

AMENDMENTS TO LB600  
(Amendments to AM1241)

Introduced by Bolz, 29.

1           1. Strike the original sections and all amendments thereto and  
2 insert the following new sections:

3           Section 1. Section 43-285, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,  
4 2018, is amended to read:

5           43-285 (1) When the court awards a juvenile to the care of the  
6 Department of Health and Human Services, an association, or an individual  
7 in accordance with the Nebraska Juvenile Code, the juvenile shall, unless  
8 otherwise ordered, become a ward and be subject to the legal custody and  
9 care of the department, association, or individual to whose care he or  
10 she is committed. Any such association and the department shall have  
11 authority, by and with the assent of the court, to determine the care,  
12 placement, medical services, psychiatric services, training, and  
13 expenditures on behalf of each juvenile committed to it. Any such  
14 association and the department shall be responsible for applying for any  
15 health insurance available to the juvenile, including, but not limited  
16 to, medical assistance under the Medical Assistance Act. Such custody and  
17 care shall not include the guardianship of any estate of the juvenile.

18           (2)(a) Following an adjudication hearing at which a juvenile is  
19 adjudged to be under subdivision (3)(a) or (c) of section 43-247, the  
20 court may order the department to prepare and file with the court a  
21 proposed plan for the care, placement, services, and permanency which are  
22 to be provided to such juvenile and his or her family. The health and  
23 safety of the juvenile shall be the paramount concern in the proposed  
24 plan.

25           (b) The department shall provide opportunities for the child, in an  
26 age or developmentally appropriate manner, to be consulted in the

1 development of his or her plan as provided in the Nebraska Strengthening  
2 Families Act.

3 (c) The department shall include in the plan for a child who is  
4 fourteen years of age or older and subject to the legal care and custody  
5 of the department a written independent living transition proposal which  
6 meets the requirements of section 43-1311.03 and, for eligible children,  
7 the Young Adult Bridge to Independence Act. The juvenile court shall  
8 provide a copy of the plan to all interested parties before the hearing.  
9 The court may approve the plan, modify the plan, order that an  
10 alternative plan be developed, or implement another plan that is in the  
11 child's best interests. In its order the court shall include a finding  
12 regarding the appropriateness of the programs and services described in  
13 the proposal designed to help the child prepare for the transition from  
14 foster care to a successful adulthood. The court shall also ask the  
15 child, in an age or developmentally appropriate manner, if he or she  
16 participated in the development of his or her plan and make a finding  
17 regarding the child's participation in the development of his or her plan  
18 as provided in the Nebraska Strengthening Families Act. Rules of evidence  
19 shall not apply at the dispositional hearing when the court considers the  
20 plan that has been presented.

21 (d) The last court hearing before jurisdiction pursuant to  
22 subdivision (3)(a) of section 43-247 is terminated for a child who is  
23 sixteen years of age or older or pursuant to subdivision (8) of section  
24 43-247 for a child whose guardianship or state-funded adoption assistance  
25 agreement was disrupted or terminated after he or she had attained the  
26 age of sixteen years shall be called the independence hearing. In  
27 addition to other matters and requirements to be addressed at this  
28 hearing, the independence hearing shall address the child's future goals  
29 and plans and access to services and support for the transition from  
30 foster care to adulthood consistent with section 43-1311.03 and the Young  
31 Adult Bridge to Independence Act. The child shall not be required to

1 attend the independence hearing, but efforts shall be made to encourage  
2 and enable the child's attendance if the child wishes to attend,  
3 including scheduling the hearing at a time that permits the child's  
4 attendance. An independence coordinator as provided in section 43-4506  
5 shall attend the hearing if reasonably practicable, but the department is  
6 not required to have legal counsel present. At the independence hearing,  
7 the court shall advise the child about the bridge to independence  
8 program, including, if applicable, the right of young adults in the  
9 bridge to independence program to request a court-appointed, client-  
10 directed attorney under subsection (1) of section 43-4510 and the  
11 benefits and role of such attorney and to request additional permanency  
12 review hearings in the bridge to independence program under subsection  
13 (5) of section 43-4508 and how to request such a hearing. The court shall  
14 also advise the child, if applicable, of the rights he or she is giving  
15 up if he or she chooses not to participate in the bridge to independence  
16 program and the option to enter such program at any time between nineteen  
17 and twenty-one years of age if the child meets the eligibility  
18 requirements of section 43-4504. The department shall present information  
19 to the court regarding other community resources that may benefit the  
20 child, specifically information regarding state programs established  
21 pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 677. The court shall also make a finding as to  
22 whether the child has received the documents as required by subsection  
23 (9) of section 43-1311.03.

24 (3)(a) Within thirty days after an order awarding a juvenile to the  
25 care of the department, an association, or an individual and until the  
26 juvenile reaches the age of majority, the department, association, or  
27 individual shall file with the court a report stating the location of the  
28 juvenile's placement and the needs of the juvenile in order to effectuate  
29 the purposes of subdivision (1) of section 43-246. The department,  
30 association, or individual shall file a report with the court once every  
31 six months or at shorter intervals if ordered by the court or deemed

1 appropriate by the department, association, or individual. Every six  
2 months, the report shall provide an updated statement regarding the  
3 eligibility of the juvenile for health insurance, including, but not  
4 limited to, medical assistance under the Medical Assistance Act. The  
5 department shall also concurrently file a written sibling placement  
6 report as described in subsection (3) of section 43-1311.02 at these  
7 times.

8 (b) The department, association, or individual shall file a report  
9 and notice of placement change with the court and shall send copies of  
10 the notice to all interested parties, including all of the child's  
11 siblings that are known to the department, at least seven days before the  
12 placement of the juvenile is changed from what the court originally  
13 considered to be a suitable family home or institution to some other  
14 custodial situation in order to effectuate the purposes of subdivision  
15 (1) of section 43-246. The department, association, or individual shall  
16 afford a parent or an adult sibling the option of refusing to receive  
17 such notifications. The court, on its own motion or upon the filing of an  
18 objection to the change by an interested party, may order a hearing to  
19 review such a change in placement and may order that the change be stayed  
20 until the completion of the hearing. Nothing in this section shall  
21 prevent the court on an ex parte basis from approving an immediate change  
22 in placement upon good cause shown. The department may make an immediate  
23 change in placement without court approval only if the juvenile is in a  
24 harmful or dangerous situation or when the foster parents request that  
25 the juvenile be removed from their home. Approval of the court shall be  
26 sought within twenty-four hours after making the change in placement or  
27 as soon thereafter as possible.

28 (c) The department shall provide the juvenile's guardian ad litem  
29 with a copy of any report filed with the court by the department pursuant  
30 to this subsection.

31 (4) The court shall also hold a permanency hearing if required under

1 section 43-1312.

2 (5) When the court awards a juvenile to the care of the department,  
3 an association, or an individual, then the department, association, or  
4 individual shall have standing as a party to file any pleading or motion,  
5 to be heard by the court with regard to such filings, and to be granted  
6 any review or relief requested in such filings consistent with the  
7 Nebraska Juvenile Code.

8 (6) Whenever a juvenile is in a foster care placement as defined in  
9 section 43-1301, the Foster Care Review Office or the designated local  
10 foster care review board may participate in proceedings concerning the  
11 juvenile as provided in section 43-1313 and notice shall be given as  
12 provided in section 43-1314.

13 (7) Any written findings or recommendations of the Foster Care  
14 Review Office or the designated local foster care review board with  
15 regard to a juvenile in a foster care placement submitted to a court  
16 having jurisdiction over such juvenile shall be admissible in any  
17 proceeding concerning such juvenile if such findings or recommendations  
18 have been provided to all other parties of record.

19 (8) The executive director and any agent or employee of the Foster  
20 Care Review Office or any member of any local foster care review board  
21 participating in an investigation or making any report pursuant to the  
22 Foster Care Review Act or participating in a judicial proceeding pursuant  
23 to this section shall be immune from any civil liability that would  
24 otherwise be incurred except for false statements negligently made.

