

**DOUGLAS COUNTY**  
**Juvenile Services**  
**Comprehensive Community Plan**  
**July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2030**

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## Section I: Executive Summary

*Provide a brief (no more than two pages) summary of the need analysis, priorities identified, and strategies to be put in place.*

Douglas County is located centrally on the eastern border of Nebraska. The city of Omaha falls largely in Douglas County. Other cities, towns or villages in the county include (all or parts of): Bennington, Valley, Ralston, Waterloo, and Boys Town. The child population (under 19 years) in Douglas County includes 163,082 youth. The number of 10-19-year-old youth is 81,659. It is the most heavily populated area of state, representing approximately 30% of the total state population. The county is considered 98% urban, 2% rural. According to the 2022 U.S. Census Bureau: Within Douglas County, the overall population identifies as 68% White; 11% Black or African American; 1% American Indian; 5% Asian; 9% Two or more Races and 6% Other. The Hispanic or Latino population is 14%.

Much of the work Douglas County has undertaken since the 2021-2025 Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan was written has been guided by Kakar's (2006, p. 378) study of factors that contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system (see "Attachment E"). She identified six key findings: (1) system factors; (2) social factors; (3) family/parental factors; (4) education factors; (5) individual factors; and (6) economic factors; data from local sources illustrates the prevalence of each of these factors in Douglas County, especially in our communities of color. Local data included in the plan narrative details the extent to which these factors are prevalent throughout Douglas County.

Douglas County has commissioned multiple studies since 2021 (i.e., Douglas County Environmental Scan, The BRIDGE Community Survey, and focus groups with parents of youth violence victims and perpetrators) and reviewed available data on youth at each point in the juvenile justice system to examine Kakar's (2006) factors. Through these reviews, we identified four key domains that were present in virtually every source: mental/behavioral health, school attendance, supportive peer/family relationships, and prosocial activities.

During the summer of 2024, Douglas County Juvenile Services hosted a series of three Community Forum meetings to allow community members to provide their input on the priority areas for this Community Plan. These meetings were held on June 22, 2024, at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in South Omaha; July 20, 2024, at Metropolitan Community College in North Omaha; and on August 10, 2024, at Concord Mediation Center in West Central Omaha. A total of 104 individuals attended the three meetings. An online survey was also available through September 30, 2024 to collect feedback from those unable to attend the in-person meetings; an additional 14 provided input through this format. Meeting attendees and survey respondents represented community-based providers, interested members of the public, youth and family members with lived experience, governmental agencies, funders, and school districts, among others. In all formats, members of the public were provided information about the domains of mental/behavioral health, school attendance, supportive peer and family relationships, and prosocial activities, based on available juvenile justice system data and findings from studies in the community. The feedback provided by 103 (87%) of these community

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## Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)

members reinforced findings that the four domains listed above are the most important needs areas in Douglas County.

For each domain, participants were asked to rate each of the following barriers to service delivery on a scale from one (not an issue) to ten (extreme barrier): availability, accessibility, capacity, quality, cultural and gender competency, and funding adequacy. Participants were also afforded the opportunity to provide additional feedback on other domains they believed may be of importance and barriers related to adequate service provision. The activities proposed under this community plan are intended to serve pre-adjudicated youth in culturally-appropriate and trauma-informed ways that focus on positive youth development and mitigate barriers related to mental/behavioral health, school attendance, supportive peer and family relationships, and prosocial activities.

## Section II: Introduction

### Community Team: Background, Formation, and Purpose

**Description of Team:** Douglas County Community Team is comprised of the Juvenile Justice Stewardship Group. A list of the members can be found in Appendix “A”.

**Description of the Planning Process:** The Juvenile Justice Stewardship Group meets on a quarterly basis. The Douglas County Data Administrator further prepares monthly and quarterly reports regarding our youth in detention, youth receiving services at the Juvenile Assessment Center, monthly data from all federal and state funded community programs and information from our community forums. Douglas County also contracted with an independent evaluator to complete a Community Assessment in 2022 (Appendix “B”). During the summer of 2024, Douglas County conducted three Community Forums. One located in North Omaha, one in South Omaha and one in West Omaha to hear from the community as to their needs with regard to the juvenile justice system. All of this information was used to complete the Douglas County Juvenile Services Community Plan 2025-2030.

**List of Team Members/Contributors** (title, address, phone numbers, email): See attached list of all of the community members involved in the planning process (Appendix “C”).

### Community Description

#### Geographic:

Douglas County is located centrally on the eastern border of Nebraska. The entire eastern edge of the county is bordered by the Missouri River, forming a natural state line boundary with Iowa. The county spans an area of 326.5 square miles and contains a population of 584,526 according to the 2020 Census Population Program. The child population (under 19 years) includes 163,082 youth. The number of 10-19-year-old youth is 81,659. It is the most heavily populated area of state, representing approximately 30% of the total state population. The county is considered 98% urban, 2% rural.

The city of Omaha falls largely in Douglas County. Other cities, towns or villages in the county include (all or parts of): Bennington, Valley, Ralston, Waterloo, and Boys Town. Douglas County is a part of the Greater Omaha Metropolitan Area, which also includes the mostly urban Nebraska counties of Sarpy (including Offutt Air Force Base, Bellevue, LaVista, Papillion, Gretna, and Springfield), Cass, Saunders and Washington, as well as Hamilton, Pottawattamie (Council Bluffs, Iowa), and Mills counties in Iowa. While citizens comprising the metro population statistics may reside in the bordering counties, many of these individuals either work, attend school, visit, or travel through Douglas County daily.

#### Population Details:

According to the 2022 U.S. Census Bureau: Within Douglas County, the overall population identifies as 68% White; 11% Black or African American; 1% American Indian; 5% Asian; 9% Two or more Races and 6% Other. The Hispanic or Latino population is 14%.

**Transportation:**

Douglas County is the central portion of what is considered to be the Greater Omaha Metropolitan Area. U.S. Interstate Highways 29 and 80 intersect Douglas County, and four U.S. and eight state highways converge in the area. Eppley Airfield is Omaha’s major regional airport, and served over 4.6 million passengers in 2018. Metropolitan Area Transit (MAT) also provides bus transportation to 85% of the Omaha area. Omaha is one of the largest rail centers in the U.S, including being the home of Union Pacific headquarters. Public transportation is not heavily used in Douglas County, with only 1.3% of the population using it to commute to work (compared to 5.1% in the US). However, the average commute time is 19.2 minutes – less than the US average of 26.1 minutes.

**Economics:**

According to the 2022 U.S. Census Bureau, the median household income was \$77,457. 10.2% of the population as a whole, and 14% of children under 18 years old live below the poverty level. Douglas County is home to the headquarters of four Fortune 500 companies (Berkshire Hathaway, Union Pacific, Peter Kiewit Sons, Inc., and Mutual of Omaha), and five additional Fortune 1000 companies (Valmont Industries, Green Plains, Inc., TD Ameritrade, West Corporation, and Werner Enterprises).

**Educational Opportunities:**

Within Douglas County, there are seven public school districts, which all fall within an eleven-district Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties. National Center of Education 2022-23 Statistics: Omaha Public Schools is the largest district with 51,693 students; Millard Public Schools with 23,300 students; followed by Elkhorn Public with 11,455 students; Westside Public with 6,319 students; Ralston Public with 3,409 students; Bennington Public with 2,931 students; and Douglas County West with 970 students. The largest district, Omaha Public Schools, reported a 70.4% 4-year high school graduation rate and a 4% dropout rate in the 2022-23 school year.

**Section III: Analysis of Juvenile Delinquency Problems (Youth Crime) and Needs**

**Overview of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention System**

Lancaster County was awarded the OJJDP FY2019 Nonparticipating States grant funding for Nebraska in a collaborative effort with the Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ), and contracted with the University of Nebraska at Omaha Juvenile Justice Institute (UNO-JJI) to work collaboratively with the NCJJ to lead that project. As part of that work, they put together a comprehensive State Profile document, that has been updated by Douglas County under their awards of the FY2020/2021 and FY2022 Nonparticipating States grants. This document is attached as “Appendix D,” and describes Nebraska’s Juvenile Justice System Structure and Process, to include: law enforcement, diversion, probation, detention, courts, county attorneys, juvenile defense, Department of Health and Human Services,

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## Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)

Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility, Office of Inspector General for Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice, community-based service continuum, non-therapeutic services, and therapeutic services.

### **Risk Factors and Local Statistical Data:**

Much of the work Douglas County has undertaken since the 2021-2025 Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan was written has been guided by Kakar’s (2006, p. 378) study of factors that contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system (see “Attachment E”). She identified six key findings: (1) system factors; (2) social factors; (3) family/parental factors; (4) education factors; (5) individual factors; and (6) economic factors; data from local sources illustrates the prevalence of each of these factors in Douglas County, especially in our communities of color.

#### **System Factors:**

System factors that result in disproportionate minority contact “include bias, lack of alternatives to arrest, inadequate resources, inequitable access to adequate legal representation, inequitable access to programs in the community, and higher police presence” (Kakar, 2006, p. 378). It is important to note that youth in Douglas County do commit serious crimes, some on multiple occasions, and such offenses warrant formal justice system interventions. The following data points are key to Douglas County’s 2025-2030 Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan:

#### Arrests:

Data from the Omaha Police Department (OPD) show an average of 426 juveniles were arrested for felony offenses each year between 2017 and August 31, 2024. Despite reductions in juvenile felony arrests in 2020 and 2021, arrests for 2022 and 2023 were comparable to pre-pandemic levels. Of particular importance in this data are the numbers of youth with five or more felony arrests, which have increased nearly every year since 2017. OPD arrested 12 such youth in 2017; this number increased to 28 during 2021, and to 36 during 2023.

Furthermore, there has been a simultaneous increase in the number of youths arrested for felony gun charges. Since 2019, over 21% of the youth with felony arrests each year have firearms-related charges; around 10% have been arrested for felony gun-related charges at least three times. Although the raw numbers are relatively low, they highlight the existence of a small group of youth who likely have extremely high needs and/or are likely responsible for the majority of serious events that are occurring in the community.

#### Diversion:

The Douglas County Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC) assessed 1,001 youth during 2023; 71% were youth of color, and 57% were male. Approximately one-third of these referrals came from just three of Douglas County’s 36 zip codes (68111 and 68104 in North Omaha, and 68107 in South Omaha) that have high rates of crime and victimization, are comprised primarily of neighborhoods of color, and are communities that have been historically marginalized and underserved. Around 49% of the youth assessed came from households with incomes under \$40,000. Slightly over half of youth referred had charges related to shoplifting, assault, disorderly conduct, or obstruction.

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## Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)

In order to determine which services are best suited for youth recommended for diversion, the JAC administers the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) to assess their criminogenic risks and needs. For youth assessed during 2023, 45% had an overall composite score of moderate, high, or very high. With regard to individual domains, about two-thirds of youth or more scored moderate or higher on Personality (77%), Education (74%), Peers (65%), and Leisure/Recreation (54%). Scores on the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument 2<sup>nd</sup> Version (MAYSI-2) mental health screening tool indicate 19% of youth had a caution or warning score on the “Angry/Irritable” domain, and 17% had caution or warning on “Depressed/Anxious.” As a result of these assessment outcomes, 970 referrals were made to 43 different community providers for 45 different types of programs. The most common referrals were for programs related to counseling/therapy (26%), decision making (13%), culturally-specific leadership (8%) gang intervention (6%), and restorative justice (6%).

### Detention:

In 2023, 109 youth admitted to Douglas County Youth Center (DCYC) were charged in the adult criminal justice system, and 733 were admitted with charges in juvenile court. In both groups, the majority were youth of color (80% non-white) and male (81%). Youth charged as adults are generally detained for three- to four-times as long as youth in the juvenile system; during 2023, youth charged as adults remained in detention for around 183 days prior to release, compared to juvenile court youth who stayed for an average of 41 days. Pre-adjudicated juvenile court youth tend to be released sooner than youth who are already under the supervision of Juvenile Probation when they enter DCYC (35 days compared to 51 days, respectively). Although DCYC experienced lower populations and shorter lengths of stay during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020 and 2021, detention trends have returned to pre-pandemic levels.

The offenses for which youth are admitted to detention have also increased in recent years. On a given day, around two-thirds of youth in DCYC are detained for violent crimes (i.e., assault, homicide, robbery, offenses involving weapons). During August 2024, 16 youth were admitted for offenses involving firearms, including six youth charged with homicide. An additional 24 youth were admitted for other types of felony offenses, and two youth had misdemeanor charges. It is also important to note that of the 72 admissions during that month, 25 youth (35%) entered DCYC without new charges but were detained for probation violations or by court order.

### **Social Factors:**

The social factors underlying racial and ethnic disparities “include distressed neighborhoods, represented by lack of stability, lack of role models, inadequate services, lack of concern, inadequate alternatives, lack of incentives, and lack of attachment to the neighborhood, community disorganization, neighborhood environment, and media” (Kakar, 2006, p. 378). Much of the recent violence in Omaha, particularly events involving weapons possession and use, stems from gang-related issues. The Omaha community has made a conscious effort to address youth violence, including youth gang violence, since the early 1980s. Since that time, elected officials, foundations, and youth-serving organizations have championed a number of programs and initiatives to reduce youth violence in Douglas County. While

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## Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)

Omaha has experienced many successes through the development and implementation of these initiatives, the problem persists.

Black males in northeast and southeast Douglas County are at far greater risk of becoming involved in gangs and falling victim to, and/or perpetuating, violence compared to other groups. In May 2021, The Violence Policy Center reported that the black homicide rate in Nebraska was 13.23 per 100,000, a rate tied for the 27th highest in the U.S. When placing this information into the local context, black individuals make up less than 5% of the population in Nebraska, but 30% of the State's total homicide victims. Data from OPD indicates that there were 51.9 non-fatal shootings of teenagers, per capita between January 1, 2021 and August 31, 2024; during this same period, teenagers were the victims of 13.3 homicides per capita. The fact that the demographics of youth most likely to be involved with the juvenile justice systems are the same as those of youth most likely to be victims of violence, and that these youth are likely to be members of racial/ethnic minority groups, underscores the need for community-based initiatives to provide prevention and early intervention services for at-risk youth and their families.

### **Family/Parental Factors:**

The overrepresentation of youth of color in the juvenile justice system may also be the result of factors within the family dynamic. Such factors may “include family structure, conflict, lack of attachment, lack of concern, family history, parenting and discipline, lack of nurturing, lack of awareness, illiteracy, and lack of skills” (Kakar, 2006, p. 378). In 2021, researchers from the OMNI Institute conducted an environmental scan to examine the needs, assets, and barriers within the community, and ways in which service delivery could be improved for youth and families within Douglas County (Davidson, et al., 2021). One resource area in which this study noted Douglas County to be deficient was related to parental engagement and family relationships. Specifically, few prevention and early intervention services exist for at-risk families; most of the available resources require formal involvement with the justice or child welfare systems before youth and their families can access the programs and services they need. It should be no surprise that parents feel frustration at a system they perceive as punitive and tautological, when they try to find services that will prevent their children from winding up in the system, but formal system involvement is required in order for most parents to learn about, or take advantage of, such services. Douglas County has a need to implement holistic wrap-around programs and services for pre-adjudicated youth at their earliest point of contact with the juvenile justice system in order to prevent recidivism and future delinquent behavior and minimize R/ED.

### **Education Factors:**

Certain educational factors may place youth of color at a higher risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system, such as “school discipline problems, poor academic performance, lack of commitment to school, lack of attachment to school, inadequate curriculum, dropout, and truancy” (Kakar, 2006, p. 378). One of the precursors to formal juvenile justice system involvement is chronic school absenteeism (Gakh et al., 2020; Hirsch et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2010). Data from Omaha Public Schools (OPS), the largest school district in Douglas County, demonstrate that chronic absenteeism (i.e., missing 10% or more school

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## Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)

days) is widespread, with 39.7% of students missed 10% or more days of school during the 2022-23 school year. When examining rates by grade level, 57.8% of high school students, 42.7% of middle school students, and 26.9% of elementary school students were identified as chronically absent. Disproportionate rates of chronic absenteeism exist among Black and Hispanic youth when compared to the respective proportions of the student population that they represent. For example, Black children comprise 25.5% of all OPS students, but half of Black students are identified as chronically absent. This disparity becomes even more apparent when poverty level is considered. Given the disproportionate representation of racial/ethnic minority students among both those who have excessive absenteeism and those who are experiencing poverty, it is no surprise to find that youth of color who experience poverty have higher rates of absenteeism than their counterparts who do not live in poverty. The chronic absenteeism rates in Douglas County among youth of color living in poverty are especially troubling when situated in the context of a lack of programs and support services in their communities. Youth who do not attend school and lack community-based alternatives to provide positive, organized activities to occupy their free time are at higher risk of coming into formal contact with the justice system.

As mentioned, chronic absenteeism is often a precursor to juvenile justice and/or child welfare involvement. Research has shown that one key contributing factor to the over-representation of non-white youth in the juvenile justice system is the “school-to-prison pipeline,” which refers to the unintentional pathway that can be created when schools adopt zero-tolerance policies and over-involve police in the enforcement of school rules. Research on this topic suggests that these types of policies and practices result in disproportionately higher in-school disciplinary actions and arrest rates among youth of color, even though youth of all races engage in similar rates of misconduct at school (Novak, 2019; Owens, 2017; Skiba et al., 2014). OPS data indicates that 11.5% of students received out-of-school suspensions during the 2023-24 school year; this is comprised of 13.8% of high schoolers, 23.4% of middle schoolers, and 4.2% of elementary school students. Black youth accounted for 45.8% of all suspensions, despite making up 23.5% of the overall student population. Furthermore, 22.3% of all Black students experienced at least one out-of-school suspensions, compared to 7.4% of white students.

Involvement in structured and prosocial activities, including school and after-school programs, has been shown to reduce delinquency in youth (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Wooditch et al., 2014). Without community-based alternatives to provide positive, organized activities to occupy the free time of youth not attending school, it is logical that many youth experiencing chronic absenteeism, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions begin to associate with delinquent peer groups and eventually come into formal contact with the justice system.

Meeting the educational needs of youth once they enter detention is particularly difficult due to the shorter duration of their confinement (Koyama, 2012) and the need for active involvement with the youth’s home school district to ensure continuity in education and a seamless plan for transitioning back into the classroom. Around 53% of youth in DCYC in October 2022 had IEPs; 13% of these youth attended alternative programs in their home school districts. In Nebraska, approximately 16% of students have been educationally verified with a disability (Education Rights Counsel [ERC], 2023); in DCYC, however, about 50% of youth have been educationally verified as such, and it is likely that an additional 15-20% may have

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## Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)

a disability that is yet to be verified. almost half of detained youth (44% in the second half of 2022) had IEPs that were incomplete or out of date. As of September 2024, 58% of youth in DCYC had an IEP.

### **Individual Factors:**

Individual factors related to higher proportions of minority youth in detention “include physical and mental development, temperament, friends, inadequate resources, lack of belief in the society and system, self-esteem, lack of responsibility, and lack of motivation.” (Kakar, 2006, p. 378). OMNI’s environmental scan (Davidson et al., 2021) revealed insecurity for many Douglas County youth in their most basic needs (e.g., housing, employment, transportation, and food). In addition, many youth and families struggle to meet their mental and behavioral health needs.

There are multiple reasons for this, including a lack of availability (both within geographical boundaries and outside of a traditional 8a.m.-to-5p.m. work schedule), an inability to pay, long waiting lists for in-patient treatment, and few providers willing to take youth with significant mental health issues or histories of violence. Behaviors related to mental illness may be interpreted by authority figures, such as teachers and law enforcement officers, as intentional defiance or disregard for the rules and result in justice system contact. This has the ability to create disparities in low-income communities of color in which such mental health resources are scarce. Individual factors may also compound educational factors, where chronic absenteeism and truancy serves as a latent indicator of more serious underlying issues, such as a lack of transportation or a lack of child care that requires older youth to be responsible for their younger siblings in the absence of parental supervision.

### **Economic Factors:**

Kakar (2006, p. 378) considers economic factors to be such things as “extreme poverty, inadequate resources, lack of employment opportunities, and media. Census data shows that 13.6% of people 18 or younger in Douglas County live in households whose incomes during the past 12 months are below the poverty line. As noted previously, about one-third of youth referred to the JAC for assessment lived in communities that have been historically marginalized and underserved, and that nearly half of youth lived in households with annual incomes under \$40,000. Similar trends exist for youth entering detention. Just under half of youth who entered DCYC in 2022 came from 5 zip codes, and around two-thirds lived in communities where at least 20%, and sometimes upwards of 40%, of children under the age of 18 live in poverty. These communities are also largely comprised of neighborhoods of color. The inability of youth of color and their families to overcome economic factors undoubtedly increases the level of difficulty they face in overcoming obstacles from the other five factors, and compounds the issues contributing to their involvement in the justice system.

### **Priority Areas:**

Douglas County has commissioned multiple studies since 2021 (i.e., Douglas County Environmental Scan, The BRIDGE Community Survey, and focus groups with parents of youth violence victims and perpetrators) and reviewed available data on youth at each point in the juvenile justice system to examine

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## Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)

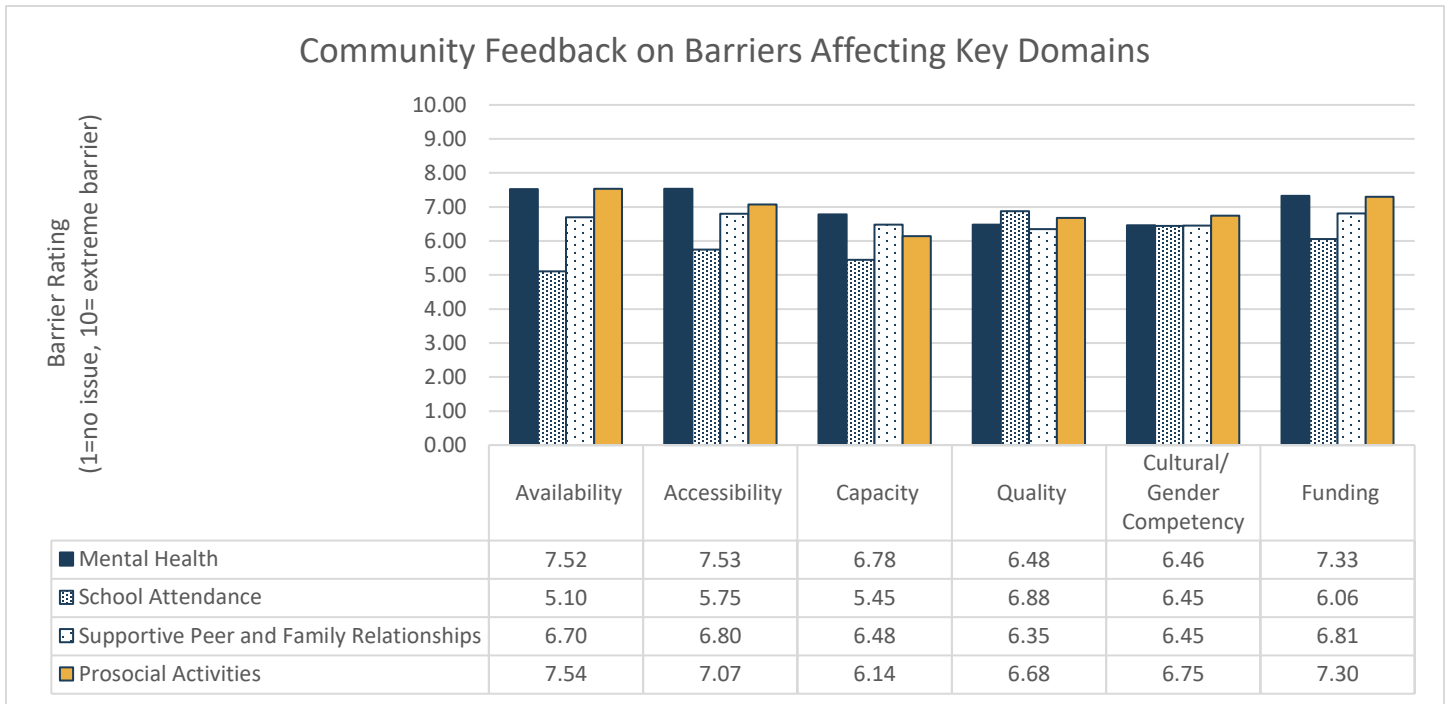
Kakar’s (2006) factors. Through these reviews, we identified four key domains that were present in virtually every source: mental/behavioral health, school attendance, supportive peer/family relationships, and prosocial activities.

During the summer of 2024, Douglas County Juvenile Services hosted a series of three Community Forum meetings to allow community members to provide their input on the priority areas for this Community Plan. These meetings were held on June 22, 2024, at St. Luke’s Lutheran Church in South Omaha; July 20, 2024, at Metropolitan Community College in North Omaha; and on August 10, 2024, at Concord Mediation Center in West Central Omaha. A total of 104 individuals attended the three meetings. An online survey was also available through September 30, 2024 to collect feedback from those unable to attend the in-person meetings; an additional 14 provided input through this format. Meeting attendees and survey respondents represented community-based providers, interested members of the public, youth and family members with lived experience, governmental agencies, funders, and school districts, among others. In all formats, members of the public were provided information about the domains of mental/behavioral health, school attendance, supportive peer and family relationships, and prosocial activities, based on available juvenile justice system data and findings from studies in the community. The feedback provided by 103 (87%) of these community members reinforced findings that the four domains listed above are the most important needs areas in Douglas County.

For each domain, participants were asked to rate each of the following barriers to service delivery on a scale from one (not an issue) to ten (extreme barrier): availability, accessibility, capacity, quality, cultural and gender competency, and funding adequacy. Participants were also afforded the opportunity to provide additional feedback on other domains they believed may be of importance and barriers related to adequate service provision. The graphic presented below provides the aggregate scores for the barriers within each domain; “Appendix F” provides more detailed breakdowns of this information, by forum location, to illustrate geographic similarities and differences.

In addition to experiencing the service delivery deficits noted in the graphic below, youth in the juvenile justice system often come from families in crisis and are retraumatized by many aspects of the juvenile justice system. If the family/youth crisis is not effectively recognized and addressed at pre-adjudication, the youth will be forced further into the juvenile justice system. Research has shown that programs with a control philosophy increase recidivism rates while those with a trauma-informed, therapeutic philosophy reduce them (Lipsey 2010; Zettler, 2021). The activities proposed under this community plan are intended to serve pre-adjudicated youth in culturally-appropriate and trauma-informed ways that focus on positive youth development and mitigate barriers related to mental/behavioral health, school attendance, supportive peer and family relationships, and prosocial activities.

## Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)



### Section IV: Services and Program

#### System Point: Prevention

The table below includes programs that aim to intervene before and after problematic behaviors are identified.

Program / Agency Name	Eligible Age	Risk or Need
Before and After School Program / Hope Center	5-18	Suspended/expelled youth
C.A.T.S. / Metro Area Youth Services	12-18	Suspended/expelled youth
School / Omaha Street School	12-18	Suspended/expelled youth
Emergency Services / Nebraska Help Line	0-18	Connection to community services
Crisis Response Team / Lutheran Social Services	12-18	Crisis stabilization
Therapy Services / One World Health Center	0-18	Family support
Therapy Services / Charles Drew Health Center	0-18	Family support
Physical and Mental Health / Urban Indian Health Coalition	0-18	Family support
Before and After School Program / Boys and Girls Club	0-18	All protective factors
Refugee Advocate / Heartland Family Services	12-18	Family support
Lead & Seed / Thrive Center Omaha	12-18	Substance abuse
Urban Youth B.O.L.T. / Center for Holistic Development	12-18	Culturally-responsive leadership
Creative writing / Nebraska Writer's Collective	12-18	Written communication skills
Prosocial youth activities / P.A.C.E.	12-18	Prosocial attitudes
Attendance navigators / Urban League of Nebraska	12-18	School engagement

## Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)

Parental support / International Council for Refugees and Immigrants	12-18	Family support
Girls, Inc.	12-18	All protective factors
BRIDGE Family Resource Connector Network	4-18	All protective factors for prevention and early intervention family needs

### System Point: Diversion Services

The table below includes programs and services available to youth on diversion.

Program / Agency Name	Eligible Age	Risk or Need
Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), Ecological In-Home Family Treatment (EIHFT) / Boys Town	12-18	All individual and family protective factors
LIFT Together / Boys Town	12-18	School-based engagement, family support
Latino Center of the Midlands	12-18	School-based engagement, family support
Intensive Family Preservation (IFP) and family support / Community Options	12-18	All individual and family protective factors
IFP and family support / Beneficial Behavior	12-18	All individual and family protective factors
IFP and family support / Better Living Foundation	12-18	All individual and family protective factors
IFP and family support / Omni Inventive Care	12-18	All individual and family protective factors
IFP and family support / KVC	12-18	All individual and family protective factors
Therapy, family support / Munroe-Meyer Institute	12-18	All individual and family protective factors
Substance Use Treatment / Center for Holistic Development	12-18	Drug and alcohol use
Substance Use Treatment / Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership	12-18	Drug and alcohol use
Job training, tutoring / Reconnect, Inc.	12-18	All protective factors
Tutoring / Key Integrated Support Services	12-18	Low academic achievement
African Immigrant Family Services	12-18	Peer groups, educational and instructional services
Center for Holistic Development	12-18	Peer groups, educational and instructional services
Missing Youth Services / Child Saving Institute	12-18	Mental health/Therapy
Completely KIDS	12-18	Mental health/Therapy
International Center for Refugees and Immigrants	12-18	Peer and family support
Education classes / Nebraska Safety Council	12-18	Anger management, alcohol and drug use
Restorative justice / Concord Mediation	12-18	All individual risk factors

## Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)

Restorative justice / Heartland Family Services	12-18	All individual risk factors
New Life Family Alliance	12-18	Peer and family support
Family Matters / ReConnect, Inc.	12-18	All individual and family risk factors
Elevate Program / Urban League	12-18	All individual and family risk factors
Diversion / Douglas County Juvenile Assessment Center	12-18	All individual and family risk factors
O.NE Mentoring	12-18	Mentoring
Stay in School Stop the Violence	12-18	Mentoring
Missing Youth Initiative / Project Harmony	12-18	All individual and family risk factors
Violence Prevention / YouTurn	12-18	All individual and family risk factors
Violence Prevention / Dusk to Dawn	12-18	All individual and family risk factors
North Omaha Community Partnership	12-18	Wrap-around services for youth and family
Habits of a Queen / I Believe in Me	12-18	Gender-specific skill development

### System Point: Alternatives to Detention (for Pre-Adjudicated Youth Only)

The table below includes any programs that allow youth to remain in the community after any contact with law enforcement. Note: All services listed in the table above for “Diversion Services” are also used for pre-adjudicated youth.

Program / Agency Name	Eligible Age	Risk or Need
Day and Evening Reporting Centers (8 contracted programs)	12-18	All individual and family risk factors
Family Matters and Wraparound Services (2 contracted programs)	12-18	All individual and family risk factors
EM and Tracker / Douglas County H.O.M.E. Program	12-18	All individual and family risk factors
EM and Tracker / Community-Based Services	12-18	All individual and family risk factors
Shelter / Omaha Home for Boys	12-18	All individual and family risk factors
Shelter / Boys Town	12-18	All individual and family risk factors
Shelter / Child Saving Institute	12-18	All individual and family risk factors
All Diversion Services	12-18	All individual and family risk factors

## Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)

### Known Gaps in Service

The table below includes known gaps in programs and services for at-risk and pre-adjudicated youth in Douglas County.

Program / Agency Name	Eligible Age	Risk or Need
Expansion of The BRIDGE Family Resource Connector Network that would divert status offenders from system involvement through an early assessment and care coordination system.	12-18	All individual and family protective factors
Expansion of gang prevention and early intervention programs	12-18	All individual and family protective factors, specifically targeting the highest risk youth
Expansion of guns and violence prevention and early intervention programs	12-18	All individual and family protective factors, specifically targeting the highest risk youth
Easily accessible crisis response	12-18	All individual and family protective factors
Expansion of targeted restorative justice and mediation services	12-18	All individual and family protective factors
Expansion of gender-specific programs, especially for girls	12-18	All individual and family protective factors, specifically targeting females
Expansion of in-home family engagement and family support services concentrating on positive parent development (protective factors) and parent coping skills	12-18	All individual and family protective factors
Targeted mentoring programs that meet the needs of at-risk youth and are racially appropriate	12-18	All individual and family protective factors
Expansion of alternatives to detention for pre-adjudicated youth that can be used along with electronic monitoring by the H.O.M.E. Program	12-18	All individual and family protective factors developed specifically based upon the needs of these youth
Development and implementation of a digital platform that would assist in directing families to programs/services by key stakeholders, such as school, community professionals, and the legal system	12-18	Easy accessibility for services

## Section V: Priorities and Strategies

In the spring of 2024, Douglas County was awarded a FY23 OJJDP Continuum of Care for Juvenile Justice grant. This grant is an eighteen-month planning grant to support our community in conducting planning and assessment activities to **build a community-based juvenile justice continuum of care** of promising and evidence-based prevention and early intervention services. This plan will serve as a strong foundation for preventing youth from entering the juvenile justice system, diverting them from moving deeper into the system, and providing them with the skills needed to lead productive, safe and law-abiding lives.

This OJJDP Planning grant includes the following seven steps: Preparation; Assessment; Creation of Strategic Plan; Implementation Process for Strategic Plan; Communication of Strategic Plan; Evaluation of the Strategic Plan Process; and Sustainability. Currently Douglas County is in the Assessment stage and is gathering data from a wide variety of stakeholders (e.g., community providers, youth and families, school districts, government officials, local foundations). Data collection will use a variety of avenues, including focus groups, interviews, surveys, archival data review, and more. Feedback from community providers will be gathered directly during this initial assessment phase. All of this valuable information will be used to complete the Douglas County Strategic Plan and Costs/Benefit Analysis with the community by the summer of 2025.

Based on the findings and results of the Douglas County Strategic Plan process required by the OJJDP Continuum of Care grant, Douglas County will be amending the Action Steps in our four Priority Areas to include these recommendations as to programs and implementation.

Please see the detailed four Priorities below.

**Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)**

<b>Priority Area #1: Increase availability of mental/behavioral health service for youth and families</b>						
<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>	<b>Expected Results</b>	<b>Anticipated Barriers</b>
Availability of Services throughout the Community	Increase number of providers especially psychiatric and psychological services	Douglas County; Region 6; mental/behavioral health service providers; State Probation	2025 through 2030	Long-term funding sources for said services	Increase in availability of services without long wait periods	Funding  Scarcity of professional resources  Lack of free or sliding scale mental/behavioral health services
	Increase number of in-school counselors and social workers starting in first through third grade	Douglas County; All Omaha area schools; Private funders				
	Implementation of more prevention services and early identification services	Douglas County; BRIDGE Family Resource Connector Network; Community providers.				
Accessibility of Services throughout the Community	Provide easier accessibility of services outside of traditional work hours	Douglas County; Region 6; mental/behavioral health service providers	2025 through 2030	Long-term funding sources for said services.  Ability to access Medicaid services for youth leaving detention	Increase in crisis response services to prevent court involvements	Funding  Scarcity of professional resources
	Increase quality of before and after school programs to	Douglas County; Region 6; mental/behavioral health service				

**Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)**

	<p>include therapeutic services</p> <p>Increase ability to access crisis services quickly by having CIT services throughout entire community</p>	<p>providers; after school programs in targeted areas</p> <p>Douglas County; Omaha Police Department; Douglas County Sheriff’s Office; Lutheran Family Services</p>				
Capacity Issues	<p>Creation and implementation of a facility to serve youth in a home-like setting to help with mental health needs</p> <p>Collaboration between mental health providers and grassroot community organizations to better meet the needs</p> <p>Work with higher education to support students such as the “Ladder Program” to support new</p>	<p>Douglas County; residential care providers</p> <p>Douglas County and key stakeholders to create partnerships; FQHCs; Region 6</p> <p>Douglas County; UNO; UNL; Bellevue University; Metro Community College; Public school districts</p>	2025 through 2030	<p>Long-term funding sources for said services.</p> <p>Ability to access Medicaid services for youth leaving detention</p>	<p>Increase in the number of professionals available throughout the community especially the school system</p> <p>Increase in the types and locations of services offered to better serve individualized needs</p> <p>Decreased stigmatization of receiving mental health services</p>	<p>Funding</p> <p>Scarcity of professional resources</p>

**Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)**

	<p>therapists and targeted scholarships in needed areas</p> <p>Increase in the number of male mental health providers who have lived experience</p>	<p>Douglas County; UNO; UNL; Bellevue University; Metro Community College; Public school districts</p>				
<p>Ensure quality of mental/behavioral health services</p>	<p>Develop and implement a process to separate severe mental health conditions from mild/momentary mental health issues</p> <p>Identify quality services that are innovative and evidence-based outside the traditional therapeutic setting</p> <p>Appropriate training for all professionals on trauma and</p>	<p>Douglas County; Region 6; mental/behavioral health service providers; State Probation</p> <p>Douglas County; Region 6; mental/behavioral health service providers; State Probation</p> <p>Douglas County; Region 6; mental/behavioral health service providers; State Probation</p>	<p>2025-2030</p>	<p>Long-term funding sources for said services.</p> <p>Ability to access Medicaid services for youth leaving detention</p>	<p>Creation and implementation of non-traditional mental/behavioral health services</p>	<p>Funding</p> <p>Scarcity of professional resources</p>

**Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)**

	traumatic brain injury					
Ensure cultural/general competency in mental/behavioral health services	<p>Integrate comprehensive cultural services through a cultural-centered grassroots organizations</p> <p>Capacity-building for organizations through training in the area of cultural competency</p>	Douglas County; community providers	2025-2030	<p>Long-term funding sources for said services.</p> <p>Ability to access Medicaid services for youth leaving detention</p>	<p>More diversified professional workforce</p> <p>More trained professionals in the areas of cultural competency</p>	<p>Funding</p> <p>Scarcity of professional resources</p>

**Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)**

<b>Priority Area #2: Increase School Attendance and Engagement</b>						
<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>	<b>Expected Results</b>	<b>Anticipated Barriers</b>
Availability of needed programs within school buildings and outside of school hours	Increase engagement activities for youth both within the school and outside of school hours	Douglas County; School Districts; Community Providers	2025-2030	Funding for services	Increase in number of mentors	Funding resources
	Increase mentoring programs to meet the specific needs of the youth	Douglas County; mentoring programs		Community campaigns as to the importance and need of mentors	Higher school engagement through programs working with schools	
	Increase in availability of math and reading tutors	Douglas County; school districts		Looking outside usual mentoring services to meet specific needs of youth such as workforce development areas	Increase in attendance and school engagement	
Accessibility of alternative educational opportunities	Need for a special school with focused curriculum such as skilled trades for youth struggling in traditional school environments	Douglas County; School districts; Community providers; Chamber of Commerce	2025-2030	Funding for services and internships	Increase in attendance and school engagement	Funding resources
	Increase internship programs for youth	Douglas County; community providers			Increase in graduation rate	

**Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)**

Quality of Needed Services	Development of programs working with targeted schools to meet needs of youth	Douglas County; school districts; community providers	2025-2030	Funding for targeted programs in schools	Increase in attendance and school engagement  Increase in graduation rates	Funding resources
Cultural and Gender Competent Services	<p>Increase grants focused on multicultural groups</p> <p>Cultural training for refugee/immigrant population regarding school attendance laws</p> <p>Support organizations to reinforce cultural identity to help boost self-esteem</p>	Douglas County; school districts; community providers	2025-2030	Funding for targeted programs in schools	<p>Increase in attendance and school engagement</p> <p>Increase in graduation rate</p>	Funding resources

**Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)**

<b>Priority Area #3: Supportive Peer and Family Relationships</b>						
<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>	<b>Expected Results</b>	<b>Anticipated Barriers</b>
Availability of services in the highest need areas	Identify neighborhood leaders who can guide supportive components for prevention and early intervention community services	Douglas County; Community providers	2025-2026	Funding resources for said services	Increase of community-based and local services for youth within the community  Increased youth participation in prosocial activities and decreases in gang- and gun-related events	Funding and needed facilities
Accessibility	Need to destigmatize so families feel safe, supported and free to seek help  Affordable therapy/counseling/mentoring services  Parent education services targeting teenage years  Wraparound services that involve the whole family and not just the youth	Douglas County and community providers	2025-2030	Funding resources for said services  Creation of new parent mentor programs  Ensure all providers are doing wraparound services for entire family	Increase parental involvement and engagement	Funding resources and increase in in-home services

**Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)**

Capacity	<p>Meet with local church and community leaders to encourage their involvement</p> <p>Partner with churches to provide services</p> <p>Equip and strengthen capacity and skills of peers and mentors with lived experience</p>	Douglas County and community providers	2025-2030	<p>Funding resources for said services</p> <p>Creation of new parent mentor programs</p> <p>Ensure all providers are doing wraparound services for entire family</p>	Increase parental involvement and engagement	Funding resources and increase in in-home services
Cultural and Gender Competency	<p>Meet with local church and community leaders to encourage their involvement</p> <p>Partner with churches to provide services</p> <p>Partner with culturally-specific organizations, and gender-based organizations for girls, to provide services</p> <p>Equip and strengthen capacity and skills of peers and mentors with lived experience</p>	Douglas County and community providers	2025-2030	<p>Funding resources for said services</p> <p>Ensure all providers are doing wraparound services for entire family</p>	<p>Increase parental involvement and engagement</p> <p>Increased feelings of gender- and culturally-based confidence among youth participants</p> <p>Increase strength of bonds for youth through role models/mentors who share their same cultural identity</p>	<p>Funding resources</p> <p>Increase in in-home services</p>

**Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)**

<b>Priority Area #4: Increase of Prosocial Activities</b>						
<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>	<b>Expected Results</b>	<b>Anticipated Barriers</b>
Increase of availability of services and activities within the local community	<p>Increase after school availability</p> <p>Increase number of activities and services available such as parks programs and programs with social emotional learning</p> <p>Increase mentoring programs and increase volunteer mentors through creation of a new type of mentoring program</p>	Douglas County; Community providers	2025-2026	Funding resources for said services	Increase of community-based and local services for youth within the community	Funding Needed facilities/physical locations
Easy Accessibility of Prosocial Activities	Provide more safe spaces for prosocial activities in the local community	Douglas County; OPD; School Districts; Community Providers	2025-2030	Funding resources for said services	<p>Increase in school attendance and engagement</p> <p>Decrease in juvenile justice involvement</p>	Funding Needed facilities/physical locations

**Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan (2025 – 2030)**

Capacity	<p>Meet with local church and community leaders to encourage their involvement</p> <p>Partner with churches and community-based organizations to provide activity space</p> <p>Partner with churches and community-based organizations to host safe activities outside of traditional work and school hours</p>	Douglas County and community providers	2025-2030	<p>Funding resources for said services</p> <p>Creation of new parent mentor programs</p> <p>Ensure all providers are doing wraparound services for entire family</p>	<p>Increase in the type and location of prosocial activities available to youth</p> <p>Increased diversity of prosocial activities available to youth</p>	Funding  Needed facilities/physical locations
Cultural and Gender Competency	<p>Meet with local church and community leaders to encourage their involvement</p> <p>Partner with churches to provide services</p> <p>Partner with culturally-specific organizations, and gender-based organizations for girls, to provide services</p>	Douglas County and community providers	2025-2030	<p>Funding resources for said services</p> <p>Ensure all providers are doing wraparound services for entire family</p>	<p>Increase parental involvement and engagement</p> <p>Increased feelings of gender- and culturally-based confidence among youth participants</p> <p>Increase strength of bonds for youth through role models/mentors who share their same cultural identity</p>	Funding resources  Needed facilities/physical locations

## **Appendix**

**Appendix “A” – Douglas County Community Team - Juvenile Justice  
Stewardship Organizational Document**

**Appendix “B” – Douglas County Environmental Scan by the Omni  
Institute**

**Appendix “C” – List of Community Members involved in Community  
Plan**

**Appendix “D” – Nebraska Juvenile Justice System Structure and  
Process**

**Appendix “E” – Understanding the Causes of Disproportionate  
Minority Contact: Result of Focus Group Discussions by  
Dr. Suman Kakar**

**Appendix “F” – Community Forum Feedback Data**

**Appendix “G” – Douglas County Juvenile Justice Programming  
Graphic**

## APPENDIX 'A'

### **JJSG Organizational Structure**

Members of the Juvenile Justice Stewardship Group (JJSG) would act as stewards of the larger community interest and serve the broader collective vision through its responsibility of ensuring that action-focused work teams are created based upon a specific need of the community. The JJSG will be facilitated and coordinated by the Deputy County Administrator – Juvenile Services.

Voting members of the JJSG include the following:

- Deputy County Administrator – Juvenile Services
- Douglas County Data Administrator - Juvenile Services
- Presiding Juvenile Court Judge or designee
- Douglas County Commissioner(s) – no more than three
- Douglas County Public Defender or designee
- Douglas County Attorney or designee
- Chief of District 4J Probation Office or designee
- Chief of the Omaha Police Department or designee
- Douglas County Sheriff or designee
- JDAI Co-chair (1)
- Youth Impact Co-chair (1)
- Juvenile Justice Private Funding Organization (1)

The JJSG shall be identified as the Community Team for all grants administered through the Nebraska Crime Commission.

# Douglas County Family Resource Center Project: Environmental Scan

Community Needs & Assets, Barriers, and Potential Solutions



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# Douglas County Family Resource Center Project: Environmental Scan

Community Needs & Assets, Barriers, and  
Potential Solutions

Submitted to:

Kim Hawekotte, J.D.- Douglas County, Nebraska

and Erin Bock; Kerri Sanchez- The Sherwood Foundation

June, 2021

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# Introduction

While issues facing youth and families in Douglas County have been a central concern of community stakeholders for many years, recent discussions around the absence of an effective early intervention and prevention system sparked momentum to explore the possibility of developing a Family Resource Center (FRC) type of model in this area. These discussions began in mid-late 2020 and focused mostly on the issue of chronic absenteeism and truancy as a critical point of early intervention for at-risk youth and families. However, there was also a desire to broaden the focus to truly understand the unmet needs of youth and families in Douglas County, explore ways to leverage existing resources and infrastructure, and discover what might be missing from that equation, to better meet those needs.

In November of 2020, Douglas County and the Sherwood Foundation partnered with OMNI Institute to take a deep dive into existing research and community needs, assets, and barriers in a way that would provide stakeholders with the information needed to determine a path forward to improve service delivery for youth and families in this community. To accomplish these goals, OMNI developed a three-phased approach to this project. The first phase has involved the collection and review of relevant information, data, and literature culminating in this Environmental Scan document that will be shared with stakeholders to guide future planning and decision-making efforts. In the second phase, OMNI will engage in a collaborative process with stakeholders to develop an agreed-upon Action Plan that outlines sequenced steps required to implement the path forward (FRC or other solution). It is anticipated that this action plan will include resources needed to complete each step in the process, persons responsible for completing the actions, proposed timelines, and other key components that will result in clarity of roles and responsibilities. Finally, in the third phase, OMNI will specify an evaluation framework and plan to ensure there is a clearly articulated approach for assessing whether planned efforts are happening as intended, whether course correction and adjustments are needed, and eventually, whether and how efforts are leading to the desired outcomes.





# Approach & Methods

The goal of the environmental scan was to synthesize information on: (a) current needs of youth and families in Douglas County; (b) community assets and gaps; and (c) effective models, practices, and programs to intervene early to prevent system involvement. To achieve these objectives, OMNI used a multi-method approach that included: document and data review; facilitated discussion; stakeholder interviews; and literature review. Each of these methods is briefly described below.

- **Document and data review.** Douglas County representatives provided OMNI with documents, meeting notes, and reports that included information on prior work in the County on issues related to youth system involvement as well as school-level data on suspensions, absenteeism, truancy, and referrals. These resources were catalogued and reviewed to better understand youth and family needs and community strengths and systems-level gaps.
- **Literature review.** OMNI reviewed literature on Family Resource Center Models and other effective strategies and practices that prevent downstream formal system involvement.
- **Facilitated discussions.** Key representatives from local government, education, child welfare, juvenile justice, and social services were invited to be part of an advisory 'Think Tank' for the project. In late April 2021, OMNI facilitated a virtual discussion with this group that included

conversation about youth and family systems-level service and support needs, strengths and gaps in youth- and family-serving organizational collaborations, and potential needs by specific groups and geographic areas.

- Stakeholder interviews.** Members of the advisory 'Think Tank' group (n=7) completed an online survey to identify and prioritize organizational representatives for the stakeholder interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to gather perspectives from key community leaders who could speak to the needs of local youth and families and to provide perspective on gaps that could be filled by a Family Resource Center or other model. To conduct the interviews, OMNI developed a semi-structured interview guide with supplemental questions to ask specifically of organizations providing direct services to youth and families. In total, OMNI conducted 10 key informant interviews and one focus group (involving five school social workers) with representatives from the following agencies and organizations:

	Programs	Type of Services
<b>Community Resource</b> 	Latino Center Family and Community Department	Case Management/Navigation/Referrals
	Douglas County Community Response	Navigation and Referrals
	Nebraska Family Support Network	Mentoring/Navigation/Referrals
	Nebraska Family Helpline	Navigation and Referrals
	Urban League	Navigation/Referrals/Mentoring/Case Management
<b>Child Welfare</b> 	DHHS Intensive Family Preservation	Case Management/In-Home Services
<b>Education</b> 	GOALS	Case Management
	Douglas County School Social Workers	Navigation and Referrals
<b>Juvenile Justice</b> 	JAC	Assessment/Case Management/Referrals
	Douglas County Attorney	Adjudication/Referrals

Across data sources, OMNI synthesized the information to generate a summary of youth and family needs in Douglas County; community assets; systems barriers and gaps in services; and potential solutions, including specification of core components and potential pathways to developing an FRC in Douglas County.

# Youth & Family Needs

## Basic Needs

The needs of youth and families in Douglas County are complex and multi-faceted. At the foundation, stakeholders discussed how some families in Douglas County are still struggling with meeting basic needs, such as housing, employment, and food security. Although the unemployment rate is relatively low in Douglas County at 3%,<sup>i</sup> underemployment is a salient concern with approximately 12% of residents living below the poverty line<sup>ii</sup> and nearly 14% of families experiencing food insecurity.<sup>iii</sup> These struggles have only worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Considering the number of families struggling to meet basic needs, one interviewee expressed concern that resources were not being adequately allocated to emergency services. In recent roundtables held by Operation Youth Success, parents shared their greatest need was access to financial resources and an easy way to connect to existing services.<sup>iv</sup> To further illustrate this point, approximately 27% of families calling the Nebraska

Family Helpline between 2018-2020 requested Basic Needs support.<sup>v</sup> From the perspective of stakeholders, the issue of basic needs is two-fold in that not only are there limited direct support services available in the community, but families are often unaware of what resources are available to them until their circumstances escalate to a crisis warranting a call to the Helpline or they become formally system-involved.

Transportation was another primary basic need discussed by most stakeholders. One interviewee explained that lack of transportation is a deep-rooted problem that impacts so many areas of a youth or family's life, and it "can't be solved with random bus tickets" especially since public transportation in the area is limited. A lack of reliable transportation impacts a family's ability to take their children to school, go to court hearings, and access much-needed services.

## Mental and Behavioral Health Needs

In addition to those basic foundational needs, stakeholders also discussed the varying mental and behavioral health needs of children and youth that are not being met. Almost all stakeholders said that families struggle to find high-quality mental health care for their children, both due to a lack of availability or inability to pay. Most providers also work M-F 9-5, which does not work well for families who can't easily take time off work during traditional business hours.

Stakeholders also discussed the gap in services for youth with more severe mental health diagnoses and for those who need trauma-informed care. There is a shortage of child psychiatrists in Douglas County

**12%** of residents living below the poverty line.

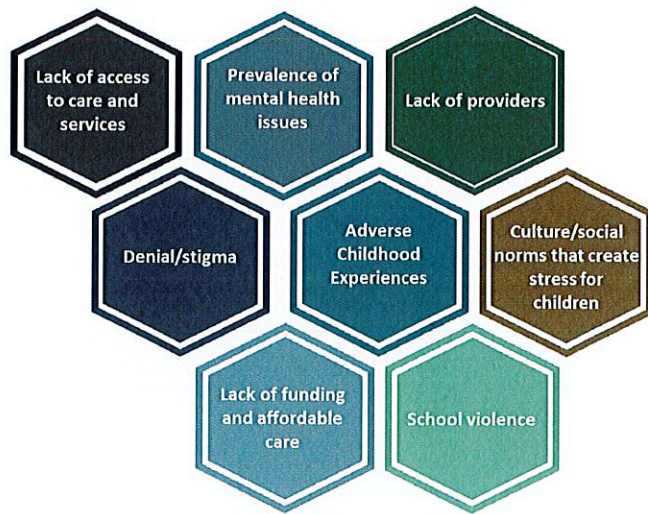


**14%** of families experiencing food insecurity.



and a long waiting list for in-patient mental health treatment. In addition, placement options are limited for youth with significant mental health issues or a history of violence.

This gap in mental health services is especially severe for families who do not speak English, and stakeholders indicated that in general there is a lack of culturally responsive mental health services. Youth participating in roundtable discussion with Operation Youth Success said that they wanted therapists who reflected their community.<sup>vi</sup> Stakeholders also surfaced that there may be an issue of trust with providers, and they shared that families are not often given the autonomy to change providers if they are determined to not be a good fit. According to stakeholders, families want and deserve choice in their provider network.



The need for mental health services is supported by community data. According to the 2018 Child & Adolescent Health Needs Assessment (Professional Research Consultants [PRC], 2018):

Eighty percent of key informants surveyed for the Child & Adolescent Health Needs Assessment (PRC,

- ◀ 14.8% of Omaha Metro Area parents reported that their children (ages 5-17) needed mental health services.
- ◀ 13.8% reported their children received mental health services.
- ◀ Approximately 11% reported that their children have been prescribed medication for mental health concerns.
- ◀ “Mental Health” also represented the top requested referral among families calling the Nebraska Family Helpline, with over 40% of families requesting this type of assistance.

2018) agreed that children’s mental and emotional health was a “major problem” for the Omaha Metro Area. The top concerns identified by participants are highlighted in the figure above.

## Parent Engagement and Family Relationships

Stakeholders discussed the importance of empowering parents who are “system-fatigued.” They may be struggling to meet their family’s basic needs and address their children’s mental and behavioral health issues. Instead of services within the formal systems, which may be viewed as punitive, families need holistic support that empowers them to better parent and advocate for their children. Parent education and support was the top referral made to families calling the Nebraska Family Helpline between 2018-2020, with over 50% of families being referred for this type of service.<sup>vii</sup>

Stakeholders from within the formal juvenile justice and child welfare systems explained that by the time families reach those systems, relationships between parents and adolescent children are fraught with conflict. According to one stakeholder, many parents are “fed up with teenagers whose behaviors are out of control.” Stakeholders shared that many parents just “want the child out of the house,” but they don’t necessarily qualify for that level of intervention, underscoring the need for stronger parental support and informal short-term respite care. Other stakeholders agreed that by the time families reach the point of formal system intervention, there are parents who won’t respond to services because they want the child removed from the home making it very difficult to meaningfully engage them in the service plan especially if it is not court-ordered.

*“The way we do services is just as important as the services themselves.”*

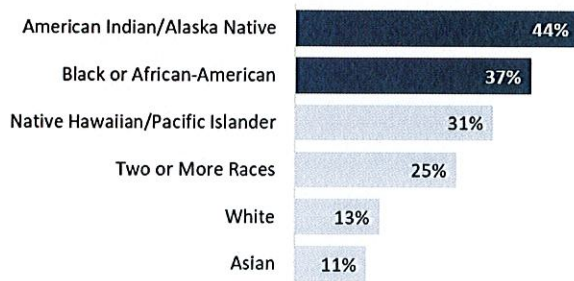
## Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy

Almost all stakeholders discussed the tricky issue of chronic absenteeism. There is no single solution to keeping youth in school—every youth and family is unique, and at the heart of the issue is the fact that you simply cannot force a teenager to go to school. Sometimes families do not prioritize school attendance, but often absenteeism is one among many outcomes that result when families struggle to meet basic needs. Absenteeism can result from lack of child-care, inadequate transportation, or other factors that make it difficult for children to get to school.

As with other issues, prevention and early intervention is the key. Educational neglect cases for children under age 12 often turn into truancy cases in the future if the problem is not solved. Once a truancy case is filed, schools have often tried multiple solutions, so it’s important for schools to collaborate with families early to keep kids interested in school. Stakeholders explained that truancy is often a gateway to other delinquency issues, because if kids aren’t in school, they’re more likely to “get into trouble.” Thus, preventing chronic absenteeism is an important component to creating and sustaining a community of thriving youth and families.

In the 2018-2019 school year, 19,910 students in Douglas County experienced chronic absenteeism (more than 15 absences), representing nearly 21% of the student population. Over one-third of students missed more than ten days and approximately 13% had more than 20 absences. These numbers illustrate the prevalence of absenteeism in Douglas County. The figures below show the demographic distribution of chronic absenteeism in the county.<sup>viii</sup>

Chronic absenteeism data in Douglas County from 2018-2019 shows a large percentage of American Indian/Alaskan Natives, and Black or African American youth are at-risk.



75% live in Poverty



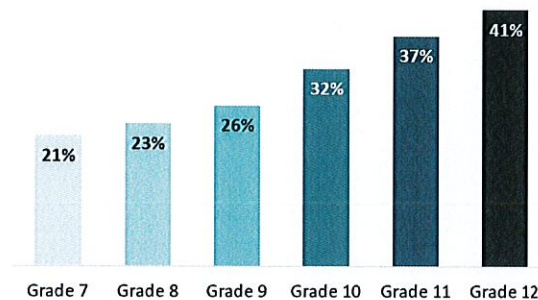
25% are in special education

\*Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 15+ days in a school year.

An equal proportion of males and females experienced chronic absenteeism, and the prevalence of chronic absenteeism increased with each grade level.



20% of males and females presented chronic absenteeism



As noted in the figures above, there is a strong link between living in an economically insecure household and chronic absenteeism. Overall, nearly 48% percent of enrolled students were living in poverty (Black students were overrepresented in this population as well with 80% falling into this category), but when looking at those youth experiencing chronic absenteeism, approximately 75% were living in poverty. This suggests that youth from lower income families are at a greater risk for chronic absenteeism.<sup>ix</sup>

The JAC administers the Absenteeism Intervention Management (AIM) tool to assess youth who are referred for truancy. The AIM tool was designed to identify reasons for absenteeism and family needs so that the JAC can match the services to meet those needs. Below represents findings from analysis of 2018-2019 AIM data conducted by Category One Consulting, which indicated the following top ten factors contributing to formal truancy filings<sup>x</sup>:

- 1 Parents unable/unwilling to enforce expectations
- 2 Morning routine (alarm clock, no monitoring)
- 3 Parents not assisting with school expectations
- 4 Student refuses to get up or attend school
- 5 Student not reporting whereabouts to parents
- 6 Student had history of absenteeism prior year
- 7 Student has mental health needs
- 8 Student is behind on course credits
- 9 Student is skipping class but in building
- 10 Student has special education needs

These factors and causes for formal truancy filings demonstrate the importance of early intervention for chronic absenteeism, for bridging the gaps between schools and youth and their families. According to data from the JAC, in 2018-19, the Douglas County Attorney’s Office received 1,458 truancy filings. However, almost none of these filings ever make it to a formal court proceeding because the County Attorney referred them for diversion to the JAC and recommended no further action. Of these cases, 296 involved youth under age 12 and were related to educational neglect. Recent trends show that formal truancy referrals have been increasing for 12- and 13-year-olds, from 135 in 2015-16 to 238 in 2018-19.<sup>xi</sup>

The GOALS Center was created to be a central provider to address root causes of absenteeism—a hub-and-spokes navigation model—but it has evolved into providing more direct case management services, and they do not have the capacity and resources to serve all students who need them. In 2019-2020, GOALS served 161 students from 57 schools across 9 districts. This number was down from 200 students in 2018-2019, although referrals from schools could have been impacted by COVID-19. It is important to note that GOALS can only operate as intended if given adequate and appropriate referrals from schools, and not all schools in the community are taking advantage of this asset. That said, GOALS alone does not have the capacity to serve all youth in the County experiencing absenteeism and truancy issues.

According to stakeholder interviews, a commitment to truancy prevention varies by school and district. Schools make the final decision of how to deal with chronic absenteeism—the state does not provide consistent oversight over referrals for services or truancy filings or data tracking. It’s up to the individual school how they handle cases of chronic absenteeism among their students—with some schools being more committed to engaging youth and families than others. Schools also have individual relationships with specific service providers, and there is no broad connected network between providers and schools.

## Continuum of Services & Navigation

Families have unique and individualized needs, and there is not a formalized continuum of care to meet these needs, particularly for at-risk families that are not currently system involved. A theme that emerged from the interviews is that services are more readily available once a family becomes involved in the child welfare and/or juvenile justice systems, but early intervention and prevention services are limited. Several stakeholders discussed the need for short-term interventions to relieve family stress or pressure

to prevent these situations from escalating to the point of system intervention. For example, when fighting between parents and an adolescent has reached a crisis point, families may need respite care—a safe place for the youth to stay for a few days so everyone can cool off and come to a solution. Currently, respite care is not available without formal entry into the child welfare or juvenile justice system.

One particular challenge raised by stakeholders is that many youth and families in the community are largely unaware of the services that are available to them until they come into contact with a formal system of intervention. To some degree, even service providers are not fully aware of other available services in the community and at times those responsible for connecting families to services have referral preferences. These circumstances culminate in an underutilization of existing services and a disruption of the continuum of services.

Stakeholders discussed the need for a central hub (both in-person and online) where families can go for direct services, referrals, and system/service navigation, especially prior to formal system involvement. Families need advocates to help them navigate the formal systems of juvenile justice and child welfare, and they also need assistance in accessing the siloed network of service providers throughout the County. Douglas County Community Response fills a navigator role now, but it is not a centralized hub. Rather, its navigators are trained and housed in different service providers and agencies. They also fill a short-term referral and connection role; they do not have long-term case management relationships with families. Not all families need long-term assistance, but there should be a continuum of services available prior to formal system involvement. Stakeholders felt strongly that youth and families should not need a child protection referral or a delinquency filing to access much-needed services.

While some families need short-term solutions or infrequent service referrals, other families, many dealing with entrenched intergenerational poverty, need long-term services that couple evidence-based practices with concrete basic needs. Several stakeholders mentioned a desire to provide more intensive and longer-term services to families, but their scope and funding are limited. Currently such family preservation services are only available to families with a child welfare referral. Other stakeholders acknowledged that many families just need a support system—wraparound services and/or pro-social services that are strengths-based rather than punitive in nature.

## Community Assets

Every interviewee was quick to acknowledge that Douglas County has a rich well of resources, funding, organizations, and practitioners devoted to helping youth and families thrive. In particular, the formal juvenile justice and child welfare systems are well-versed at collaboration and coordination with each other and with community organizations to best meet the needs of youth and families. As mentioned previously, youth and families are generally able to access more resources when they become formally child welfare and/or juvenile justice system involved.

The interviews with Douglas County stakeholders revealed an array of services available to families, a wealth of knowledge and commitment, and a willingness to collaborate and find solutions to longstanding social problems. While there are many community organizations serving youth and families in Douglas County, the purpose of this section of the report is not to identify and describe each of those organizations, but to highlight the critical components of the infrastructure that are most relevant to the content areas discussed in this report and the most pressing needs of youth and families in this area.

In Douglas County, the County Attorney's office diverts the majority of juvenile cases from the formal court system and works collaboratively with the JAC and Probation to oversee and collaborate on case planning. In addition, youth in foster care who have a delinquency case are served by a special crossover team, recognizing that many of their behaviors are related to trauma and should be treated as such rather than criminal activities. The role of the court system cannot be underestimated when it comes to identifying and addressing the needs of youth and families in the community.

Further, the JAC is an important asset for *system-involved* youth and families. Established in 2003, the JAC was developed to meet the needs of youth coming into the system for both status and legal offenses. Except for serious felonies such as murder or sexual assault, nearly all delinquency and status offense filings are diverted to the JAC for assessment and services. JAC case managers complete a comprehensive assessment with youth and their families and develop a collaborative case plan intended to provide referrals to community services and keep the young person out of the formal justice system. Although parents are allowed to self-refer their children to the JAC for services, interviewees indicated that this route is not well-utilized. Either parents do not know about this option, are intimidated by its connection to the formal juvenile justice system, or are not interested in these types of family services for a child whose behavior has become unmanageable.

The GOALS Center (Greater Omaha Attendance and Learning Services) is another unique asset and resource for schools, youth, and families in the Douglas County area. GOALS was originally established through legislation in 2009, and became a separate nonprofit in 2011. GOALS works with all eleven school districts in Douglas and Sarpy Counties and partners with other community non-profits to provide intensive ongoing case management for kids and families struggling with attendance issues. GOALS is designed to find individual solutions for chronic absenteeism before it turns into a legal truancy issue. However, it is a small agency and simply cannot meet the needs of all the children and families struggling with attendance at its current level of funding and staffing.

The Nebraska Family Helpline operates a crisis line and can provide de-escalation, referrals and a mobile crisis unit when necessary. It was created as a resource for families in crisis and does not presuppose system involvement, but stakeholders indicated that it is underutilized. Bolstering this service and ensuring there is a solid crisis continuum of care—crisis line, call/text contacts, mobile response, crisis stabilization, and hospitalization—could go a long way toward stabilizing youth and families in their homes.

The resources outlined above combined with the agencies represented in our stakeholder interviews and Think Tank are only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the rich resources that are available to youth and families in the community. However, as stated previously, families have a difficult time accessing resources prior to formal system involvement and the primary concern of community stakeholders that precipitated this project is the lack of a coordinated system of prevention and early intervention in the continuum of care.

## System Barriers & Gaps

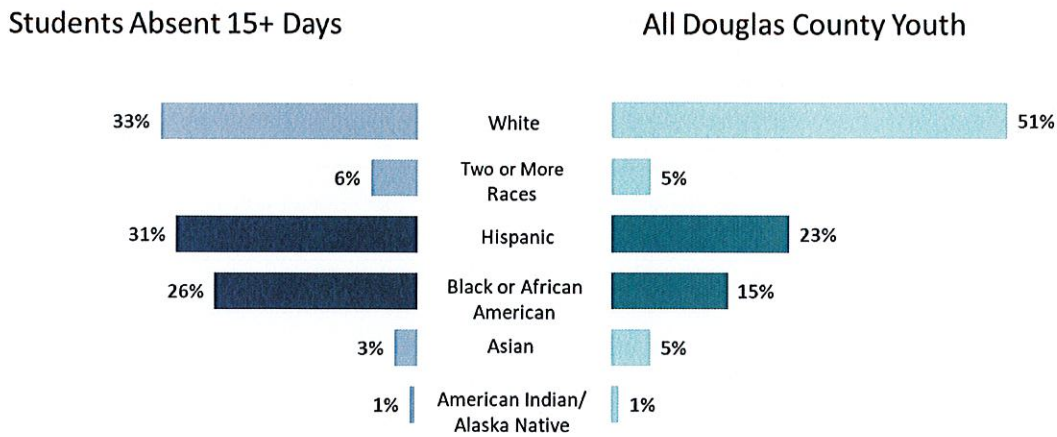
Despite the numerous resources and assets of the service array in Douglas County, there are considerable gaps in service and systemic barriers that are disrupting the continuum of care and limiting access to needed services for youth and families in the community. The community continues to struggle with entrenched systemic issues that leave some families and neighborhoods behind. Layered on top of these systemic problems is a network of services that is limited in scope and capacity, with difficulties consistently and effectively collaborating and communicating. The two most salient barriers/system issues that should be taken into consideration in the context of youth and families in Douglas County are racial and ethnic disparities in the systems of care, and challenges surrounding collaboration and coordination.

### Racial & Ethnic Disparities in Formal Intervention Systems

An issue that is not unique to Douglas County, but is certainly worth raising in this context is the existing racial and ethnic disparities that exist within the formal intervention systems that impact youth and families in this area. Like other cities and communities across America, Omaha struggles with issues of systemic racism that prevent Black and Brown families and neighborhoods from thriving. As one interviewee put it, families of color are often underserved by strengths-based programs and overserved by punitive systems, as demonstrated by their disproportionate representation in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Structural racism, housing discrimination, and inequity have created pockets of entrenched generational poverty. Further, one interviewee said that Omaha continues to struggle with police violence, and communities of color have expressed the need for more positive community policing.

As one of the precursors to formal system involvement, chronic absenteeism and truancy represent an area to begin exploring racial and ethnic disparities. While data from local schools demonstrate that chronic absenteeism is widespread at the high school level (34% of high school students in Douglas County missed 15 days or more in 2018-19), students of color and low-income students are over-represented among those experiencing chronic absenteeism as presented in the section above. To elaborate, the figure below illustrates the disproportionate rates of chronic absenteeism among Black and Hispanic youth when compared to their respective proportions of the student population that they represent. Key stakeholders re-emphasized these points, and further shared that White youth are more likely to be referred to and access needed services in the community, such as GOALS. The GOALS data shows that youth of color are under-represented in their program, which has been attributed to the lack of referrals for these families.

Data from the schools demonstrate that chronic absenteeism is widespread at the high school level, and it disproportionately impacts students of color.




As mentioned, chronic absenteeism is often a precursor to juvenile justice and/or child welfare involvement, so the disproportionality seen in that indicator is reflective of the racial and ethnic disparities seen throughout those systems. Both nationally and locally, youth of color are more likely than White youth to be arrested and detained, and less likely to be diverted from the juvenile justice system.<sup>xii</sup> Research has shown that one key contributing factor to the over-representation of minorities in the juvenile justice system is the “school-to-prison pipeline,” which refers to the unfortunate pathway that can be created when schools adopt zero-tolerance policies and over-involve police in the enforcement of school rules. Data on this topic suggests that these types of policies and practices result in disproportionately higher in-school disciplinary actions and arrest rates among youth of color, even though youth of all races engage in similar rates of misconduct at school.<sup>xiii</sup>

When examining local juvenile justice statistics, 2,011 youth were arrested in Douglas County, Nebraska in 2019, of which nearly 30% were Black and 13% were Hispanic, with only 18% of arrestees being White.<sup>xiv</sup> The demographics of the juvenile detention population in Douglas County, Nebraska, largely reflect statewide and national detention statistics, although the proportion of Black youth detained in this jurisdiction is higher than the comparative state and national figures (41% and 31% respectively). Nationally, approximately 31% of detained youth are Black, while in Douglas County, of the 740 unique youth detained in 2017, 49% were Black.<sup>xv, xvi</sup> These figures are reflective of the racial and ethnic disparities seen throughout the juvenile justice system in this community, as well as around the country.

Similar racial and ethnic disparities can be found within the child welfare system. In 2018, there were 1,983 substantiated victims of child maltreatment in the DHHS Eastern Service Area, which covers Douglas and Sarpy Counties. Approximately 23% of these

**43%** of those arrested were Black or Hispanic youth.



**23%** of child maltreatment victims were Black.



victims were Black and roughly 19% were Hispanic.<sup>xvii</sup> When looking across the State of Nebraska, findings from a report produced by *Voices for Children* indicates that “children of color experience longer average response times for investigation and disposition, and the average number and type of service or intervention offered to children and their families in the first three months of a case also differs by racial or ethnic group.<sup>xviii</sup>

While youth of color are over-represented in formal intervention systems, they are less likely than White youth to receive appropriate behavioral health diagnoses and treatment.<sup>xix</sup> Research suggests that this is reflective of differential treatment in systems of care. Existing screening and assessment tools are not sensitive to diverse populations and are less likely to be administered to these groups, resulting in underdiagnosis.<sup>xx,xxi</sup> Research in this area indicates a heightened need for culturally responsive screening and assessment processes and tools, as well as the implementation of mental health services that are sensitive to the unique needs and barriers faced by minority youth to ensure equitable access and delivery of services.

Several interviewees noted that Douglas County needs to put more effort into addressing issues of racial inequity and creating a network of culturally responsive services throughout the county. Some noted that many services are centered in North Omaha, neglecting the issues facing families in South Omaha. However, DHHS staff explained that a high percentage of DHHS intake cases are from two North Omaha zip codes, and there remains a lack of access to services in those areas as well. Across Douglas County, immigrants and refugee families continue to struggle to find services in their language, and indigenous/native families are generally not served at all by the larger network of services. GOALS has started partnering with the Nebraska Urban Indian Health Coalition to start to address this gap in services.

Several community organizations serve specific racial and ethnic populations, such as the Urban League and the Latino Center. There is ongoing work to address issues of racial disproportionality in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, such as the federal Thriving Families grant and the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, but system representatives acknowledge that this road remains long and there are biases inherent at every decision point.

## Capacity and Collaboration

Although there are organizations, services and programs designed to help children, youth, and families throughout Douglas County, the capacity of these individual organizations is maxed out at current funding levels. For example, GOALS, the Urban League, and the Latino Center all serve youth with chronic absenteeism who are at risk of truancy, but these three agencies simply cannot meet the needs of all the

youth who need these services. In addition, GOALS is not used equally by all the school districts, and it is up to individual schools to make referrals and commit to solving an absenteeism problem.

All interviewees expressed concerns about the lack of formal collaboration and communication across the service array, especially for families who are not involved in a formal system. One interviewee explained that there is a lot of planned collaboration once a youth is involved in the justice system to divert them from further formal involvement, but there is a lack of early intervention to help families before they get to that point. The result is a patchwork of siloed organizations doing their best to meet family needs, but there is no coordinating hub for the spokes of this wheel. There are organizations that provide resource navigation and referrals (DCCR, Latino Center, Nebraska Family Helpline), but there is no central coordination point where any and all families can go to prevent formal system involvement, especially for support with positive youth development and mental health. Although families can self-refer for services through the JAC, its connection to the formal justice system may not feel welcoming and open for families struggling with youth behaviors.

When organizations come together, people want to work together, and as one stakeholder said,

*“Collective impact is the only way we’re going to fix it. The system is ripe for reform now—people realize there is a problem they can’t fix alone.”*

Interviews revealed that Omaha is wealthy and well-resourced, but the collaborations are siloed and specific. There is no entity to integrate all the stakeholders who might play a role in serving youth and families and preventing juvenile justice involvement. The current compartmental funding structures also do not support a continuous system of care model. As a result, there is overlap and duplication of efforts or under-utilized programs at the system level. On an individual basis, there may also be redundancies because providers don’t always know who else is serving a family.

Fortunately, all interviewees agreed that there is energy and passion in the community to collaborate and create a model that provides a continuum of care that works better for youth and families.

## Potential Solutions

### Douglas County Needs and Assets

This environmental scan revealed a community grappling with systemic inequities and service gaps but eager to collaborate and create a continuum of services for youth and families to prevent formal system involvement. Several key themes emerged through the environmental scan that inform potential solutions to the ongoing challenges faced by the community:

**Douglas County needs early intervention and prevention programs to meet youth and family needs.**

Families need access to basic needs, parenting, and mental health services without formal involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems. By the time an older adolescent is in trouble, either with school or the law, many parents have given up and are no longer engaged in seeking help. Families need a

**continuum of services**, from short-term solutions and service/system navigation to long-term, intensive help.

**Douglas County needs a holistic approach to preventing chronic absenteeism**, a solution aimed at younger children before a high schooler is referred to the JAC for truancy. Absenteeism is a complex issue involving parents, students, schools, and communities. It is symptomatic of larger systemic issues of poverty, inequity, and racism, and several approaches are needed to meet the diverse needs of youth, families and communities. Stakeholders uniformly agreed that interventions should start earlier. Interventions should be designed to engage youth, parents, and schools in providing solutions that address the underlying causes of absenteeism, and that keep kids interested and engaged in school. For this approach to be successful, **schools need to be committed to holistic, pro-social, non-punitive solutions for chronic absenteeism.**

**Douglas County is rich in resources and solutions, but collaboration and communication are ad hoc, and the fragmented funding structure does not support a holistic, system-of-care model.** Collaboration between providers and systems is well-established once youth and families are system-involved, but collaboration is limited to **prevent** system involvement and provide early intervention services.

## Family Resource Centers

Family Resource Centers are a model of care that could meet these family needs and build upon the strengths of Douglas County’s provider networks. FRCs are family-centered, strengths-based community hubs that provide culturally responsive supports to families. FRCs are embedded in communities and are intentionally designed to be welcoming and inclusive. Although FRCs can vary in their array of services, how they are structured and funded, and where they are located, they all approach their work with the goal of improving family well-being through supportive programs and services that meet families’ immediate and longer-term needs. Importantly, families play a key role in determining the services and supports that they want and need and the changes they want to make for themselves.<sup>xxii</sup> Family support workers meet families where they are, and provide a voluntary, mutually respectful environment to create opportunities for success. In 2019, Casey Family Programs summarized 10 common elements that guide the work of FRCs. As listed in their report,<sup>xxiii</sup> these defining characteristics are as follows:

*“In a family resource center, how things are done is as important as what is done.”*

– Family Resource Centers:  
Vehicles for Change

1. “Operate using a **set of standards or a framework** for implementing programs and assessing outcomes, such as the National Family Support Network’s [Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening](#) or the [Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework](#) developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy. As an alternative, the Alabama Legislature passed into law [state standards](#) for its family resource network, and New Jersey recently contracted with the National Implementation Research Network to develop a practice profile for its network of Family Success Centers.<sup>13</sup>
2. Seek to be **welcoming spaces** that can be utilized by a mixture of diverse community members.

3. **Partner with families and whole communities** using strengths-based, multi-generational, family-centered approaches.
4. Provide services that are grounded in a **strengths-based** approach, are **culturally sensitive** and, when possible, **linguistically competent**, or offered in languages that reflect the families and communities being served.
5. Be **prevention-focused** and aim to improve parents' **protective factors**
6. Coordinate, implement, and make **referrals** to a multitude of services in order to provide comprehensive and flexible individualized and group-based support to address families' complex needs, including a focus on concrete needs and evidence-based practices.
7. Develop **parent and community leadership** to support advocacy efforts and family and community resilience.
8. Have a diverse, **high-quality and well-trained staff**.
9. Be an integral part of the community — serving as a **link between families, schools, support services, and the community** — and sustain strong partnerships with a variety of other community-based providers, system leaders, and key stakeholders in order to adequately address local needs.
10. Be **reflective and adaptable** in order to address the specific needs of the community in which they are located."

Interviewees identified many of these core elements as ones that they think will be beneficial for Douglas County. In particular, interviewees note that any solution for the County needs to include:

- community outreach to make families aware of all that is available, and in a way that will empower and engage them in services
- neighborhood-based access to make sure services are accessible and welcoming and not associated with courts and formal government systems
- community-based staffing so that families are being served by staff with similar lived experiences
- community-sensitive in that services are tailored to the families in different areas of Douglas County (North and South Omaha in particular)

*"People need to trust the people who are offering help"*

– Stakeholder Interviewee

## Services & Supports

FRC services and supports are shaped by families in the community and are designed to meet their needs. Because FRCs focus on parents with children, they typically offer parent education and supports that may include parenting classes, home visitation programs, support groups, crisis counseling, or drop-in programs designed for parents. A survey of statewide networks found that parent education, parent leadership development, resource and referral, and child development services were most commonly provided across their networks.<sup>xxiv</sup> **Nationwide, common service areas include:**<sup>xxv</sup>

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| • Basic Needs Supports                   | • Life Skills Development       |
| • Child Development Activities           | • Parent Education              |
| • Child Abuse/Neglect Treatment Services | • Parent Leadership Development |
| • Community Development Activities       | • Peer-to-Peer Supports         |
| • Domestic Violence Treatment Services   | • Resource and Referral         |
| • Family Economic and Self Sufficiency   | • Senior Services               |

- Family Health & Wellness
- Family Literacy and Education Supports
- Formal Service Coordination
- Substance Abuse Education & Referrals
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- Youth Development

FRCs may provide programs and services directly or via collaborations with other community-based providers. They understand the community context and the resources available to families, and they help families access what is available to them. Programs and services are often co-located to increase accessibility and access. In addition, human service agencies may staff workers at the FRC to help screen families and enroll them into programs and services for which they are eligible, or train FRC staff to help support family access to government programs.<sup>xxvi</sup> In addition, FRCs often serve as a resource for families screened out of formal systems (e.g., child welfare) to help them with parenting and other services.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Interviewees identified several types of programs and services that they thought would be beneficial to Douglas County, emphasizing the need for early intervention and services before families are involved with formal systems. Suggested offerings include:



**Parent mentors and parenting classes**, especially classes that have been shown to be effective for parents of teenagers with behavioral and/or behavioral health needs.



**Wrap-around, holistic family supports.**



**A resource and referral hub** that serves as a one-stop place to access services and is especially able to connect parents to needed mental health and substance use treatment services.



**Basic life skills training** in high school and beyond



**Workforce development programs** including employment training and job skills.



**Programming** designed to meet the needs of specific communities (e.g., LGBTQ+ youth; families with developmental disabilities; foster-care families).

When ultimately determining a core set of services and supports, it is critical that they be informed by research and best practices, and selected with input from families and the community, to ensure they leverage community resources, are responsive, are likely to be accessed, and are not duplicative.

## Structure & Funding

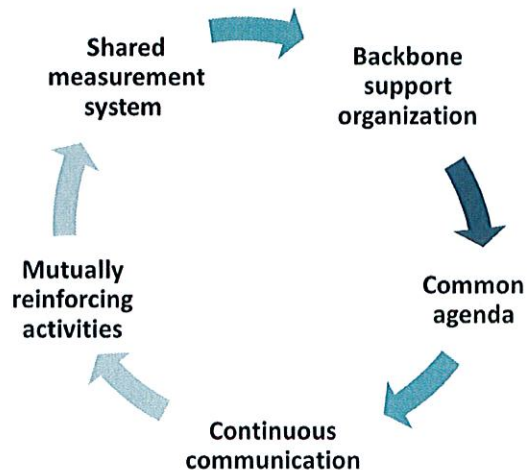
FRCs serve families and communities across the country, and their structure and funding vary from location to location. FRCs can be school-based, free-standing 501(c)(3)s, or embedded in community organizations (e.g., health centers/ hospitals, larger human service nonprofits with FRCs as programs, home visiting agencies, afterschool programs).<sup>xxviii</sup> FRCs may serve the broader community or target specific populations (e.g., teen parents, families with special needs children, school or ethnic communities) and be housed in schools, storefronts, shopping centers, converted houses, etc.

FRC budgets vary depending on size and scope of programs, infrastructure needs, cost of living, among other factors. In New Jersey, a typical community-based center has “an annual budget of \$240,000 to \$300,000 with three to four full-time staff” and in Kentucky, a typical school-based FRC has “an annual budget of \$33,000 to \$82,000 with one to two full-time staff with space and other resources provided in-kind.”<sup>xxix</sup> FRCs are typically funded through multiple funding sources, and they often blend or braid funding streams to best serve families. They frequently receive funding from federal, state, and/or local government, and seek to diversify funding through non-governmental sources such as philanthropy and in-kind donations.

## Networks

In 2011, the National Family Support Network (NFSN) was established as a membership-based organization to support statewide networks of FRCs, defined as “two or more Family Support and Strengthening programs, such as Family Resource Centers, working together within a collective impact framework to ensure coordinated quality support for families.”<sup>xxx</sup> Currently, there are 31 NFSN-member networks representing over 3,000 Family Support and Strengthening organizations, using various models and funding approaches to support their efforts.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Collective impact frameworks include five components that create the infrastructure and systems to tackle complex issues, including a backbone support organization, a common agenda, continuous communication, mutually reinforcing activities, and a shared measurement system. In Colorado, Family Resource Center Association (FRCA) has operationalized each of these components for their network of 30+ community- and school-based FRCs located in rural and urban regions of the state.<sup>xxxii</sup> Networks are helpful because they provide connection, coordination, and collaboration among members (e.g., serve as a coordinating hub for the spokes on the wheel) and offer training and technical assistance to support high quality service delivery, among other functions that can include organizational capacity building, policy and advocacy support and a shared measurement system.



Thus, when considering a solution to meet the various needs of Douglas County, it is important to consider not only individual FRCs that can support specific communities but also how FRCs may come together to work collectively to serve the larger Douglas County region. Based on the information reported in this environmental scan, it is clear that communities within Douglas County have different resources and needs, and interviewees recognize the value of customized, neighborhood solutions that will be family friendly, accessible, and culturally relevant.

## Selected Examples from the Field

### School-Based FRCs

Schools are no longer stand-alone, academic institutions where children come solely to learn. Schools are integrated institutions within communities, and many are serving children living in poverty with significant social and emotional needs. Teachers are not necessarily trained to meet these needs, and school social workers are often stretched thin or across multiple buildings. FRCs, however, are designed to meet these social and emotional (and basic) needs of children and families, and integrating an FRC into a school building can help students succeed academically and emotionally while removing this burden from individual teachers<sup>xxxiii</sup>.

In 1993, Tennessee granted the authority to local districts to create school-based FRCs, but state funding was never guaranteed, and local funding constraints remain a barrier. However, in 2019-2020, the state Department of Education allocated \$3.05 million to fund 102 FRCs in 79 districts. Guidelines require FRCs to collaborate and coordinate with local service providers to help families meet their children's academic and social needs. These school-based FRCs work with the school and parents to **establish goals and strategies that meet the unique needs of that community, including:**

- ✓ Attendance and truancy
- ✓ Collaboration and community partnerships
- ✓ Behavioral health and social-emotional learning
- ✓ Family support
- ✓ Family training and education
- ✓ Family engagement
- ✓ Academic Support

Each FRC has an advisory council to help them set annual priorities and program goals. These advisory councils typically consist of parents, state agency representatives, local service providers, and philanthropy representatives. Setting annual priorities helps keep the FRC grounded in a community's changing needs.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Kentucky has also established a statewide network of school-based FRCs that has been in place for over 30 years. Their overriding mission is to help ensure children come to school ready to learn, addressing issues of poverty and behavioral health needs that can be barriers to academic success. Like Tennessee, each school district and FRC works with a local advisory board to create flexible services that adapt to a community's changing needs. Initially, at least 20% of students at a school must be eligible for free/reduced lunch to receive state funding for an FRC, but once established, all students' families in a district are able to access services. In 2019, there were 856 school-based FRCs in Kentucky, with 283 serving more than one school.<sup>xxxv</sup> Like other FRCs, the school centers in Kentucky are focused on

identifying family strengths and needs and creating collaborative action plans. A key part of these plans is coordination between the schools and community service providers, helping families navigate the system of providers and enhance their engagement with the school.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

## **Family Access Center of Excellence (FACE)**

The Family Access Center of Excellence (FACE) in Boone County, MO is a unique school-partnership model providing a coordinated and collaborative approach to quality social, emotional, and behavioral health services for all families with a child 0-19 years old. FACE represents a partnership between six school districts and the Missouri Prevention Science Institute (MPSI) at the local University of Missouri. FACE aims to provide early intervention for children’s behavioral health issues by providing case management and referral services and sustaining a continuum of evidence-based programs and practices.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Boone County voters overwhelmingly passed a sales tax in 2012 to create the Children’s Service Fund, and the Missouri Prevention Science Institute used this funding source to create the Boone County Schools Mental Health Coalition (BCSMHC) and FACE. BCSMHC sought to build upon the success of the Juvenile Assessment Center model by focusing more on early intervention and reducing the net-widening effect that government-based JACs can inadvertently create. FACE was designed to be a single-access point for families needing mental health services, reducing the number of children and youth in formal systems by providing early intervention, systemic prevention programming, data-based decision-making, and a coordinated system of care delivery. FACE does not provide direct mental health services, but they provide referrals, case management, and ongoing monitoring to ensure that families are able to access services to meet their children’s needs. Like a more general FRC model, FACE works collaboratively with families, working together to create service plans with measurable goals.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The Boone County model is designed to serve children, youth, and families *before* they have contact with the juvenile justice system through a collaborative partnership with all six county school districts. BCSMHC has implemented a county-wide assessment system to gather data on risk factors that are predictive of poor school, mental health, and life course outcomes. Teachers fill out mental health assessment checklists three times a year for all students grades K-12. Students in grades 3-12 also complete age-appropriate self-assessments. These data are provided back to each school building in a dashboard indicating risk factors on both a school and individual level. There is a dual focus on universal evidence-based prevention programs as well as targeted interventions for at-risk kids such as group and individual therapy. MPSI provides training and support for school-based teams to analyze their data and implement effective evidence-based programming. Children and youth indicating a need for a higher level of care are referred to FACE. In 2020, BCSMHC was able to integrate the educational data system to FACE’s data system to evaluate the impact of FACE services—connecting youth receiving services at FACE to their school ID to track intervention and educational outcomes.<sup>xxxix</sup>

## **Hartford Brighter Futures Family Center Network**

Responding to the stakeholders’ description of the siloed structure of services in Douglas County, an example in Hartford, CT may provide a model for integration. Brighter Futures is an early childhood initiative launched by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving in the early 1990s. What started as targeted support of programs within discrete areas such as early childhood and family support evolved into a broad-based community-focused approach to build the capacities of families and integrate services across the region. In recent years, the Foundation has shifted to a systems-building perspective—finding

the linkages and connections between individuals in a larger system—in order to more comprehensively respond to family needs in the region. <sup>xii</sup>

Since the beginning of the initiative, Brighter Futures has funded six neighborhood-based family centers operated by three community-based organizations. These family centers provide family support services typical to other FRCs, but although they shared the same major funder, they operated in separate silos. In 2015, the Hartford Foundation launched the Family Center Redesign, focusing on user-centered design, team decision-making, reflective practice in organizational-change management, and improvement methodology. This process enabled the funder and the family center staff to recognize that the centers had moved beyond simple points of service to become the primary “go-to” spot for neighborhood family services, innovation hubs where ideas could be tested and scaled up, places where the larger community-based organizations could receive honest client feedback, and safe places for residents that were rooted in communities rather than institutions. <sup>xiii</sup> The Redesign process created an integrated network of centers, strengthening linkages and aligning programs between previous stand-alone family centers.

As the centers committed to becoming a more intentional network that connected families with community services, the evaluation necessarily shifted from traditional individual summative assessments to measuring systems change within the new network. This new formal learning process also incorporated the direct perspectives of frontline staff and families in new ways, allowing the network to establish formal feedback loops so that their services could continue to meet the changing needs of families. This shift from individual center accountability to collective action and learning allowed program staff and leaders from all six centers to come together to create a common Theory of Change and select drivers and measurement tools that outline the organizational practices that will meet family needs. For example, lessons learned or changes tested in one center might be applied to services throughout the whole network. In the end the goal of the new network was to help parents support their child’s health and development, increase access to effective services, and support parent and neighborhood connections. <sup>xiii</sup>

Each center also operates a Parent Leadership Council, where parent leaders provide their own ideas for innovation and change. Staff from each center shared the ongoing data collection efforts with the Parent Leadership Councils to inform their work, ideas, and program goals. <sup>xiv</sup>

## Summary and Next Steps

This Environmental Scan was intended to provide key stakeholders with the information needed to critically assess potential solutions to the gaps in prevention and early intervention services for youth and families in the community. As presented in this report, the salient issues of concern pertinent to youth and families in Douglas County at-risk for formal system involvement include basic needs, mental and behavioral health, parent engagement and family relationships, chronic absenteeism and truancy, and service coordination and navigation. Further, the systemic racial and ethnic disparities faced by families of color in the community and the lack of cohesive community provider collaboration represent broader, system-level barriers that need to be addressed when developing solutions.

While the community faces many challenges when it comes to addressing the unmet needs of local youth and families, there are engaged stakeholders and funders, critical assets and providers, and momentum

in Douglas County to work toward solutions. When reviewing the literature and examining possible approaches to addressing the issues outlined in this report, the Family Resource Center model stood out as an appropriate option for stakeholders to consider for this community most notably due to the strengths-based, family-driven approach and adaptability feature of this model.

An FRC, as a potential solution, can take many forms. This report shared a few key examples that were most relevant to the characteristics, infrastructure, and needs of Douglas County. As key stakeholders embark on the next stage of the planning process to consider whether an FRC is the appropriate path to pursue, it is important to consider the organizational and programmatic requirements for various FRC models to determine which approach most closely aligns with the goals, resources, and infrastructure of Douglas County. The table below presents a few of these considerations that will be discussed and reviewed further as this project moves into the Action Planning stage of work.

FRC Model	Highly Qualified Administrative Staff	Well-trained Program Staff	Evidence-Based Programs	Data System	Financial/Accounting System & Staff	Board of Directors
FRC is embedded within a community organization	X	X	X	*	*	*
FRC is embedded within a County Government Dept.	X	X	X	*	*	*
School-based FRC	X	X	X	*	*	*
Neighborhood FRCs operating under a lead organization	*	X	X	*	*	*
Free-standing FRC (501c3 organization)	X	X	X	X	X	X

X Provided directly by and for the FRC

\* Provided by the community organization/school district/county department administration/system

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## **Douglas County, Nebraska, FY20/21 OJJDP Non-Participating State (NPS) Profile**

### Introduction

Douglas County applied for and received the FY2020/2021 OJJDP Non-Participating State (NPS) funds. The purpose of this grant project is to increase the availability of community-based services for youth of color who come into contact with the juvenile justice system and/or to prevent youth of color from coming into contact with the juvenile justice system. Douglas County will issue subawards to provide community-based services to juveniles under programs aligned with evidence-based practices through the use of OJJDP Title II R/ED funds.

The majority of information in this State Profile was compiled by Lancaster County, which applied for and received 2019 NPS funds in a collaborative effort with the Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ), and contracted with the University of Nebraska at Omaha Juvenile Justice Institute (UNO-JJI) to work collaboratively with the NCJJ to lead that project.

### Juvenile Justice System Structure and Process

The juvenile justice system in Nebraska is multi-faceted with state and local governments providing services to youth as well as funding services through professional service providers. The following provides a synopsis of the major components in the Nebraska Juvenile Justice System.

#### Law Enforcement:

Law enforcement officers encounter juveniles in a variety of situations including investigations of abuse/neglect, emergency mental health placements, street contact, and arrest. Law enforcement may release a youth, issue a citation, or take a youth into custody if they are considering a request for detention. Nebraska Statute §43-249 clarifies that law enforcement take youth into temporary custody and are not formally considered arrested. Officers also have contact with out of state runaways and transportation of juveniles.

There are three primary “branches” of law enforcement in the State of Nebraska: City Police Departments, Sheriff’s Departments, and Nebraska State Patrol. In 2019, the Nebraska Crime Commission reported 3,859 full time sworn officers with 187 vacant positions across the state. As of 2019, there are 2.0 full-time sworn officers per 1,000 individuals in Nebraska (based on the 1,917,926 population; Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcements and Criminal Justice, 2019).

According to the Nebraska Crime Commission 2019 Law Enforcement Employment Data Report, there are 31 city police departments serving communities with a population over 5000, and 75 city police departments serving communities with a population under 5000. Twenty-six sheriff’s offices or city police departments have contracts to provide law enforcement support for smaller communities that cannot support their own police force.

Each county elects a sheriff every four years. They “serve or otherwise execute, according to law, and return writs or other legal process issued by lawful authority and directed or committed to the sheriff and to perform such other duties as may be required by law.” (Nebraska Revised Statute 23-701).

The Nebraska State Patrol is Nebraska’s statewide full-service law enforcement agency (Nebraska State Patrol, 2021a). The Nebraska State Patrol is tasked with “working with communities to improve public safety; enforcing traffic, criminal and drug laws; investigating crimes, as well as enforcing the laws and federal regulations pertaining to commercial motor carriers.” The Nebraska State Patrol is comprised of four divisions: office of the superintendent, field services division, investigative services division, and administrative services division (Nebraska State Patrol, 2021b). The Nebraska State patrol operates through six troop areas across the state, with the main offices located in: Omaha, Norfolk, Grand Island, North Platte, Scottsbluff, and Lincoln (Nebraska State Patrol, 2021c).

In addition to these primary law enforcement agencies, the following entities supplement law enforcement functions in Nebraska:

- Nebraska Revised Statute 79-2701 (2019) indicates that schools have an interest in keeping students safe and public-school children and employees are entitled to safety. Accordingly, schools may employ school resource officers or security guards to meet these ends (Nebraska Revised Statute 79-2701, 2019). As of 2021, there are approximately 101 school resource officers in the state. Additionally, schools may employ a security officer. School resource officers are designated through their local city police department or sheriff’s office.
- The Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center (NLETC) is home to two law enforcement training academies: Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Academy and Nebraska State Patrol Training Academy (Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center, n.d. a). The center is tasked with law enforcement education, training, and evaluations of law enforcement officers (Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center, n.d. b). In addition, the NLETC ensures that law enforcement state certification requirements, established by the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice’s Police Standards Advisory Council, are upheld by regulating statewide training academies and mandated programs. All law enforcement in the state receive training at NLETC except for Lincoln and Omaha police departments who support their own training academies.
- Nebraska has three Native American reservations with recognized Law Enforcement Agencies by the FBI: The Omaha Tribe, Winnebago Tribe, and Santee Tribe. Tribal Officers are employed via a sovereign nation not a Nebraska Law Enforcement Agency, therefore they are not considered Nebraska Law Enforcement Officers. To enhance law enforcement capabilities where state and tribal lands are contiguous and intermingled, a Tribal Officer can enroll in limited tribal certification for cross-deputization with the Nebraska State Patrol. Cross-deputization allows law enforcement personnel from state and tribal entities to cross jurisdictions in criminal cases. The limited tribal certification is only good for the time they are with that tribal agency. The officer cannot go anywhere else in Nebraska and work as a certified

officer; however, if they were to get hired by a Nebraska agency and attend reciprocity training, they then could be recognized as Nebraska officers.

- Nebraska Game and Parks also has the power of arrest for youth.

Diversion:

Youth may have the opportunity to participate in a juvenile diversion program as authorized by Nebraska Revised Statutes §43-260.02- 43-260.07. The county attorney has the authority to determine what charges are eligible for their diversion program.

The following excerpt from the 2020 Juvenile Diversion in Nebraska Annual Report (Arp & Hoffman, 2021) effectively describes the intent of diversion in Nebraska:

*The state of Nebraska has identified four goals of a juvenile pretrial diversion program: 1) to provide eligible juvenile offenders with an alternative program in lieu of adjudication through the juvenile court; 2) to reduce recidivism among diverted juvenile offenders; 3) to reduce the costs and caseload burdens on the juvenile justice system and the criminal justice system; and 4) to promote the collection of restitution to the victim of the juvenile offender's crime.*

*In Nebraska, a county attorney has statutory authority to develop a juvenile diversion program with the concurrence of their county board. A county attorney's decision to utilize a diversion program and refer a youth to diversion is often based on factors generally including: 1) the youth's age, 2) the nature of the offense and the youth's role in the offense, 3) previous offenses, dangerousness or threat posed by the youth, and 4) recommendations of referring agency, victim, and advocates for the youth. Juvenile pretrial diversion programs in Nebraska are required to provide screening services for use in creating an individualized diversion plan that utilize appropriate services for the youth, and include program requirements such as a letter of apology, community service, restitution, educational or informational classes, curfew, and victim youth conferencing.*

*As a result of LB482 in 2015, a county attorney cannot file a juvenile petition under Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-247(3)(b) until they have made reasonable efforts to refer a youth and family to community-based resources available to address the youth's behaviors, provide crisis intervention, and maintain a youth safely in the home.<sup>13</sup> This statutory requirement is another reason why county attorney support and development of juvenile diversion programs is vital in Nebraska.*

Juvenile Diversion Data  
2020

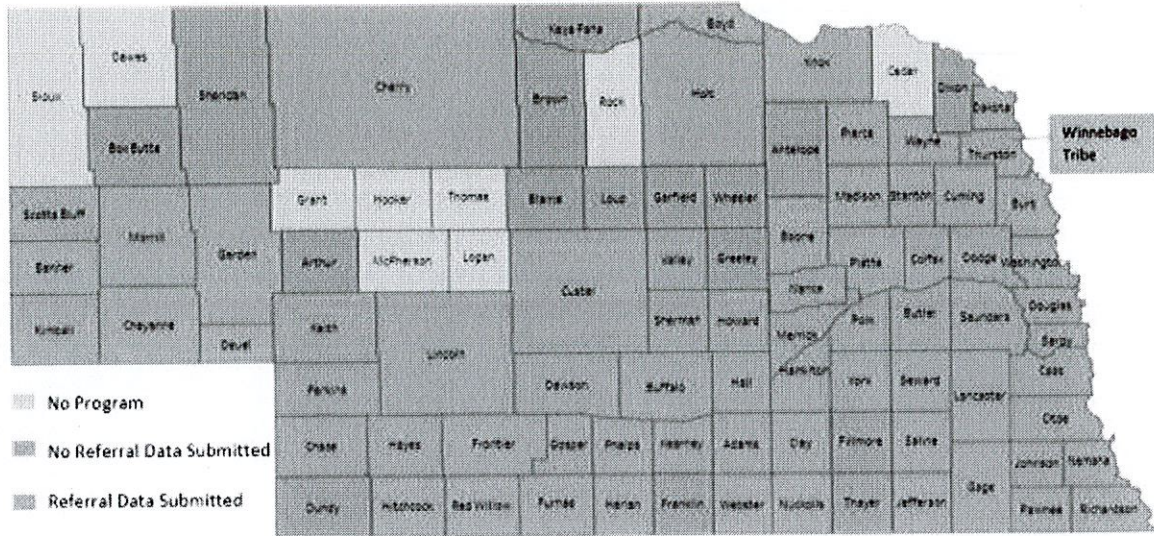


Figure 1

The number of counties with diversion programs in Nebraska continues to increase annually (Arp & Hoffman, 2021). In 2015, 69 counties offered diversion; by the end of calendar year 2020, 84 Nebraska counties and the Winnebago Tribe offer some type of diversion opportunity to youth. The map above illustrates the counties offering diversion programs across the state as provided by the Nebraska Crime Commission.

Nebraska Statute requires every pre-trial diversion program to submit data on an annual basis to the Nebraska Crime Commission (NCC). The NCC compiles the data into an annual report to the legislature. In addition, the NCC supports a statewide Director of Diversion Programs to oversee the program. The Director works collaboratively with the Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice Statewide Diversion Advisory Subcommittee, which helps guide policy, training, and support to diversion programs statewide. (Arp & Hoffman, 2020). The subcommittee has developed the Nebraska Juvenile Pretrial Diversion Guidelines and worked with the Juvenile Justice Institute to develop a statewide diversion screening tool. As of July 2022, implementation processes are underway with various counties across the state to begin utilization of this tool.

Probation:

Probation in Nebraska is a statewide system housed within the Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (AOC). The state level administration includes a Probation Administrator and a Deputy over the following three divisions: Adult Programs and Services Division, which includes a Rehabilitative Services Unit to support adult and juvenile behavioral health; Juvenile Services Division; and Information Technology and Operations. Youth sentenced to probation in adult court receive supervision and services supported by the Adult Programs and Services Division. The Juvenile Services Division is responsible for “statewide administration of juvenile intake, investigations, supervision, and services for youth and families impacting community safety, habilitation, and behavior change” (State of Nebraska Judicial Branch, 2021c).

Probation in Nebraska is a state and county partnership. The AOCPS support the personnel for 14 probation districts statewide which align with District Court Judicial Districts. Each local district has a chief probation officer who works with the county(s) they serve to support local office infrastructure. (See the Nebraska Judicial Branch Website for an interactive map: [District Information | Nebraska Judicial Branch](#)) All districts have officers who specialize in high-risk supervision, low risk supervision and authoring pre-disposition investigations. Larger districts may have the opportunity to further specialize caseloads by offense, such as youth who sexually harm or status youth.

By statute, probation is responsible for conducting an intake assessment at the point in which a youth has been taken into custody by law enforcement and a decision is needed to determine whether the youth should go to secure detention, an alternative placement, or can be released pending court. Probation uses a statewide detention screening tool created with the technical support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation Juvenile Detention and Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). Probation is currently working with researchers to validate the tool. By statute, all probation officers receive basic and regular training on the tool.

After adjudication, a judge can order probation to conduct a pre-disposition investigation (PDI). Probation utilizes the Nebraska Youth Screen (NYS), the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) and a variety of specific evidence-based assessments as necessary to develop the report to the court. Probation also utilizes a dispositional recommendation matrix based on offense and YLS domains to guide recommendations to the court. Officers are trained to use motivational interviewing during their PDI and supervision work to ensure the best possible outcome for the youth.

If a youth is placed on probation by the court for supervision, the youth is classified to a specific level of supervision based on the recommendations from the PDI and a case plan is developed with the officer. The case plan outlines probation conditions as well as programs and/or services the youth will participate in while on probation. High risk youth will participate in the cognitive group Nebraska-Aggression Replacement Training (N-ART) facilitated by trained probation officers. Officers also make referrals for treatment and other needed services. Statute allows probation to implement a matrix of graduated response of incentives and sanctions as part of supervision in lieu of automatic violation.

Youth who are not being successful on probation can be ordered by the court to the Office of Juvenile Services under the Department for Health and Human Services for placement at a Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC). There are designated facilities for boys, girls, and youth with high behavioral health needs. Probation has a reentry team that remains highly engaged with youth while at the YRTC, assists with family team meetings, and begins developing a reentry plan upon placement at the facility. Youth are released from YRTC back onto probation.

Youth are discharged from probation when they have successfully completed their case plan or are unsatisfactorily discharged by the court.

Detention:

A Juvenile Detention facility in Nebraska is defined by Nebraska Revised Statute §83-4,125(2) as:

*Juvenile detention facility means an institution operated by a political subdivision or political subdivisions for the secure detention and treatment of persons younger than eighteen years of age, including persons under the jurisdiction of a juvenile court, who are serving a sentence pursuant to a conviction in a county or district court or who are detained while waiting disposition of charges against them. Juvenile detention facility does not include any institution operated by the department;*

There are four juvenile detention centers in Nebraska: Douglas County Youth Center (DCYC) in Omaha, Patrick J. Thomas Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) in Papillion (Sarpy County), Lancaster County Youth Services Center (LCYSC) in Lincoln and Northeast Juvenile Services in Madison County (Voices for Children in Nebraska, 2020). Since 1993, detention facilities are responsible for adhering to the minimum juvenile detention facility standards, which are promulgated by Nebraska's Jail Standards Division (Nebraska Crime Commission, n.d.). