

Steve Sisolak  
Governor

Richard Whitley, MS  
Director



# DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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



Ross Armstrong  
Administrator

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## Nevada Children's Commission Full Commission Meeting Minutes

**DATE:** Friday, March 19, 2021

**TIME:** 10:30 AM

**LOCATION:**

This meeting will be conducted via video conference and teleconference options listed below, in accordance with Governor Sisolak's Declaration of Emergency Directive 006; Subsection 1; The requirement contained in NRS 241.023 (1) (b) that there be a physical location designated for meetings of public bodies where members of the public are permitted to attend and participate is suspended.

Governor Sisolak's Declaration of Emergency Directive 006 was extended by Directive 029, Section 4.

**VIDEO CONFERENCE:** [Click here to join the meeting](#)

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

**EXTENSION:** 312870248#

**1. Call to order-** Justice Nancy Saitta, Justice Elissa Cadish, Ross Armstrong

The meeting was called to order at 10:32 a.m. by Justice Saitta.

**2. Welcome and Introductions (Roll Call)-** DCFS Staff

**Members Present:** Justice Nancy Saitta, Justice Elissa Cadish, Ross Armstrong, Margaret Crowley, Brigid Duffy, Dr. Jesus Jara, Megan Miller, Judge Michael Montero, Kimberly Palma-Ortega, Shelia Parks, Dr. Tiffany Tyler-Garner, Janice Wolf, Judge Stephanie Charter (proxy for Judge Frank P. Sullivan)

**Members Absent:** Nancy Brune, Senator Marilyn Dondero-Loop, Valerie Fujii, Tim Burch, Amber Howell, Judge Cynthia Lu, Shannon Gildea, Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno, Senator Keith Pickard, Judge William Voy, Judge Egan Walker, Assemblyman Steve Yeager

**DCFS Staff:** Kathryn Roose, Linda Guastella, Elvira Saldana

**Public:** Cynthia Carstairs, Jane Saint, Wanda Pena, Linda Anderson, Bailey Bortolin, Gwynneth Smith, Jay Fisher, Dr. Tara Raines, Valerie Balen, Zaide Martinez, Janne Hanrahan

Roll call was taken, and it was determined a quorum of the Nevada Children's Commission was present.

Justice Saitta informed Judge Cynthia Lu and Valerie Fujii will be replaced. Justice Saitta welcomed Judge Stephanie Charter, 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court Judge.

**3. Public Comment and Discussion:**

There was no public comment.

**4. For Possible Action: Meeting Minutes - Justice Nancy Saitta**

Justice Saitta asked if there were any additions or corrections for the September 18, 2020 minutes.

No recommendations were made.

Justice Saitta asked if there were any additions or corrections for the December 18, 2020 minutes.

No recommendations were made.

**Action:** A motion was made by Brigid Duffy to approve the minutes, seconded by Kimberly Palma-Ortega, and carried to approve the minutes of September 18, 2020 and December 18, 2020.

**5. For Information: Evictions Update - Bailey Bortolin**

Bailey Bortolin informed the state and federal eviction protections currently in place are set to expire on March 31<sup>st</sup>. There is no formal confirmation they will be extended. A lot of the advocacy is revolving on trying to get children and families to the end of the school year. There has not been updated Nevada specific data on the projection of evictions. In the Las Vegas Justice Court, there are over 4,000 cases currently held. The American Rescue Plan signed by President Biden includes a large amount of money for rental assistance, however it is difficult to issue the money quickly due to Federal Treasury guidelines. If landlords do proceed with evictions and have them granted, the rental assistance money becomes ineligible to be used for arrears.

Justice Saitta asked if there has been discussion on judicial education and how the judiciary might be able to help.

Bailey Bortolin replied Justice Hardesty and Chief Judge Saragosa have been active participants in the working group with the State, of what the path forward is or can be. They are trying to work with all the courts and judges as much as possible. The summary eviction process creates a hurdle from an education outreach component. Nevada is the only state in which an eviction can be granted without a hearing. From a Legal Aid perspective, they are trying to figure out what education outreach they can do. The judges are actively working with them to see how they can ramp up the Mediation Program and bring rental assistance into the courtrooms for those individuals who do receive a hearing.

Justice Saitta asked Judge Michael Montero what is taking place in his jurisdiction regarding eviction processes.

Judge Michael Montero replied he is not up to speed since he does not handle evictions, however it is a good conversation to have with some of the limited jurisdiction judges in his area.

Justice Cadish commented it is crazy there is money available and it cannot be used for the people who need it due to there not being enough staff to go through the volume of cases. Justice Cadish asked if some of the money could be used to hire staff to help process the applications.