25 Sec. 2. Section 43-1311.03, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
26 amended to read:

27 43-1311.03 (1) When a child placed in foster care turns fourteen  
28 years of age or enters foster care and is at least fourteen years of age,  
29 a written independent living transition proposal shall be developed by  
30 the Department of Health and Human Services at the direction and  
31 involvement of the child to prepare for the transition from foster care

1 to successful adulthood. Any revision or addition to such proposal shall  
2 also be made in consultation with the child. The transition proposal  
3 shall be personalized based on the child's needs and shall describe the  
4 services needed for the child to transition to a successful adulthood as  
5 provided in the Nebraska Strengthening Families Act. The transition  
6 proposal shall include, but not be limited to, the following needs and  
7 the services needed for the child to transition to a successful adulthood  
8 as provided in the Nebraska Strengthening Families Act:

9 (a) Education;

10 (b) Employment services and other workforce support;

11 (c) Health and health care coverage, including the child's potential  
12 eligibility for medicaid coverage under the federal Patient Protection  
13 and Affordable Care Act, 42 U.S.C. 1396a(a)(10)(A)(i)(IX), as such act  
14 and section existed on January 1, 2013;

15 (d) Behavioral health treatment and support needs and access to such  
16 treatment and support;

17 (e) Financial assistance, including education on credit card  
18 financing, banking, and other services;

19 (f) Housing;

20 (g) Relationship development and permanent connections; and

21 (h) Adult services, if the needs assessment indicates that the child  
22 is reasonably likely to need or be eligible for services or other support  
23 from the adult services system.

24 (2) The transition proposal shall be developed and frequently  
25 reviewed by the department in collaboration with the child's transition  
26 team. The transition team shall be comprised of the child, the child's  
27 caseworker, the child's guardian ad litem, individuals selected by the  
28 child, and individuals who have knowledge of services available to the  
29 child. As provided in the Nebraska Strengthening Families Act, one of the  
30 individuals selected by the child may be designated as the child's  
31 advisor and, as necessary, advocate for the child with respect to the

1 application of the reasonable and prudent parent standard and for the  
2 child on normalcy activities. The department may reject an individual  
3 selected by the child to be a member of the team if the department has  
4 good cause to believe the individual would not act in the best interests  
5 of the child.

6 (3) The transition proposal shall be considered a working document  
7 and shall be, at the least, updated for and reviewed at every permanency  
8 or review hearing by the court. The court shall determine whether the  
9 transition proposal includes the services needed to assist the child to  
10 make the transition from foster care to a successful adulthood.

11 (4) The transition proposal shall document what efforts were made to  
12 involve and engage the child in the development of the transition  
13 proposal and any revisions or additions to the transition proposal. As  
14 provided in the Nebraska Strengthening Families Act, the court shall ask  
15 the child, in an age or developmentally appropriate manner, about his or  
16 her involvement in the development of the transition proposal and any  
17 revisions or additions to such proposal. As provided in the Nebraska  
18 Strengthening Families Act, the court shall make a finding as to the  
19 child's involvement in the development of the transition proposal and any  
20 revisions or additions to such proposal.

21 (5) The final transition proposal prior to the child's leaving  
22 foster care shall specifically identify how the need for housing will be  
23 addressed.

24 (6) If the child is interested in pursuing higher education, the  
25 transition proposal shall provide for the process in applying for any  
26 applicable state, federal, or private aid.

27 (7) The department shall provide without cost a copy of any consumer  
28 report as defined in 15 U.S.C. 1681a(d), as such section existed on  
29 January 1, 2016, pertaining to the child each year until the child is  
30 discharged from care and assistance, including when feasible, from the  
31 child's guardian ad litem, in interpreting and resolving any inaccuracies

1 in the report as provided in the Nebraska Strengthening Families Act.

2 ~~(8)(a) Any (8)~~ A child who is adjudicated to be a juvenile described  
3 in (i) subdivision (3)(a) of section 43-247 and who is in an out-of-home  
4 placement or (ii) subdivision (8) of section 43-247 and whose  
5 guardianship or state-funded adoption assistance agreement was disrupted  
6 or terminated after the child had attained the age of sixteen years,  
7 shall receive information regarding the Young Adult Bridge to  
8 Independence Act and the bridge to independence program available under  
9 the act.

10 (b) The department shall create a clear and developmentally  
11 appropriate written notice discussing the rights of eligible young adults  
12 to participate in the program. The notice shall include information about  
13 eligibility and requirements to participate in the program, the extended  
14 services and support that young adults are eligible to receive under the  
15 program, and how young adults can be a part of the program. The notice  
16 shall also include information about the young adult's right to request a  
17 client-directed attorney to represent the young adult pursuant to section  
18 43-4510 and the benefits and role of an attorney.

19 (c) The department shall disseminate this information to any child  
20 who was all children who were adjudicated to be a juvenile described in  
21 subdivision (3)(a) of section 43-247 and who is are in an out-of-home  
22 placement at sixteen years of age and any child who was adjudicated to be  
23 a juvenile under subdivision (8) of section 43-247 and whose guardianship  
24 or state-funded adoption assistance agreement was disrupted or terminated  
25 after the child had attained the age of sixteen years. The department  
26 shall disseminate this information to any such child and yearly  
27 thereafter until such child attains the age of nineteen years of age, and  
28 not later than ninety days prior to the child's last court review before  
29 attaining nineteen years of age or being discharged from foster care to  
30 independent living. In addition to providing the written notice, not  
31 later than ninety days prior to the child's last court review before



1 attaining nineteen years of age or being discharged from foster care to  
2 independent living, a representative of the department shall explain the  
3 information contained in the notice to the child in person and the  
4 timeline necessary to avoid a lapse in services and support.

5 (9) On or before the date the child reaches eighteen or nineteen  
6 years of age or twenty-one years of age if the child participates in the  
7 bridge to independence program, if the child is leaving foster care, the  
8 department shall provide the child with:

9 (a) A certified copy of the child's birth certificate and facilitate  
10 securing a federal social security card when the child is eligible for  
11 such card;

12 (b) Health insurance information and all documentation required for  
13 enrollment in medicaid coverage for former foster care children as  
14 available under the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act,  
15 42 U.S.C. 1396a(a)(10)(A)(i)(IX), as such act and section existed on  
16 January 1, 2013;

17 (c) A copy of the child's medical records;

18 (d) A driver's license or identification card issued by a state in  
19 accordance with the requirements of section 202 of the REAL ID Act of  
20 2005, as such section existed on January 1, 2016;

21 (e) A copy of the child's educational records;

22 (f) A credit report check;

23 (g) Contact information, with permission, for family members,  
24 including siblings, with whom the child can maintain a safe and  
25 appropriate relationship, and other supportive adults;

26 (h) A list of local community resources, including, but not limited  
27 to, support groups, health clinics, mental and behavioral health and  
28 substance abuse treatment services and support, pregnancy and parenting  
29 resources, and employment and housing agencies;

30 (i) Written information, including, but not limited to, contact  
31 information, for disability resources or benefits that may assist the

1 child as an adult, specifically including information regarding state  
2 programs established pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 677, as such section existed  
3 on January 1, 2016, and disability benefits, including supplemental  
4 security income pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 1382 et seq., as such sections  
5 existed on January 1, 2016, or social security disability insurance  
6 pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 423, as such section existed on January 1, 2016, if  
7 the child may be eligible as an adult;

8 (j) An application for public assistance and information on how to  
9 access the system to determine public assistance eligibility;

10 (k) A letter prepared by the department that verifies the child's  
11 name and date of birth, dates the child was in foster care, and whether  
12 the child was in foster care on his or her eighteenth, nineteenth, or  
13 twenty-first birthday and enrolled in medicaid while in foster care;

14 (l) Written information about the child's Indian heritage or tribal  
15 connection, if any; and

16 (m) Written information on how to access personal documents in the  
17 future.

18 All fees associated with securing the certified copy of the child's  
19 birth certificate or obtaining an operator's license or a state  
20 identification card shall be waived by the state.

21 The transition proposal shall document that the child was provided  
22 all of the documents listed in this subsection. The court shall make a  
23 finding as to whether the child has received the documents as part of the  
24 independence hearing as provided in subdivision (2)(d) of section 43-285.

25 Sec. 3. Section 43-4201, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
26 amended to read:

27 43-4201 (1) The Legislature finds and declares that:

28 (a) The Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature  
29 documented serious problems with the child welfare system in its 2011  
30 report of the study that was conducted under Legislative Resolution 37,  
31 One Hundred Second Legislature, First Session, 2011;

1 (b) Improving the safety and well-being of Nebraska's children and  
2 families is a critical priority which must guide policy decisions in a  
3 variety of areas;

4 (c) To improve the safety and well-being of children and families in  
5 Nebraska, the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government  
6 must work together to ensure:

7 (i) The integration, coordination, and accessibility of all services  
8 provided to children and families by the state, whether directly or  
9 pursuant to contract;

10 (ii) Reasonable access to appropriate services statewide and  
11 efficiency in service delivery; and

12 (iii) The availability of accurate and complete data as well as  
13 ongoing data analysis to identify important trends and problems as they  
14 arise; and

15 (d) As the primary state agency serving children and families, the  
16 Department of Health and Human Services must exemplify leadership,  
17 responsiveness, transparency, and efficiency and program managers within  
18 the agency must strive cooperatively to ensure that their programs view  
19 the needs of children and families comprehensively as a system rather  
20 than individually in isolation, including pooling funding when possible  
21 and appropriate.

