

Joe Lombardo  
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.*



Marla McDade  
Williams, MPA  
Administrator

## Nevada Children's Commission Full Commission Draft Meeting Minutes

**DATE:** Friday, September 13, 2024

**TIME:** 10:30 A.M. - Adjournment

**VIDEO CONFERENCE:**

[https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting\\_OWZjMmM2MDktOGJiOS00YmRmLTg2ZGItNmE0NTY4NzMyNzF1%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_OWZjMmM2MDktOGJiOS00YmRmLTg2ZGItNmE0NTY4NzMyNzF1%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:** 747 699 041#

**1. Call to Order** – Justice Nancy Saitta, Justice Elissa Cadish, Marla McDade Williams  
The meeting was called to order at 10:32 a.m. by Justice Elissa Cadish.

**2. Welcome and Introductions (Roll Call)** – Division of Child and Family Services Staff  
**Members Present by Video:** Justice Nancy Saitta, Justice Elissa Cadish, Marla McDade Williams, Judge David Gibson, Jr., Brigid Duffy, Ryan Gustafson, Jill Marano, Zaide Martinez, Megan Miller, Judge Mike Montero, Kimberly Palma-Ortega, Shelia Parks, Keith Pickard, Dr. Tiffany Tyler-Garner, Kim Abbott (for Janice Wolf)

**Members Absent:** Judge Sunny Bailey, Nancy Brune, Judge Paige Dollinger, Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno, Assemblywoman Erica Mosca, Judge Egan Walker

**DCFS Staff:** Sara Velasquez, Elvira Saldana

**Public:** Gwynneth Smith, Judge Pickard, Luke, DeNeese Parker, Belz & Case Government Affairs Scribe, Autumn Blattman, Sabrina Schnur, Ron Murphy

**3. Public Comment and Discussion**

There was no public comment.

**4. For Possible Action:** Approval of June 21, 2024 Meeting Minutes – Justice Nancy Saitta  
Justice Elissa Cadish asked if there were any corrections or issues to raise regarding the meeting minutes.

There were no recommendations.

**Action:** A motion was made by Keith Pickard to approve the meeting minutes, seconded by Marla McDade Williams, and carried to approve the meeting minutes of June 21, 2024.

**5. For Information:** Discussion of the Organization and Structure of the Children’s Commission – Justice Elissa Cadish

Justice Elissa Cadish stated the Nevada Children’s Commission is a Supreme Court Commission created through the administrative docket process. There have been issues raised about the viability of the Commission. To some extent, the work discussed in the Commission has some overlap with the work of the Supreme Court’s Court Improvement Program (CIP), the Select Committee, and Court Improvement Councils around the state. It is difficult for the Supreme Court to oversee the Commission since the issues are policy related and outside of their lane to get involved in. The issues discussed at the meetings are important. Justice Elissa Cadish would like to avoid duplication of effort and does not want the Commission members to be working hard to come up with proposals which the Court cannot act on. Justice Elissa Cadish has not been able to figure out a good solution for how the issues should get presented and considered by the folks who can act on them.

Justice Nancy Saitta stated she is deeply concerned about the issue and strongly believes the Commission can and must continue. The Commission should remain in its current composition. A methodology should be developed where the Commission members and subject matter experts can make recommendations to the appropriate venue/entity for the identified issues and the Commission act as the umbrella organization as it was intended to be. The judicial members can and must abstain from participating in some of the recommendations. The Co-Chairs have continued to work on another way to either house or place the Commission. Justice Nancy Saitta opposes any change in the structure and is concerned about flipping the Commission into CIP. The Commission is modeled after the Texas Supreme Court Children’s Commission which has sat in their Supreme Court for approximately 20 years. The Commission is far too valuable to set aside or minimize.

Marla McDade Williams stated she respects everyone and the work done. It does cross the separation of powers of government. The Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) is responsible for staffing the Commission without any budgetary authority. There has been a struggle with figuring out the role in the system in terms of agenda items. The challenge is what is the authority of the Commission to make recommendations.

Keith Pickard stated the Commission was put together for a good reason. It was recommended and started as a function of the Supreme Court. The Commission needs to defer to the authorities and follow their guidance.

Brigid Duffy stated she has been alongside Justice Nancy Saitta for the entire creation of the Commission. The downfall is the lack of funding for the staff the Commission needs. It is not appropriate for DCFS to staff. Funding has not been provided to get the staff needed to be independent. The Children’s Commission is meant to be the umbrella and the intention was to have all the commissions/consortiums relating to children report to the Commission. Perhaps it can go to the judges to oversee.

Justice Elissa Cadish stated CIP has a legislative committee which makes legislative proposals relating to court processes. The Texas Children’s Commission is their CIP. The issues being worked on do need to be worked on, however Justice Elissa Cadish would like to see more legislative interest in the issues. Justice Elissa Cadish has talked with Barbara Buckley and Bailey Bortolin at Legal Aid of Southern Nevada, and they have advocated to not have the Commission continue, to the extent it is overlapping with other

committees and commissions their folks are involved in. Justice Elissa Cadish hopes to find a way to have the issues presented to and addressed by others who are in a position to address.

Marla McDade Williams commented the Joint Interim Committee on Judiciary takes recommendations for legislation. There are opportunities to make change as needed.

Justice Elissa Cadish stated further discussion will take place in December. The inclination of the court is the Children's Commission will likely be dissolved at the end of the year. Justice Elissa Cadish is looking for alternatives and suggestions from the members.

Judge David Gibson commented he has taken part in various groups and understands the concern about the overlap of effort, however, sees this Commission as Supreme Court created therefore the Supreme Court has the final say. If the Supreme Court does not believe the Commission is maximizing its effectiveness for their purpose, then will defer to what the Supreme Court wants to do.

Keith Pickard commented it is unreasonable to think they will be able to make significant changes under the present circumstance. If the Commission is going to be dissolved, the likelihood of having a Legislative Commission replace it is slim to none. Keith Pickard sees it as a practical abandonment of the mandate they have to protect children.

Justice Elissa Cadish commented the Education Committee, for example, has been working on important issues, however Justice Elissa Cadish wonders if it is appropriate for her as a Chief Justice of the Nevada Supreme Court to be weighing in on.

Kimberly Palma-Ortega commented a missing piece on the Commission is a youth voice. If the right placement can be found for the work that has been done, Kimberly Palma-Ortega offered to help navigate the efforts that have been put into the committees.

Justice Elissa Cadish stated the Juvenile Justice Oversight Commission, which is an Executive Branch Commission was being reinvigorated.

Marla McDade Williams commented DCFS is responsible for staffing the Juvenile Justice Oversight Commission. A bill draft request has been put together to get the membership in alignment with what the federal requirements are. Marla McDade Williams is happy to share the proposal with anyone.

Justice Nancy Saitta commented the Juvenile Justice Oversight Commission was the creation by statute of the Children's Commission in coordination with the council of state governments in a combined effort under then Governor Brian Sandoval.

Justice Elissa Cadish stated if there are any suggestions, comments, or input to please reach out to her or Elvira Saldana. Justice Elissa Cadish wants the folks who are doing the work, gathering information, and ultimately making proposals based on that information to have an appropriate venue to present the information to someone who can act on it and make a difference. Justice Elissa Cadish is concerned she is not that venue.

## **6. For Information:** Updates from Committees

- Behavioral Health Committee- Gwynneth Smith  
Gwynneth Smith reported since the last meeting in June, the committee has continued to work on the development of the data request. Gwynneth Smith is in the process of taking the data points

discussed and finalizing into a draft the committee can review and consider submitting to the full Commission for approval. Amber Howell was invited to the last committee meeting to further discuss the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI). The BBI CEO will be invited to present to the committee.

- **Child Welfare Committee- Megan Miller**

Megan Miller reported the committee discussed potential recommendations for new members at the last meeting. One of the committee's requests is to have a Clark County Family Services representative and judicial representatives from Clark County and the rural community on the committee. The committee has been focusing on organizing a placement roundtable to discuss issues that have been occurring in locating and maintaining placements. The committee has discussed specific slots the committee would like to invite to the roundtable. The committee's hope is to have foster parents, licensing workers, former foster youth, and Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) representatives at the roundtable meeting.

- **Education Committee**

Justice Elissa Cadish reported the committee has not met. A new Chair has not been appointed.

**7. For Information: Court Improvement Program Update – Zaide Martinez, Nevada Supreme Court-Administrative Office of the Courts**

- **Provide updates on the Court Improvement Program.**

Zaide Martinez stated the link for the scope of CIPs for all the states was included in the meeting chat, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/courts/court-improvement-programs/?top=1498>. CIP sent out the funding opportunity announcement for the Community Improvement Councils (CICs). The CICs are in every jurisdiction and work to address barriers and improve the system within their jurisdiction. The deadline for applications is November 5<sup>th</sup>. The judicial roundtable and CIC Summit is scheduled September 18-20. The CIP Legislative Subcommittee has been convening for a few months. Kelly Brandon is the Chair of the committee. Participation is encouraged. The committee is still trying to figure out which topics they want to pursue. Zaide Martinez has been working with the Family Programs Office on the IV-E eligibility report. CIP is still working on Judicial, Court, and Attorney Measures of Performance (JCAMP). A few sites agreed to court observation and case file review. CIP has contracted with Ashley Willcott to add a dependency section to the Nevada Rules of Civil Procedure (NRCP).

**8. For Possible Action: Discuss and Decide Upon Next Steps – Justice Nancy Saitta**

- **Assign Tasks to Committee Members (if needed)**

Tasks were not assigned.

- **Specify Agenda Items for the Next Meeting**

No recommendations were made.

- **Confirm Next Meeting Date/Time**

- i. December 6, 2024 at 10:30 a.m.

**9. Public Comment and Discussion**

There was no public comment.

**10. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:49 a.m.