Bailey Bortolin stated Tim Burch and Kevin in Clark County are working to figure out those problems. There are an additional 100 temporary staff about to be hired to help with the process.

Justice Saitta asked if there is discussion about public service announcements to make individuals aware.

Bailey Bortolin replied when the Nevada Supreme Court adopted the rules for the Mediation Program, they included information via court rule in the eviction notices that go out to people. They are trying to ensure when an eviction notice is received, it includes the rental assistance information and available help. Legal Aid has been conducting eviction trainings for community partners, other organizations, and non-profits in trying to make sure all the service providers and everyone assisting people in this crisis are aware of the steps people need to take.

Justice Saitta asked if there has been a consideration by way of a Bill Draft Request (BDR) relating to the summary eviction process currently in place.

Bailey Bortolin replied summary eviction is a statutory process. There are approximately 12-15 housing, landlord, tenant and eviction BDRs. Assemblywoman Torres has Assembly Bill 161 which would do away with the summary eviction process. It has not been set for a hearing yet. Assembly Bill 141 has been heard which has an important piece related to the pandemic and would automatically seal eviction records for people who are evicted for nonpayment of rent during the state of emergency. It would help people secure housing going forward without the eviction record.

Justice Saitta asked if there were any questions.

Judge Michael Montero commented an area in which the district courts may be of some assistance is through the specialty courts and maybe education. They may be able to do the education piece through specialty courts.

Justice Saitta asked Judge Michael Montero if he would be willing to look into it. Justice Saitta asked Bailey Bortolin if there was anything, she might recommend taking up with the District Judges and specialty court settings.

Bailey Bortolin replied for Judge Montero, the Rural Housing Authority would be the right voice to try to figure what could be helpful.

Justice Saitta requested Judge Michael Montero make an inquiry and report back at the next meeting.

Judge Michael Montero replied he would be happy to.

Justice Saitta thanked Bailey Bortolin for her help and requested her email address.

Bailey Bortolin stated her email address is [bbortolin@washoelegalservices.org](mailto:bbortolin@washoelegalservices.org).

**6. For Information:** Effects of the Pandemic on Children Report and Overview of Children's Week at the Legislature - Dr. Tara Raines

Dr. Tara Raines reported the findings were based on data collected from September and October of 2020. Families who had at least 1 child under the age of 18 years old were surveyed. Data was captured for food and security, housing stability, ability to pay rent or mortgage, and access to health care. Feelings of depression and hopelessness were also covered. The COVID report found nationally about 14% of families said they were experiencing food and security due to the pandemic. In Nevada it was 17%. About a quarter of the families in

Nevada which had at least one child under the age of 18 years old in the household did not have the finances to make their next rent or mortgage payment. The number was above the national average of 18%. Regarding access to health care, 13% of families do not have access to health care due to the pandemic. Over a quarter of Nevadans are experiencing depression or hopelessness. Data collection is ongoing. There will be additional data in the fall. Regarding Children's Week at the Legislature, there were panels on data, issues related to children and children's health. Dr. Tara Raines asked Dr. Tiffany Tyler-Garner if she would like to highlight any specific events from Children's Week.

Dr. Tiffany Tyler-Garner stated Mr. Jackson's panel with the youth who had transitioned from the system who noticed some nuisance challenges around the supports they are receiving could be up for the Commission. A youth who stood out in the panel was one who noted his 2-hour ride on the bus to and from school while needing to work. Another youth discussed mental health and how it was not just counseling, and the need for one adult to tell her they believe in her and she will make it when she experiences tough days.

Dr. Tara Raines reported there is an increase of kids working and going to school to help support their families during the pandemic. The Children's Advocacy Alliance's next major undertake will be a Mental Health Data Resource Book for the State. Their early findings suggest there are several counties which do not have mental health providers.

Justice Saitta suggested a mentoring section be added to the Children's Commission Workplan.

Ross Armstrong stated the Workplan is a living document and can be adjusted as needed. Ross Armstrong stated Brigid Duffy is on the Mentoring Commission. A key take away is how are we making sure we are incorporating authentic youth and family voice into these groups and decision making.

Justice Saitta asked Brigid Duffy if she would talk about the Mentoring Commission at the next meeting.

Brigid Duffy replied there is a meeting in the afternoon, and she would be able to provide an update at the next meeting. Due to budget cuts, the Mentoring Commission has not been able to do much.

Justice Saitta stated as a Commission, they should find a place to create an incorporation or assistance to the Mentoring Commission and/or add a mentoring program into one of the working groups the Children's Commission already has.

Dr. Tiffany Tyler stated she hopes it is thought about as a larger eco system. Perhaps the role the Commission can play is to bring folks together to better coordinate resources as well as refine how to identify and connect individuals to resources.