22 (2) It is the intent of the Legislature in creating the Nebraska  
23 Children's Commission to provide for the needs identified in subsection  
24 (1) of this section, to provide strategic priorities for research or  
25 policy development within a broad restructuring of the goals of the child  
26 welfare system and juvenile justice system, and to provide a structure to  
27 the commission that maintains the framework of the three branches of  
28 government and their respective powers and duties.

29 Sec. 4. Section 43-4202, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
30 amended to read:

31 43-4202 (1) The Nebraska Children's Commission is created as a high-

1 level leadership body to ~~(a) create a statewide strategic plan for reform~~  
2 ~~of child welfare and juvenile justice programs and services in the State~~  
3 ~~of Nebraska, (b) review the operations of the Department of Health and~~  
4 ~~Human Services regarding child welfare programs and services and~~  
5 ~~recommend, as a part of the statewide strategic plan, options for~~  
6 ~~attaining the legislative intent stated in section 43-4201, either by the~~  
7 ~~establishment of a new division within the department or the~~  
8 ~~establishment of a new state agency to provide all child welfare programs~~  
9 ~~and services which are the responsibility of the state, and (c) monitor~~  
10 and evaluate the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The  
11 commission shall provide a permanent forum for collaboration among state,  
12 local, community, public, and private stakeholders in child welfare and  
13 juvenile justice programs and services.

14 ~~(2)(a) (2) The Governor commission shall appoint fifteen include the~~  
15 ~~following voting members:(a) The executive director of the Foster Care~~  
16 ~~Review Office; and (b) Seventeen members appointed by the Governor. The~~  
17 members appointed pursuant to this subdivision shall represent  
18 stakeholders in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and shall  
19 include: (i) A director of a child advocacy center; (ii) an administrator  
20 of a behavioral health region established pursuant to section 71-807;  
21 (iii) a community representative from each of the service areas  
22 designated pursuant to section 81-3116. In the eastern service area  
23 designated pursuant to such section, the representative may be from a  
24 lead agency of a pilot project established under section 68-1212 or a  
25 collaborative member; (iv) a prosecuting attorney who practices in  
26 juvenile court; (v) a guardian ad litem; (vi) a biological parent  
27 currently or previously involved in the child welfare system or juvenile  
28 justice system; (ii) (vii) a foster parent; (viii) a court appointed  
29 special advocate volunteer; (ix) a member of a local foster care review  
30 board; (x) a child welfare service agency that directly provides a wide  
31 range of child welfare services and is not a member of a lead agency

1 collaborative; ~~(xi)~~ a young adult previously in foster care; and (iii)  
2 ~~(xii)~~ a representative of a child advocacy organization that deals with  
3 legal and policy issues that include child welfare; ~~and (xiii)~~ a  
4 representative of a federally recognized Indian tribe residing within the  
5 State of Nebraska and appointed ~~within thirty days after June 5, 2013,~~  
6 from a list of three nominees submitted by the Commission on Indian  
7 Affairs.

8 (b) (3) The Nebraska Children's Commission shall have the following  
9 nonvoting, ex officio members: (i) ~~(a)~~ The chairperson of the Health and  
10 Human Services Committee of the Legislature or a committee member  
11 designated by the chairperson; (ii) ~~(b)~~ the chairperson of the Judiciary  
12 Committee of the Legislature or a committee member designated by the  
13 chairperson; (iii) ~~(c)~~ the chairperson of the Appropriations Committee of  
14 the Legislature or a committee member designated by the chairperson; (iv)  
15 ~~(d)~~ three persons appointed by the State Court Administrator; (v) ~~the~~  
16 executive director of the Foster Care Review Office; (vi) ~~(e)~~ the chief  
17 executive officer of the Department of Health and Human Services or his  
18 or her designee; ~~(f)~~ the Director of Children and Family Services of the  
19 Division of Children and Family Services of the Department of Health and  
20 Human Services or his or her designee; (vii) the Director of Behavioral  
21 Health of the Division of Behavioral Health of the Department of Health  
22 and Human Services or his or her designee; (viii) ~~(g)~~ the Commissioner of  
23 Education or his or her designee; (ix) ~~(h)~~ the Inspector General of  
24 Nebraska Child Welfare.

25 (3) The nonvoting, ~~ex officio~~ members may attend commission meetings  
26 and participate in the discussions of the commission, provide information  
27 to the commission on the policies, programs, and processes within their  
28 areas of expertise of each of their respective bodies, and gather  
29 information for the commission, ~~and provide information back to their~~  
30 ~~respective bodies from the commission.~~ The nonvoting, ex officio members  
31 shall not vote on decisions by the commission or on the direction or

1 ~~development of the statewide strategic plan pursuant to section 43-4204.~~  
2 ~~(4) The commission shall meet within sixty days after April 12, 2012, and~~  
3 ~~shall select from among its members a chairperson and vice-chairperson~~  
4 ~~and conduct any other business necessary to the organization of the~~  
5 ~~commission. The commission shall meet not less often than once every~~  
6 ~~three months, and meetings of the commission may be held at any time on~~  
7 ~~the call of the chairperson. The commission may hire staff to carry out~~  
8 the responsibilities of the commission.

9 (4) For administrative purposes, the offices of the staff of the  
10 commission shall be located in the Foster Care Review Office. The  
11 commission may hire a consultant with experience in facilitating  
12 strategic planning to provide neutral, independent assistance in updating  
13 the statewide strategic plan. ~~The commission shall terminate on June 30,~~  
14 ~~2019, unless continued by the Legislature.~~

15 (5) The commission, with assistance from the executive director of  
16 the Foster Care Review Office, shall employ a policy analyst to provide  
17 research and expertise to the commission relating to the child welfare  
18 system. The policy analyst shall work in conjunction with the staff of  
19 the commission. His or her responsibilities may include, but are not  
20 limited to: (a) Monitoring the Nebraska child welfare system and juvenile  
21 justice system to provide information to the commission; (b) analyzing  
22 child welfare and juvenile justice public policy through research and  
23 literature reviews and drafting policy reports when requested; (c)  
24 managing or leading projects or tasks and providing resource support to  
25 commission members and committees as determined by the chairperson of the  
26 commission; (d) serving as liaison among child welfare and juvenile  
27 justice stakeholders and the public and responding to information  
28 inquiries as required; and (e) other duties as assigned by the  
29 commission.

30 (6) Members of the commission shall be reimbursed for their actual  
31 and necessary expenses as members of such commission as provided in

1 sections 81-1174 to 81-1177. No member of the commission shall have any  
2 private financial interest, profit, or benefit from any work of the  
3 commission.

4 (7) It is the intent of the Legislature to fund the operations of  
5 the commission using the Nebraska Health Care Cash Fund.

6 Sec. 5. Section 43-4203, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,  
7 2018, is amended to read:

8 43-4203 (1) The Nebraska Children's Commission shall create a  
9 committee to examine state policy regarding the prescription of  
10 psychotropic drugs for children who are wards of the state and the  
11 administration of such drugs to such children. Such committee shall  
12 review the policy and procedures for prescribing and administering such  
13 drugs and make recommendations to the commission for changes in such  
14 policy and procedures.

15 (2) The commission shall create a committee to examine the Office of  
16 Juvenile Services and the Juvenile Services Division of the Office of  
17 Probation Administration. Such committee shall review the role and  
18 effectiveness of out-of-home placements utilized in the juvenile justice  
19 system, including the youth rehabilitation and treatment centers, and  
20 make recommendations to the commission on the juvenile justice continuum  
21 of care, including what populations should be served in out-of-home  
22 placements and what treatment services should be provided at the centers  
23 in order to appropriately serve those populations. Such committee shall  
24 also review how mental and behavioral health services are provided to  
25 juveniles in residential placements and the need for such services  
26 throughout Nebraska and make recommendations to the commission relating  
27 to those systems of care in the juvenile justice system. The committee  
28 shall collaborate with the Juvenile Justice Institute at the University  
29 of Nebraska at Omaha, the Center for Health Policy at the University of  
30 Nebraska Medical Center, the behavioral health regions as established in  
31 section 71-807, and state and national juvenile justice experts to

1 develop recommendations. The recommendations shall include a plan to  
2 implement a continuum of care in the juvenile justice system to meet the  
3 needs of Nebraska families, including specific recommendations for the  
4 rehabilitation and treatment model. The recommendations shall be  
5 delivered to the commission and electronically to the Judiciary Committee  
6 of the Legislature annually by September 1.

7 (3) The commission shall collaborate with juvenile justice  
8 specialists of the Office of Probation Administration and county  
9 officials with respect to any county-operated practice model  
10 participating in the Crossover Youth Program of the Center for Juvenile  
11 Justice Reform at Georgetown University.

