independent living can go under it as a subcategory. A lot of the independent living work is tied to placement. In Washoe County, mental health is becoming much more of a community awareness issue in children specifically. A lot of options for children have been lost post COVID. It is a big issue and Ryan Gustafson does not know if it should be on the list.

Judge Stephanie Charter stated mental health could go under placement. It could be an extension of independent living. Independent living and dual wards as one category in placement, in addition to separation of siblings and mental health.

Megan Miller stated dual wards can be placed under independent living with a focus on children who are dual wards. One of the action steps can be to look at how it would apply to children who are dual wards. That would be two priorities, independent living and placement.

Judge Stephanie Charter commented dual wards could maybe go under both categories. The committee could touch on what is going on with them under both the placement and independent living categories.

Megan Miller stated they are good topics for having a lot of overlap. Hopefully there will be a lot of information that will be useful to both topics. Megan Miller asked if there would be a motion for independent living and placement to be the overarching priorities.

Judge Charter made a motion for independent living and placement to be the two main categories, Ryan Gustafson seconded, and passed two approve the two priorities.

Megan Miller stated one of the big action items the committee talked about for independent living is placement. Another one being dual wards. Following the fiscal analysis to make sure they are on track to have extended foster care implemented would be another action item. Megan Miller asked committee members if there were any other action items or specific topics underneath the independent living umbrella that should be included.

Judge Stephanie Charter commented it would be interesting if there could be some sort of research component to know what the rate of return is of the kids that are aging out of the system either in the criminal system or as parents of kids in the child welfare system. It would be interesting to know if anything that is being done for the kids aging out is helping them.

Megan Miller stated her understanding is because there is the bill for extended foster care that there are research groups surrounding this.

Ryan Gustafson stated they have some information on AB 350/court jurisdiction program. It may provide a baseline. Ryan Gustafson stated he would be happy to ask the Washoe County team to provide some front-end information relating to AB 350.

Megan Miller asked committee members if there are any other action items under independent living.

There were no recommendations.

Megan Miller stated she would make a motion to adopt the action items under independent living to be dual wards, placements for children entering extended foster care, following on the fiscal analysis that is required, researching the success rate, and bringing in the other workgroups who are working on the issue for any updates.

Elvira Saldana asked if the committee will be voting on action items for each of the priorities.

Megan Miller asked if they should be done separately.

Elvira Saldana stated the committee should discuss whatever will be selected as the priorities and if action items will be included, a final vote can be taken at the end once the committee decides what will go under each one. The motion would be to state what the priorities will be and whatever action items the committee plans to have under each one.

Megan Miller acknowledged the process. Megan Miller stated under placements the committee talked about sibling placements and placements regarding children with behavioral and mental health issues. Megan Miller asked committee members if there were any other action items they would like to include under placements.

Judge Stephanie Charter asked if dual wards should be included.

Megan Miller stated they should be included.

Judge Stephanie Charter stated another thing the committee may consider including is the congregate care component. Perhaps try to tackle that component too since it is part of the placement issue.

Megan Miller acknowledged Judge Paige Dollinger joining the meeting.

Judge Paige Dollinger apologized for being late.

Megan Miller informed Judge Paige Dollinger the committee has been discussing and identifying top priorities to work on next year. The first identified priority is looking at independent living with the new bill for extended foster care. The action items the committee has talked about so far under it are looking at placement for children who are aging out, looking at issues involving dual wards, looking at the fiscal analysis to make sure it is on track, and looking at whether there is any research into the success rate of the independent living programs. The other umbrella item identified is placements. The action items talked about are sibling placements, placements for children with mental health and behavioral health issues, looking for placements for dual wards, and looking at the congregate care component of issues with getting children out of the congregate care facilities.

Judge Paige Dollinger commented in Washoe County, Kids Kottage is where kids with a significant medical need and kids on the autism spectrum who are not high functioning are being placed. The kids are not in a foster home setting by any means, and it is not ideal. They are lacking specialized foster homes and regular foster homes. The congregate care issue for kids with mental health, autism, and health issues is problematic.

Megan Miller stated she agrees, and it is an issue they are seeing in Clark County.

Ryan Gustafson stated the Medicaid issue needs to not be lost in the shuffle. They have children who sit in the shelter due to medical complexities. Nevada Medicaid has contracts with out of state facilities for kids with behavioral health needs, however the issue is most of the facilities will not accept the current Nevada Medicaid rate. While on paper it looks like that there are resources, there really is not. The shelters have kids with medical needs and significant behavioral health needs which is a dangerous mix.

Judge Paige Dollinger commented when kids were sent out of state previously, they would be sent back prior to them completing their program and then they did not have resources to provide them with the appropriate services.

Megan Miller stated what they have seen when kids have been sent to a residential treatment center and they return after completing their treatment, there is no placement here that can support the therapeutic care they need.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated under the independent living umbrella, the placement for kids aging out and the kids who are going to be on AB 350, would be helpful. Having more resources for that age group would be great. Judge Paige Dollinger commented she is not sure how many they have aging out in Washoe County.

Ryan Gustafson stated he feels like the AB 350 program is sub 50 children.

Megan Miller stated it is a new area to her. Brigid Duffy provided Megan Miller with frequently asked questions and would be happy to share them with the committee. It seems to indicate the agency can determine whether the funds are provided to the placement or the young adult. Megan Miller asked the committee members if there were any other action items under the umbrella items they would like to add or any comments about the ones they currently have.

There were no recommendations.

**Action:** Megan Miller made a motion to approve the action items under independent living to be placements for children entering extended foster care, the impact of dual wards once they are Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) age and following into extended foster care, following up with the fiscal analysis, and following up with the research of the success rate and how to make that more effective; under placements, the action items to be sibling placements, mental health placements, placement for dual ward, and congregate care; seconded by Judge Paige Dollinger. The motion passed unanimously.

**7. For Possible Action: Discuss and Decide Upon Next Steps – Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks**

- Assign Tasks to Committee Members (if needed)  
Tasks were not assigned.
- Specify Agenda Items for the Next Meeting  
Agenda items were not identified.
- Confirm Next Meeting Date/Time  
The next meeting date was not confirmed.

## **8. Public Comment and Discussion**

Elyse Monroy-Marsala stated she has had the opportunity to participate in all the Children's Commission subcommittee meetings and was in the behavioral health subcommittee meeting last week. It was interesting to her that both committees talked about a lot of similar issues. One item that came up in both committee meetings was the fact there is no system/continuum of care for kids with a dual diagnosis behavioral issue that then become involved with the mental health system or child welfare. Elyse Monroy-Marsala stated she looks forward to the Children's Commission meeting since everyone is identifying the same issues. Elyse Monroy-Marsala thanked the committee for the opportunity to be in attendance and to be able to listen to the great conversation.

Megan Miller thanked Elyse Monroy-Marsala for the information.

Elyse Monroy-Marsala stated it will be a great conversation when they see all the priorities side by side at the Children's Commission meeting.

## **9. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 12:48 p.m.