Justice Cadish commented video could be an available resource to help with counseling issues in the areas where there is a lack of mental health providers.

Judge Michael Montero stated the use of technology and the pandemic is opening some doors in the rurals. Humboldt County has not had a Psychologist or Psychiatrist until now. Mentoring or seeing what services the Commission can help get to more people should be kept on future agendas.

Justice Saitta requested Commission members send an email to the Co-Chairs and Elvira Saldana if they have any information or contacts about mentoring programs.

Brigid Duffy stated the Mentoring Commission is not providing any mentoring. The Commission is supposed to provide training and organize available mentoring groups. There are several organizations the Children's Commission should be embracing to come in. Brigid Duffy nominated Gwynneth Smith to Chair the Behavioral Health Committee. Mental health is a crisis and the Mental Health Committee needs to be built up.

Kimberly Palma-Ortega commented the pieces everyone has spoken on plays a huge role. All the reports compiled with the same repeated information lead nowhere. The education component with mentoring is sometimes forgotten as a mirrored event. Mentoring takes a lot of the programs to the next level when there is more of a one on one process. It would be beneficial to gather stories from the different organizations to get a sense of different areas.

Dr. Tara Raines stated the University of Nevada Las Vegas is providing mental health services in the rural communities. Nevada is part of a national licensing pact in which psychologists from other states can practice remotely for a certain number of days per year.

Zaide Martinez stated she would like to make herself available to the Commission with the permission of Justice Saitta and Shannon Gildea. There needs to be more active efforts. Poverty is not something that happened during COVID, it has been happening. Zaide Martinez thanked Dr. Tiffany Tyler-Garner for bringing that human aspect up to the Commission.

**7. For Information:** Vegas Public Broadcasting Special Overview - Brigid Duffy and Dr. Jesus Jara  
Brigid Duffy reported she had the honor of being asked by the Clark County School District to sit on a panel. It was recorded on Monday and aired on Wednesday. Prior to the special, Dr. Jesus Jara talked nationally about the crisis in mental health to our children. A lot of people did not want to talk about it because it was harsh, ugly, and depressing. Dr. Jesus Jara stood up for the kids and said people need to know, kids are suffering. There have been 23 suicides since the pandemic hit. During the national virtual tour, Dr. Jesus Jara brought in Dr. Kelly Posner from Columbia University who created a program which is saving lives across the world. Brigid Duffy stated she was involved in the panel as her role as a member of the Children's Commission and she talked to the viewers about if they have contact with a policy maker, what they can do. The Columbia Lighthouse Project is a simple screening tool. The Vegas Broadcasting Special had a great panel of people including someone who survived his attempt to take his own life and families who have lost their children.

Dr. Jesus Jara thanked Brigid Duffy for the introduction and for her participation in the panel. At the last meeting, the crisis they are facing on children's and adult's mental health was mentioned. It brought attention locally and nationally when the New York Times covered it. Earlier when they were trying to find ways to open schools, what they kept hearing about was COVID cases and the positivity rate. When they talked to Dr. Leguen, the District Health Officer of the Southern Nevada Health District, they let him know kids are suffering and the need to bring them back to school not only for face to face instruction but for the socialization. Dr. Jesus Jara informed as he participated in the virtual tour, no one else is facing the same. It could be due to lack of resources and support. Dr. Posner's screening tool is a simple protocol and is available in 160 languages. There is an app which asks simple questions and connects individuals to a Suicide Hotline. The goal is to train staff and get it out into the community. Clark County will be using the recently approved federal stimulus funding for children's mental health. However due to funding going away in 3 to 4 years, they will have to find ways to sustain it and perhaps go to the Legislature in 4 years to show the investment made from the Federal Government and ask how to continue to invest in the children. The conversation is just being started to find ways to provide resources and assistance for children who are struggling.

Justice Saitta asked if there will be further broadcasts or if the information will be disseminated statewide.

Dr. Jesus Jara replied they will disseminate the information locally. They will have conversations with the State Superintendent to share with colleagues in the other school districts. Dr. Posner would like to come back.

Brigid Duffy asked if the program is available to watch.

Dr. Jesus Jara replied he will have to follow up on it and send to Elvira Saldana.

Justice Saitta thanked Brigid Duffy and Dr. Jesus Jara.

Brigid Duffy thanked Justice Saitta for supporting her to be a representative of the Children's Commission on the panel. The Clark County School District is adding a link for the Children's Commission meetings on their website to create more awareness. Brigid Duffy suggested discussing creating a logo for the Commission at the next meeting.

Ross Armstrong stated the Division would take care of the logo.

**8. For Information: COVID-19 Awareness**

Justice Saitta asked if there were any COVID awareness updates relating to resources.

There were no updates.

**9. For Information: Legislative Session Update - Ross Armstrong**

Ross Armstrong reported the Division's budgets are likely to close on April 6<sup>th</sup> during the work session. The Governor's recommended budget had cuts to Clark and Washoe County's child welfare incentive application funding, China Springs Youth Camp, and one-year continued reduction of juvenile justice facility capacity. The work session is where changes are made. If anyone has thoughts of what should occur to the Division's budget, they should be submitted prior to April 6<sup>th</sup>.

Justice Cadish asked for clarification on China Springs.

Ross Armstrong replied the Governor's recommended budget includes a substantial cut of over a million dollars to China Springs Youth Camp. The decision unit brings the state funding for Spring Mountain Youth Camp and China Springs Youth Camp to the same level.

Justice Cadish asked if it was on a per youth funding.

Ross Armstrong replied it was not, China Springs will still have a higher allocation per youth. It will be \$500,000 of funding to each camp.

**Child Welfare:**

Ross Armstrong informed the biggest headline capturing bill so far has been the free-range children. The language for Senator Ratti's bill relating to commercially sexually exploited children came out yesterday. It is a follow up to the work done during the interim from Senate Bill 293 last session. The bill calls for allowing the creation of receiving centers for children who have been sexually exploited to end up in a treatment location rather than a detention location. It has DCFS certifying programs for those youth and a process which includes due process for child serving agencies to involuntarily have a child placed at a receiving center instead of detention. The bill may change to a more permissive than mandatory way. There was a bill which made sure the Nevada requirements for the Kinship guardianship federal subsidy match the federal requirements. Bills which have not been introduced are the Court Improvement Program bill with 432B changes and the bill which

would allow the child welfare agencies to appropriately keep their adoption savings funding. Another child welfare bill is one which requires some extra steps for everyone involved for children being admitted to a psychiatric hospital.

#### Juvenile Justice:

Ross Armstrong stated there is a lot of discussion when the youth is served in the juvenile justice system versus the adult system. There are several bills on requirements for peace officers. A bill which would require DCFS to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Corrections to determine if some of the youth currently housed at Lovelock could be served at a DCFS facility has not been introduced yet.

#### Children's Mental Health:

Ross Armstrong reported a bill which would turn the Children's Mental Health Consortium into one with BDRs and policies will be heard this afternoon.

**10. For Possible Action:** Workplan - Justice Nancy Saitta, Justice Elissa Cadish, Ross Armstrong  
Justice Saitta stated the agenda item will be placed on the next meeting agenda.

Justice Cadish requested Commission members who have input about proposed revisions to the workplan or from the committees for their part of the workplan to please submit to Elvira Saldana for the Co-Chairs to consider them and work on updating the workplan. Justice Cadish asked Ross Armstrong by what date the information should be submitted by.

Ross Armstrong replied April 1st.

Justice Saitta asked Elvira Saldana to provide Commission members with the workplan.

**11. For Possible Action:** Discuss and Decide Upon Next Steps - Justice Nancy Saitta

- Assign Tasks to Committee Members (if needed)
- Specify Agenda Items for the Next Meeting
- Confirm Next Meeting Date/Time
  - i. Friday, June 18, 2021 at 10:30 a.m.

#### 12. Public Comment and Discussion:

Dr. Jay Fisher, Medical Director of Pediatric Emergency Medicine at University Medical Center, commented what they are seeing now is severe. As a member of the Nevada American Family Pediatrics, Dr. Jay Fisher was asked to represent them. One of their top concerns and priorities for 2021 is the care of children through dual diagnosis mental health issues. They are also experiencing a sizable surge in acute, suicidal ideation, anxiety, and mental health disorders. The most egregious problem is the care of dual diagnosis children (mental health disorder and behavioral disorder) accompanied by other medical problems which complicates their care and requires a higher level of care. There is a rise in patients with dual diagnosis where there is no place in the state to care for them over a long period of time and they are residing in their pediatric emergency department. They are seeing situations where children ages 8 and 9 are being physically and chemically restrained for long periods.

Justice Saitta thanked and asked Dr. Fisher if he would be willing to attend the next meeting to provide further information.

Ross Armstrong stated it could be helpful to have an overview of residential treatment options in the state and the out of state residential situation. It is important to understand the Emergency Department's role.

Brigid Duffy stated by Dr. Jay Fisher telling his story, hopefully the Commission can figure out how to get some resources or support.

Dr. Jay Fisher stated the story tells how dire the situation is and he is willing to work as much as he has to, to help the kids.

Justice Saitta thanked Dr. Jay Fisher for his time and commitment to kids.

### **13. Adjourn**

A motion was made to adjourn by Justice Cadish, seconded by Brigid Duffy, and carried to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 12:21 p.m.