12 (4) The commission shall analyze case management workforce issues  
13 and make recommendations to the Health and Human Services Committee of  
14 the Legislature regarding:

15 (a) Salary comparisons with other states and the current pay  
16 structure based on job descriptions;

17 (b) Utilization of incentives for persons who work in the area of  
18 child welfare;

19 (c) Evidence-based training requirements for persons who work in the  
20 area of child welfare and their supervisors; and

21 (d) Collaboration with the University of Nebraska to increase and  
22 sustain such workforce.

23 (5) The Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee created pursuant to  
24 section 43-4216, the Nebraska Strengthening Families Act Committee  
25 created pursuant to section 17 of this act, and the Bridge to  
26 Independence Advisory Committee created pursuant to section 43-4513 shall  
27 be under the jurisdiction of the commission.

28 (6) The commission shall work with the office of the State Court  
29 Administrator, as appropriate, and entities which coordinate facilitated  
30 conferencing as described in section 43-247.03.

31 (7) The commission shall work with administrators from each of the



1 service areas designated pursuant to section 81-3116, the teams created  
2 pursuant to section 28-728, local foster care review boards, child  
3 advocacy centers, the teams created pursuant to the Supreme Court's  
4 Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative, community stakeholders, and  
5 advocates for child welfare programs and services to establish networks  
6 in each of such service areas. Such networks shall permit collaboration  
7 to strengthen the continuum of services available to child welfare  
8 agencies and to provide resources for children and juveniles outside the  
9 child protection system.

10 (8) The commission may organize subcommittees as it deems necessary.  
11 Members of the subcommittees may be members of the commission or may be  
12 individuals who have knowledge of the subcommittee's subject matter,  
13 professional expertise to assist the subcommittee in completing its  
14 assigned responsibilities, or the ability to collaborate within the  
15 subcommittee and with the commission to carry out the powers and duties  
16 of the commission. A subcommittee shall meet as necessary to complete the  
17 work delegated by the commission and shall report its findings to the  
18 relevant committee within the commission.

19 (9) No member of any committee or subcommittee created pursuant to  
20 this section shall have any private financial interest, profit, or  
21 benefit from any work of such committee or subcommittee.

22 ~~(1) The Nebraska Children's Commission shall work with~~  
23 ~~administrators from each of the service areas designated pursuant to~~  
24 ~~section 81-3116, the teams created pursuant to section 28-728, local~~  
25 ~~foster care review boards, child advocacy centers, the teams created~~  
26 ~~pursuant to the Supreme Court's Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative,~~  
27 ~~community stakeholders, and advocates for child welfare programs and~~  
28 ~~services to establish networks in each of such service areas. Such~~  
29 ~~networks shall permit collaboration to strengthen the continuum of~~  
30 ~~services available to child welfare agencies and to provide resources for~~  
31 ~~children and juveniles outside the child protection system. Each service~~

1 ~~area shall develop its own unique strategies to be included in the~~  
2 ~~statewide strategic plan. The Department of Health and Human Services~~  
3 ~~shall assist in identifying the needs of each service area.~~

4 ~~(2)(a) The commission shall create a committee to examine state~~  
5 ~~policy regarding the prescription of psychotropic drugs for children who~~  
6 ~~are wards of the state and the administration of such drugs to such~~  
7 ~~children. Such committee shall review the policy and procedures for~~  
8 ~~prescribing and administering such drugs and make recommendations to the~~  
9 ~~commission for changes in such policy and procedures.~~

10 ~~(b) The commission shall create a committee to examine the Office of~~  
11 ~~Juvenile Services and the Juvenile Services Division of the Office of~~  
12 ~~Probation Administration. Such committee shall review the role and~~  
13 ~~effectiveness of out-of-home placements utilized in the juvenile justice~~  
14 ~~system, including the youth rehabilitation and treatment centers, and~~  
15 ~~make recommendations to the commission on the juvenile justice continuum~~  
16 ~~of care, including what populations should be served in out-of-home~~  
17 ~~placements and what treatment services should be provided at the centers~~  
18 ~~in order to appropriately serve those populations. Such committee shall~~  
19 ~~also review how mental and behavioral health services are provided to~~  
20 ~~juveniles in residential placements and the need for such services~~  
21 ~~throughout Nebraska and make recommendations to the commission relating~~  
22 ~~to those systems of care in the juvenile justice system. The committee~~  
23 ~~shall collaborate with the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Juvenile~~  
24 ~~Justice Institute, the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Center for~~  
25 ~~Health Policy, the behavioral health regions as established in section~~  
26 ~~71-807, and state and national juvenile justice experts to develop~~  
27 ~~recommendations. The recommendations shall include a plan to implement a~~  
28 ~~continuum of care in the juvenile justice system to meet the needs of~~  
29 ~~Nebraska families, including specific recommendations for the~~  
30 ~~rehabilitation and treatment model. The recommendations shall be~~  
31 ~~delivered to the commission and electronically to the Judiciary Committee~~

1 of the Legislature annually by September 1.

2 ~~(c) The commission may organize committees as it deems necessary.~~  
3 ~~Members of the committees may be members of the commission or may be~~  
4 ~~appointed, with the approval of the majority of the commission, from~~  
5 ~~individuals with knowledge of the committee's subject matter,~~  
6 ~~professional expertise to assist the committee in completing its assigned~~  
7 ~~responsibilities, and the ability to collaborate within the committee and~~  
8 ~~with the commission to carry out the powers and duties of the commission.~~  
9 ~~No member of any committee created pursuant to this section shall have~~  
10 ~~any private financial interest, profit, or benefit from any work of such~~  
11 ~~committee.~~

12 ~~(d) The Title IV-E Demonstration Project Committee created pursuant~~  
13 ~~to section 43-4208 and the Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee~~  
14 ~~appointed pursuant to section 43-4216 are under the jurisdiction of the~~  
15 ~~commission.~~

16 ~~(3) The commission shall work with the office of the State Court~~  
17 ~~Administrator, as appropriate, and entities which coordinate facilitated~~  
18 ~~conferencing as described in section 43-247.03. Facilitated conferencing~~  
19 ~~shall be included in statewide strategic plan discussions by the~~  
20 ~~commission. Facilitated conferencing shall continue to be utilized and~~  
21 ~~maximized, as determined by the court of jurisdiction, during the~~  
22 ~~development of the statewide strategic plan. Funding and contracting with~~  
23 ~~mediation centers approved by the Office of Dispute Resolution to provide~~  
24 ~~facilitated conferencing shall continue to be provided by the office of~~  
25 ~~the State Court Administrator at an amount of no less than the General~~  
26 ~~Fund transfer under subsection (1) of section 43-247.04.~~

27 ~~(4) The commission shall gather information and communicate with~~  
28 ~~juvenile justice specialists of the Office of Probation Administration~~  
29 ~~and county officials with respect to any county operated practice model~~  
30 ~~participating in the Crossover Youth Program of the Center for Juvenile~~  
31 ~~Justice Reform at Georgetown University.~~

1           ~~(5) The commission shall coordinate and gather information about the~~  
2 ~~progress and outcomes of the Nebraska Juvenile Service Delivery Project~~  
3 ~~established pursuant to section 43-4101.~~

4           ~~(6) The commission shall develop a system-of-care plan beginning~~  
5 ~~with prevention services through treatment services for the child welfare~~  
6 ~~system based on relevant data and evidence-based practices to meet the~~  
7 ~~specific needs of each area of the state. Such system-of-care plan shall~~  
8 ~~include services that are goal-driven and outcome-based and shall~~  
9 ~~evaluate the feasibility of utilizing performance-based contracting for~~  
10 ~~specific child welfare services, including the feasibility of additional~~  
11 ~~contractual requirements for service providers requiring services to all~~  
12 ~~children without an option to deny service.~~

13           ~~(7) The commission shall analyze case management workforce issues~~  
14 ~~and make recommendations to the Health and Human Services Committee of~~  
15 ~~the Legislature regarding:~~

16           ~~(a) Salary comparisons with other states and the current pay~~  
17 ~~structure based on job descriptions;~~

18           ~~(b) Utilization of incentives for persons who work in the area of~~  
19 ~~child welfare;~~

20           ~~(c) Evidence-based training requirements for persons who work in the~~  
21 ~~area of child welfare and their supervisors; and~~

22           ~~(d) Collaboration with the University of Nebraska to increase and~~  
23 ~~sustain such workforce.~~

24           Sec. 6. Section 43-4204, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
25 amended to read:

26           43-4204   ~~(1)~~The Nebraska Children's Commission shall determine  
27 three to five strategic child welfare priorities for research or policy  
28 development for each biennium ~~create a statewide strategic plan~~ to carry  
29 out the legislative intent stated in section 43-4201 for child welfare  
30 program and service reform in Nebraska. In determining ~~developing~~ the  
31 statewide strategic child welfare priorities ~~plan~~, the commission shall

1 ~~consider the findings and recommendations set forth in the annual report~~  
2 ~~of the Foster Care Review Board, the annual report of the Office of~~  
3 ~~Inspector General for Child Welfare, and the federal Child and Family~~  
4 ~~Services Reviews outcomes. , but not be limited to:~~

5 ~~(a) The potential of contracting with private nonprofit entities as~~  
6 ~~a lead agency, subject to the requirements of subsection (2) of this~~  
7 ~~section. Such lead-agency utilization shall be in a manner that maximizes~~  
8 ~~the strengths, experience, skills, and continuum of care of the lead~~  
9 ~~agencies. Any lead-agency contracts entered into or amended after April~~  
10 ~~12, 2012, shall detail how qualified licensed agencies as part of efforts~~  
11 ~~to develop the local capacity for a community-based system of coordinated~~  
12 ~~care will implement community-based care through competitively procuring~~  
13 ~~either (i) the specific components of foster care and related services or~~  
14 ~~(ii) comprehensive services for defined eligible populations of children~~  
15 ~~and families;~~

16 ~~(b) Provision of leadership for strategies to support high-quality~~  
17 ~~evidence-based prevention and early intervention services that reduce~~  
18 ~~risk and enhance protection for children;~~

19 ~~(c) Realignment of service areas designated pursuant to section~~  
20 ~~81-3116 to be coterminous with the judicial districts described in~~  
21 ~~section 24-301.02;~~

22 ~~(d) Identification of the type of information needed for a clear and~~  
23 ~~thorough analysis of progress on child welfare indicators; and~~

24 ~~(e) Such other elements as the commission deems necessary and~~  
25 ~~appropriate.~~

26 ~~(2) A lead agency used after April 12, 2012, shall:~~

27 ~~(a) Have a board of directors of which at least fifty-one percent of~~  
28 ~~the membership is comprised of Nebraska residents who are not employed by~~  
29 ~~the lead agency or by a subcontractor of the lead agency;~~

30 ~~(b) Complete a readiness assessment as developed by the Department~~  
31 ~~of Health and Human Services to determine the lead agency's viability.~~

1 ~~The readiness assessment shall evaluate organizational, operational, and~~  
2 ~~programmatic capabilities and performance, including review of: The~~  
3 ~~strength of the board of directors; compliance and oversight; financial~~  
4 ~~risk management; financial liquidity and performance; infrastructure~~  
5 ~~maintenance; funding sources, including state, federal, and external~~  
6 ~~private funding; and operations, including reporting, staffing,~~  
7 ~~evaluation, training, supervision, contract monitoring, and program~~  
8 ~~performance tracking capabilities;~~

9 ~~(c) Have the ability to provide directly or by contract through a~~  
10 ~~local network of providers the services required of a lead agency. A lead~~  
11 ~~agency shall not directly provide more than thirty five percent of direct~~  
12 ~~services required under the contract; and~~

13 ~~(d) Provide accountability for meeting the outcomes and performance~~  
14 ~~standards related to child welfare services established by Nebraska child~~  
15 ~~welfare policy and the federal government.~~

16 ~~(3) The commission shall review the operations of the department~~  
17 ~~regarding child welfare programs and services and recommend, as a part of~~  
18 ~~the statewide strategic plan, options for attaining the legislative~~  
19 ~~intent stated in section 43-4201, either by the establishment of a new~~  
20 ~~division within the department or the establishment of a new state agency~~  
21 ~~to provide all child welfare programs and services which are the~~  
22 ~~responsibility of the state.~~

23 Sec. 7. Section 43-4206, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
24 amended to read:

25 43-4206 The Department of Health and Human Services and the Office  
26 of Probation Administration shall fully cooperate with the activities of  
27 the Nebraska Children's Commission. The department shall provide to the  
28 commission all requested information on children and juveniles in  
29 Nebraska, including, but not limited to, departmental reports, data,  
30 programs, processes, finances, and policies. ~~The department shall~~  
31 ~~collaborate with the commission regarding the development of a plan for a~~

1 ~~statewide automated child welfare information system to integrate child~~  
2 ~~welfare information into one system if the One Hundred Second~~  
3 ~~Legislature, Second Session, 2012, enacts legislation to require the~~  
4 ~~development of such a plan. The department shall coordinate and~~  
5 ~~collaborate with the commission regarding engagement of an evaluator to~~  
6 ~~provide an evaluation of the child welfare system if the One Hundred~~  
7 ~~Second Legislature, Second Session, 2012, enacts legislation to require~~  
8 ~~such evaluation.~~

9       Sec. 8. Section 43-4207, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,  
10 2018, is amended to read:

11       43-4207 The Nebraska Children's Commission shall annually provide a  
12 written report to the Governor and an electronic report to the Health and  
13 Human Services Committee of the Legislature defining its strategic child  
14 welfare priorities and progress toward addressing such priorities,  
15 summarizing reports from each committee and subcommittee of the  
16 commission, and making recommendations of its activities during the  
17 previous year on or before December 1, 2015. If the commission is  
18 continued by the Legislature as provided in section 43-4202, the  
19 commission shall provide such report on or before September 1 of each  
20 year the commission is continued. The commission shall present a summary  
21 of such report in an annual public hearing before the Health and Human  
22 Services Committee of the Legislature on or before December 1 of each  
23 year.

24       Sec. 9. Section 43-4216, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
25 amended to read:

26       43-4216 (1) The ~~On or before January 1, 2016, the Nebraska~~  
27 ~~Children's Commission shall appoint a Foster Care Reimbursement Rate~~  
28 ~~Committee is created. The committee shall be convened at least once~~  
29 ~~commission shall reconvene the Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee~~  
30 ~~every four years thereafter.~~

31       (2) The Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee shall consist of no

1 fewer than nine members, including:

2 (a) The following voting members: (i) Representatives from a child  
3 welfare agency that contracts directly with foster parents, from each of  
4 the service areas designated pursuant to section 81-3116; (ii) a  
5 representative from an advocacy organization which deals with legal and  
6 policy issues that include child welfare; (iii) a representative from an  
7 advocacy organization, the singular focus of which is issues impacting  
8 children; (iv) a representative from a foster and adoptive parent  
9 association; (v) a representative from a lead agency; (vi) a  
10 representative from a child advocacy organization that supports young  
11 adults who were in foster care as children; (vii) a foster parent who  
12 contracts directly with the Department of Health and Human Services; and  
13 (viii) a foster parent who contracts with a child welfare agency; and

14 (b) The following nonvoting, ex officio members: (i) The chief  
15 executive officer of the Department of Health and Human Services or his  
16 or her designee and (ii) representatives from the Division of Children  
17 and Family Services of the department from each service area designated  
18 pursuant to section 81-3116, including at least one division employee  
19 with a thorough understanding of the current foster care payment system  
20 and at least one division employee with a thorough understanding of the  
21 N-FOCUS electronic data collection system. The nonvoting, ex officio  
22 members of the committee may attend committee meetings and participate in  
23 discussions of the committee and shall gather and provide information to  
24 the committee on the policies, programs, and processes of each of their  
25 respective bodies. The nonvoting, ex officio members shall not vote on  
26 decisions or recommendations by the committee.

27 (3) Members of the committee shall serve for terms of four years and  
28 until their successors are appointed and qualified. The Nebraska  
29 Children's Commission shall appoint the members of the committee and the  
30 chairperson of the committee and may fill vacancies on the committee as  
31 they occur. ~~If the Nebraska Children's Commission has terminated, such~~



1 ~~appointments shall be made and vacancies filled by the Governor with the~~  
2 ~~approval of a majority of the Legislature.~~

3 Sec. 10. Section 43-4217, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
4 amended to read:

5 43-4217 (1) The Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee created in  
6 ~~appointed~~ pursuant to section 43-4216 shall review and make  
7 recommendations in the following areas: Foster care reimbursement rates,  
8 the statewide standardized level of care assessment, and adoption  
9 assistance payments as required by section 43-117. In making  
10 recommendations to the Legislature, the committee shall use the then-  
11 current foster care reimbursement rates as the beginning standard for  
12 setting reimbursement rates. The committee shall adjust the standard to  
13 reflect the reasonable cost of achieving measurable outcomes for all  
14 children in foster care in Nebraska. The committee shall (a) analyze  
15 then-current consumer expenditure data reflecting the costs of caring for  
16 a child in Nebraska, (b) identify and account for additional costs  
17 specific to children in foster care, and (c) apply a geographic cost-of-  
18 living adjustment for Nebraska. The reimbursement rate structure shall  
19 comply with funding requirements related to Title IV-E of the federal  
20 Social Security Act, as amended, and other federal programs as  
21 appropriate to maximize the utilization of federal funds to support  
22 foster care.

23 (2) The committee shall review the role and effectiveness of and  
24 make recommendations on the statewide standardized level of care  
25 assessment containing standardized criteria to determine a foster child's  
26 placement needs and to identify the appropriate foster care reimbursement  
27 rate. The committee shall review other states' assessment models and  
28 foster care reimbursement rate structures in completing the statewide  
29 standardized level of care assessment review and the standard statewide  
30 foster care reimbursement rate structure. The committee shall ensure the  
31 statewide standardized level of care assessment and the standard

1 statewide foster care reimbursement rate structure provide incentives to  
2 tie performance in achieving the goals of safety, maintaining family  
3 connection, permanency, stability, and well-being to reimbursements  
4 received. The committee shall review and make recommendations on  
5 assistance payments to adoptive parents as required by section 43-117.  
6 The committee shall make recommendations to ensure that changes in foster  
7 care reimbursement rates do not become a disincentive to permanency.

8 ~~(3) The committee may organize subcommittees as it deems necessary.~~  
9 ~~Members of the subcommittees may be members of the committee or may be~~  
10 ~~appointed, with the approval of the majority of the committee, from~~  
11 ~~individuals with knowledge of the subcommittee's subject matter,~~  
12 ~~professional expertise to assist the subcommittee in completing its~~  
13 ~~assigned responsibilities, and the ability to collaborate within the~~  
14 ~~subcommittee.~~

15 (3) (4) The Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee shall provide  
16 electronic reports with its recommendation to the Health and Human  
17 Services Committee of the Legislature on July 1, 2016, and every four  
18 years thereafter.

19 Sec. 11. Section 43-4504, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
20 amended to read:

21 43-4504 The bridge to independence program is available, on a  
22 voluntary basis, to a young adult:

23 (1) Who has attained at least nineteen years of age;

24 (2) Who was adjudicated to be a juvenile described in subdivision

25 (3)(a) of section 43-247 or the equivalent under tribal law or who was  
26 adjudicated to be a juvenile described in subdivision (8) of section

27 43-247 or the equivalent under tribal law if the young adult's  
28 guardianship or state-funded adoption assistance agreement was disrupted

29 or terminated after he or she had attained the age of sixteen years and  
30 who (a) upon attaining nineteen years of age, was in an out-of-home

31 placement or had been discharged to independent living or (b) with

1 respect to whom a kinship guardianship assistance agreement or an  
2 adoption assistance agreement was in effect pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 673 if  
3 the young adult had attained sixteen years of age before the agreement  
4 became effective or with respect to whom a state-funded guardianship  
5 assistance agreement or a state-funded adoption assistance agreement was  
6 in effect if the young adult had attained sixteen years of age before the  
7 agreement became effective;~~and~~

8 (3) Who is:

9 (a) Completing secondary education or an educational program leading  
10 to an equivalent credential;

11 (b) Enrolled in an institution which provides postsecondary or  
12 vocational education;

13 (c) Employed for at least eighty hours per month;

14 (d) Participating in a program or activity designed to promote  
15 employment or remove barriers to employment; or

16 (e) Incapable of doing any of the activities described in  
17 subdivisions (3)(a) through (d) of this section due to a medical  
18 condition, which incapacity is supported by regularly updated information  
19 in the case plan of the young adult; ~~or~~

20 (4) Who is a Nebraska resident, except that this requirement shall  
21 not disqualify a young adult who was a Nebraska resident but was placed  
22 outside Nebraska pursuant to the Interstate Compact for the Placement of  
23 Children; and

24 (5) Who does not meet the level of care for a nursing facility as  
25 defined in section 71-424, for a skilled nursing facility as defined in  
26 section 71-429, or for an intermediate care facility for persons with  
27 developmental disabilities as defined in section 71-421.

28 The changes made to subdivision (2)(b) of this section by Laws 2015,  
29 LB243, become operative on July 1, 2015.

30 Sec. 12. Section 43-4508, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
31 amended to read:

1           43-4508 (1) Within fifteen days after the voluntary services and  
2 support agreement is signed, the department shall file a petition with  
3 the juvenile court describing the young adult's current situation,  
4 including the young adult's name, date of birth, and current address and  
5 the reasons why it is in the young adult's best interests to participate  
6 in the bridge to independence program. The department shall also provide  
7 the juvenile court with a copy of the signed voluntary services and  
8 support agreement, a copy of the case plan, and any other information the  
9 department or the young adult wants the court to consider.

10           (2) The department shall ensure continuity of care and eligibility  
11 by working with a child who wants to participate in the bridge to  
12 independence program and is likely to be eligible to participate in such  
13 program immediately following the termination of the juvenile court's  
14 jurisdiction pursuant to subdivision (3)(a) of section 43-247 or  
15 subdivision (8) of section 43-247 if the young adult's guardianship or  
16 state-funded adoption assistance agreement was disrupted or terminated  
17 after he or she had attained the age of sixteen years. The voluntary  
18 services and support agreement shall be signed and the petition filed  
19 with the court upon the child's nineteenth birthday or within ten days  
20 thereafter. There shall be no interruption in the foster care maintenance  
21 payment and medical assistance coverage for a child who is eligible and  
22 chooses to participate in the bridge to independence program immediately  
23 following the termination of the juvenile court's jurisdiction pursuant  
24 to ~~such~~ subdivision (3)(a) of section 43-247.

25           (3) The court has the jurisdiction to review the voluntary services  
26 and support agreement signed by the department and the young adult under  
27 section 43-4506 and to conduct permanency reviews as described in this  
28 section. Upon the filing of a petition under subsection (1) of this  
29 section, the court shall open a bridge to independence program file for  
30 the young adult for the purpose of determining whether continuing in such  
31 program is in the young adult's best interests and for the purpose of

1 conducting permanency reviews.

2 (4) The court shall make the best interests determination as  
3 described in subsection (3) of this section not later than one hundred  
4 eighty days after the young adult and the department enter into the  
5 voluntary services and support agreement.

6 (5) The court shall conduct a hearing for permanency review  
7 consistent with 42 U.S.C. 675(5)(C) as described in subsection (6) of  
8 this section regarding the voluntary services and support agreement at  
9 least once per year and may conduct such hearing at additional times, but  
10 not more times than is reasonably practicable, at the request of the  
11 young adult, the department, or any other party to the proceeding. The  
12 court shall make a reasonable effort finding required by subdivision (6)  
13 (c) of this section within twelve months after the court makes its best  
14 interests determination under subsection (4) of this section. Upon the  
15 filing of the petition as provided in subsection (1) of this section or  
16 anytime thereafter, the young adult may request, in the voluntary  
17 services and support agreement or by other appropriate means, a timeframe  
18 in which the young adult prefers to have the permanency review hearing  
19 scheduled and the court shall seek to accommodate the request as  
20 practicable and consistent with 42 U.S.C. 675(5)(C). The juvenile court  
21 may request the appointment of a hearing officer pursuant to section  
22 24-230 to conduct permanency review hearings. The department is not  
23 required to have legal counsel present at such hearings. The juvenile  
24 court shall conduct the permanency reviews in an expedited manner and  
25 shall issue findings and orders, if any, as speedily as possible.

26 (6)(a) The primary purpose of the permanency review is to ensure  
27 that the bridge to independence program is providing the young adult with  
28 the needed services and support to help the young adult move toward  
29 permanency and self-sufficiency. This shall include that, in all  
30 permanency reviews or hearings regarding the transition of the young  
31 adult from foster care to independent living, the court shall consult, in

1 an age-appropriate manner, with the young adult regarding the proposed  
2 permanency or transition plan for the young adult. The young adult shall  
3 have a clear self-advocacy role in the permanency review in accordance  
4 with section 43-4510, and the hearing shall support the active engagement  
5 of the young adult in key decisions. Permanency reviews shall be  
6 conducted on the record and in an informal manner and, whenever possible,  
7 outside of the courtroom.

8 (b) The department shall prepare and present to the juvenile court a  
9 report, at the direction of the young adult, addressing progress made in  
10 meeting the goals in the case plan, including the independent living  
11 transition proposal, and shall propose modifications as necessary to  
12 further those goals.

13 (c) The court shall determine whether the bridge to independence  
14 program is providing the appropriate services and support as provided in  
15 the voluntary services and support agreement to carry out the case plan.  
16 The court shall also determine whether reasonable efforts have been made  
17 to achieve the permanency goal as set forth in the case plan and the  
18 department's report provided under subdivision (6)(b) of this section.  
19 The court shall issue specific written findings regarding such reasonable  
20 efforts. The court has the authority to determine whether the young adult  
21 is receiving the services and support he or she is entitled to receive  
22 under the Young Adult Bridge to Independence Act and the department's  
23 policies or state or federal law to help the young adult move toward  
24 permanency and self-sufficiency. If the court believes that the young  
25 adult requires additional services and support to achieve the goals  
26 documented in the case plan or under the Young Adult Bridge to  
27 Independence Act and the department's policies or state or federal law,  
28 the court may make appropriate findings or order the department to take  
29 action to ensure that the young adult receives the identified services  
30 and support.

31 (7) All pleadings, filings, documents, and reports filed pursuant to

1 this section and subdivision (11) of section 43-247 shall be  
2 confidential. The proceedings pursuant to this section and subdivision  
3 (11) of section 43-247 shall be confidential unless a young adult  
4 provides a written waiver or a verbal waiver in court. Such waiver may be  
5 made by the young adult in order to permit the proceedings to be held  
6 outside of the courtroom or for any other reason. The Foster Care Review  
7 Office shall have access to any and all pleadings, filings, documents,  
8 reports, and proceedings necessary to complete its case review process.  
9 This section shall not prevent the juvenile court from issuing an order  
10 identifying individuals and agencies who shall be allowed to receive  
11 otherwise confidential information for legitimate and official purposes  
12 as authorized by section 43-3001.

13 Sec. 13. Section 43-4511.01, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska,  
14 is amended to read:

15 43-4511.01 (1)(a) ~~(1)~~ Young adults who are eligible to participate  
16 under both extended guardianship assistance as provided in section  
17 43-4511 and the bridge to independence program as provided in subdivision  
18 (2)(b) of section 43-4504 may choose to participate in either program.

19 (b) Young adults who are eligible to participate under both extended  
20 adoption assistance as provided in section 43-4512 and the bridge to  
21 independence program as provided in subdivision (2)(b) of section 43-4504  
22 may choose to participate in either program.

23 (2) The department shall create a clear and developmentally  
24 appropriate written notice discussing the rights of young adults who are  
25 eligible under both extended guardianship assistance and the bridge to  
26 independence program and a notice for young adults who are eligible under  
27 both extended adoption assistance and the bridge to independence program.

28 The notice shall explain the benefits and responsibilities and the  
29 process to apply. The department shall provide the written notice and  
30 make efforts to provide a verbal explanation to a young adult with  
31 respect to whom a kinship guardianship assistance agreement or an

1 adoption assistance agreement was in effect pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 673 if  
2 the young adult had attained sixteen years of age before the agreement  
3 became effective or with respect to whom a state-funded guardianship  
4 assistance agreement or state-funded adoption assistance agreement was in  
5 effect if the young adult had attained sixteen years of age before the  
6 agreement became effective. The department shall provide the notice  
7 yearly thereafter until such young adult reaches nineteen years of age  
8 and not later than ninety days prior to the young adult attaining  
9 nineteen years of age.

10 Sec. 14. Section 43-4513, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,  
11 2018, is amended to read:

12 43-4513 (1) ~~The On or before July 1, 2013, the Nebraska Children's~~  
13 ~~Commission shall appoint a Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee is~~  
14 created within the Nebraska Children's Commission to advise and make  
15 recommendations to the Legislature department and the Nebraska Children's  
16 Commission regarding ongoing implementation of the bridge to independence  
17 program, extended guardianship assistance described in section 43-4511,  
18 and extended adoption assistance described in section 43-4512. The Bridge  
19 to Independence Advisory Committee shall ~~meet on a biannual basis to~~  
20 ~~advise the department and the Nebraska Children's Commission regarding~~  
21 ~~ongoing implementation of the bridge to independence program, extended~~  
22 ~~guardianship assistance described in section 43-4511, and extended~~  
23 ~~adoption assistance described in section 43-4512 and shall provide a~~  
24 written report regarding ongoing implementation, including participation  
25 in the bridge to independence program, extended guardianship assistance  
26 described in section 43-4511, and extended adoption assistance described  
27 in section 43-4512 and early discharge rates and reasons obtained from  
28 the department, to the Nebraska Children's Commission, the Health and  
29 Human Services Committee of the Legislature, the department, and the  
30 Governor by September 1 of each year. ~~By December 15, 2015, the committee~~  
31 ~~shall develop specific recommendations for expanding to or improving~~



1 ~~outcomes for similar groups of at-risk young adults.~~ The report to the  
2 Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature shall be submitted  
3 electronically.

4 (2) The members of the Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee  
5 shall include, but not be limited to, (a) representatives from all three  
6 branches of government, and the representatives from the legislative and  
7 judicial branches of government shall be nonvoting, ex officio members,  
8 (b) no less than three young adults currently or previously in foster  
9 care, which may be filled on a rotating basis by members of Project  
10 Everlast or a similar youth support or advocacy group, (c) one or more  
11 representatives from a child welfare advocacy organization, (d) one or  
12 more representatives from a child welfare service agency, and (e) one or  
13 more representatives from an agency providing independent living  
14 services.

15 (3) Members of the committee shall be appointed for terms of two  
16 years. The Nebraska Children's Commission shall appoint the chairperson  
17 of the committee and may fill vacancies on the committee as they occur.

18 Sec. 15. Section 43-4514, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
19 amended to read:

20 43-4514 (1) The department shall submit an amended state plan  
21 amendment by October 15, 2019 ~~2015~~, to seek federal Title IV-E funding  
22 under 42 U.S.C. 672 for any newly eligible young adult who was  
23 adjudicated to be a juvenile described in subdivision (8) of section  
24 43-247 if such young adult's guardianship or state-funded adoption  
25 assistance agreement was disrupted or terminated after the young adult  
26 had attained the age of sixteen years and for any newly eligible young  
27 adult ~~adults~~ with respect to whom an adoption ~~a kinship guardianship~~  
28 assistance agreement was in effect pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 673 if the child  
29 had attained sixteen years of age before the agreement became effective  
30 or with respect to whom a state-funded adoption guardianship ~~adoption~~ assistance  
31 agreement was in effect if the child had attained sixteen years of age

1 before the agreement became effective pursuant to subdivision (2)(b) of  
2 section 43-4504.

3 (2) The department shall implement the bridge to independence  
4 program, extended guardianship assistance described in section 43-4511,  
5 and extended adoption assistance described in section 43-4512 in  
6 accordance with the federal Fostering Connections to Success and  
7 Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, 42 U.S.C. 673 and 42 U.S.C. 675(8)(B)  
8 and in accordance with requirements necessary to obtain federal Title IV-  
9 E funding under 42 U.S.C. 672 and 42 U.S.C. 673.

10 (3) The department shall adopt and promulgate rules and regulations  
11 as needed to carry out this section by October 15, 2015.

12 (4) All references to the United States Code in the Young Adult  
13 Bridge to Independence Act refer to sections of the code as such sections  
14 existed on January 1, 2015.

15 Sec. 16. Section 43-4701, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,  
16 2018, is amended to read:

17 43-4701 Sections 43-4701 to 43-4715 and section 17 of this act shall  
18 be known and may be cited as the Nebraska Strengthening Families Act.

19 Sec. 17. Section 43-4218, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,  
20 2018, is amended to read:

21 ~~43-4218 (1) (1)(a) The Normalcy Task Force is created. On July 1,~~  
22 ~~2017, the Normalcy Task Force shall become the Nebraska Strengthening~~  
23 ~~Families Act Committee is created.~~

24 ~~(b)(i) Beginning July 1, 2016, until July 1, 2017, the Normalcy Task~~  
25 ~~Force shall monitor and make recommendations regarding the implementation~~  
26 ~~in Nebraska of the federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening~~  
27 ~~Families Act, Public Law 113-183, as such act existed on January 1, 2016.~~

28 ~~(2) The (ii) On and after July 1, 2017, the Nebraska Strengthening~~  
29 ~~Families Act Committee shall monitor and make recommendations regarding~~  
30 ~~the implementation in Nebraska of the federal Preventing Sex Trafficking~~  
31 ~~and Strengthening Families Act, Public Law 113-183, as such act existed~~

1 on January 1, 2017, and the Nebraska Strengthening Families Act.

2 ~~(3) The (2) Until July 1, 2017, the members of the task force, and~~  
3 ~~on and after July 1, 2017, the members of the committee shall include,~~  
4 but not be limited to, (a) representatives from the legislative,  
5 executive, and judicial branches of government. The representatives from  
6 the legislative and judicial branches shall be nonvoting, ex officio  
7 members, (b) no fewer than three young adults currently or previously in  
8 foster care which may be filled on a rotating basis by members of Project  
9 Everlast or a similar youth support or advocacy group, (c) a  
10 representative from the juvenile probation system, (d) the executive  
11 director of the Foster Care Review Office, (e) one or more  
12 representatives from a child welfare advocacy organization, (f) one or  
13 more representatives from a child welfare service agency, (g) one or more  
14 representatives from an agency providing independent living services, (h)  
15 one or more representatives of a child-care institution as defined in  
16 section 43-4703, (i) one or more current or former foster parents, (j)  
17 one or more parents who have experience in the foster care system, (k)  
18 one or more professionals who have relevant practical experience such as  
19 a caseworker, and (l) one or more guardians ad litem who practice in  
20 juvenile court.

21 ~~(4) (3) On or before July 1, 2016, the Nebraska Children's~~  
22 ~~Commission shall appoint the members of the task force. On July 1, 2017,~~  
23 ~~the members of the task force shall become members of the committee,~~  
24 ~~shall serve the amount of time remaining on their initial terms of~~  
25 ~~office, and are eligible for reappointment by the Nebraska Children's~~  
26 ~~Commission.~~ Members shall be appointed for terms of two years. The  
27 Nebraska Children's Commission ~~commission~~ shall appoint a chairperson or  
28 chairpersons of the committee and may fill vacancies on the committee as  
29 such vacancies occur.

30 (5) (4) The committee shall provide a written report with  
31 recommendations regarding the initial and ongoing implementation of the

1 federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, as  
2 such act existed on January 1, 2017, and the Nebraska Strengthening  
3 Families Act and related efforts to improve normalcy for children in  
4 foster care and related populations to the Nebraska Children's  
5 Commission, the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature,  
6 the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Governor by  
7 September 1 of each year. The report to the Health and Human Services  
8 Committee of the Legislature shall be submitted electronically.

9 Sec. 18. Section 68-1212, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
10 amended to read:

11 68-1212 (1) Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, ~~by~~  
12 ~~April 1, 2012,~~ for all cases in which a court has awarded a juvenile to  
13 the care of the Department of Health and Human Services according to  
14 subsection (1) of section 43-285 and for any noncourt and voluntary  
15 cases, the case manager shall be an employee of the department. Such case  
16 manager shall be responsible for and shall directly oversee: Case  
17 planning; service authorization; investigation of compliance; monitoring  
18 and evaluation of the care and services provided to children and  
19 families; and decisionmaking regarding the determination of visitation  
20 and the care, placement, medical services, psychiatric services,  
21 training, and expenditures on behalf of each juvenile under subsection  
22 (1) of section 43-285. Such case manager shall be responsible for  
23 decisionmaking and direct preparation regarding the proposed plan for the  
24 care, placement, services, and permanency of the juvenile filed with the  
25 court required under subsection (2) of section 43-285. The health and  
26 safety of the juvenile shall be the paramount concern in the proposed  
27 plan in accordance with such subsection.

28 (2) The department may contract with a lead agency for a case  
29 management lead agency model pilot project in the department's eastern  
30 service area as designated pursuant to section 81-3116. The department  
31 shall include in the pilot project the appropriate conditions,

1 performance outcomes, and oversight for the lead agency, including, but  
2 not be limited to:

3 (a) The reporting and survey requirements of lead agencies described  
4 in sections 43-4406 and 43-4407;

5 (b) Departmental monitoring and functional capacities of lead  
6 agencies described in section 43-4408;

7 (c) The key areas of evaluation specified in subsection (3) of  
8 section 43-4409;

9 (d) Compliance and coordination with the ~~development of the~~  
10 ~~statewide strategic plan for child welfare priorities determined by the~~  
11 ~~Nebraska Children's Commission as provided in section 43-4204 program and~~  
12 ~~service reform pursuant to Laws 2012, LB821; and~~

13 (e) Assurance of financial accountability and reporting by the lead  
14 agency.

15 (3) A lead agency contracted to provide community-based care for  
16 children and families shall: Before June 30, 2014, the department may  
17 extend the contract for the pilot project described in subsection (2) of  
18 this section. The lead agency shall also comply with the requirements of  
19 section 43-4204.

20 (a) Have a board of directors of which at least fifty-one percent of  
21 the membership is comprised of Nebraska residents who are not employed by  
22 the lead agency or by a subcontractor of the lead agency;

23 (b) Complete a readiness assessment as developed by the Department  
24 of Health and Human Services to determine the lead agency's viability.  
25 The readiness assessment shall evaluate organizational, operational, and  
26 programmatic capabilities and performance, including review of: The  
27 strength of the board of directors; compliance and oversight; financial  
28 risk management; financial liquidity and performance; infrastructure  
29 maintenance; funding sources, including state, federal, and external  
30 private funding; and operations, including reporting, staffing,  
31 evaluation, training, supervision, contract monitoring, and program

1 performance tracking capabilities;

2 (c) Have the ability to provide directly or by contract through a  
3 local network of providers the services required of a lead agency. A lead  
4 agency shall not directly provide more than thirty-five percent of direct  
5 services required under the contract; and

6 (d) Provide accountability for meeting the outcomes and performance  
7 standards related to child welfare services established by Nebraska child  
8 welfare policy and the federal government.

9 Sec. 19. Section 81-8,244, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,  
10 2018, is amended to read:

11 81-8,244 (1)(a) The Public Counsel may select, appoint, and  
12 compensate as he or she sees fit, within the amount available by  
13 appropriation, such assistants and employees as he or she deems necessary  
14 to discharge the responsibilities under sections 81-8,240 to 81-8,254. He  
15 or she shall appoint and designate one assistant to be a deputy public  
16 counsel, one assistant to be a deputy public counsel for corrections, one  
17 assistant to be a deputy public counsel for institutions, and one  
18 assistant to be a deputy public counsel for welfare services.

19 (b) Such deputy public counsels shall be subject to the control and  
20 supervision of the Public Counsel.

21 (c) The authority of the deputy public counsel for corrections shall  
22 extend to all facilities and parts of facilities, offices, houses of  
23 confinement, and institutions which are operated by the Department of  
24 Correctional Services and all county or municipal correctional or jail  
25 facilities.

26 (d) The authority of the deputy public counsel for institutions  
27 shall extend to all mental health ~~and veterans~~ institutions and  
28 facilities operated by the Department of Health and Human Services, to  
29 all veterans institutions operated by the Department of Veterans'  
30 Affairs, and to all regional behavioral health authorities that provide  
31 services and all community-based behavioral health services providers

1 that contract with a regional behavioral health authority to provide  
2 services, for any individual who was a patient within the prior twenty-  
3 four ~~twelve~~ months of a state-owned and state-operated regional center,  
4 and to all complaints pertaining to administrative acts of the  
5 department, authority, or provider when those acts are concerned with the  
6 rights and interests of individuals placed within those institutions and  
7 facilities or receiving community-based behavioral health services.

8 (e) The authority of the deputy public counsel for welfare services  
9 shall extend to all complaints pertaining to administrative acts of  
10 administrative agencies when those acts are concerned with the rights and  
11 interests of individuals involved in the welfare services system of the  
12 State of Nebraska.

13 (f) The Public Counsel may delegate to members of the staff any  
14 authority or duty under sections 81-8,240 to 81-8,254 except the power of  
15 delegation and the duty of formally making recommendations to  
16 administrative agencies or reports to the Governor or the Legislature.

17 (2) The Public Counsel shall appoint the Inspector General of  
18 Nebraska Child Welfare as provided in section 43-4317. The Inspector  
19 General of Nebraska Child Welfare shall have the powers and duties  
20 provided in the Office of Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare  
21 Act.

22 (3) The Public Counsel shall appoint the Inspector General of the  
23 Nebraska Correctional System as provided in section 47-904. The Inspector  
24 General of the Nebraska Correctional System shall have the powers and  
25 duties provided in the Office of Inspector General of the Nebraska  
26 Correctional System Act.

27 Sec. 20. This act becomes operative on July 1, 2019.

28 Sec. 21. Original sections 43-1311.03, 43-4201, 43-4202, 43-4204,  
29 43-4206, 43-4216, 43-4217, 43-4504, 43-4508, 43-4511.01, 43-4514, and  
30 68-1212, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and sections 43-285,  
31 43-4203, 43-4207, 43-4218, 43-4513, 43-4701, and 81-8,244, Revised

1 Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2018, are repealed.

2       Sec. 22. The following sections are outright repealed: Sections  
3 43-4205, 43-4208, 43-4209, 43-4210, 43-4211, 43-4213, and 43-4214,  
4 Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska.

5       Sec. 23. Since an emergency exists, this act takes effect when  
6 passed and approved according to law.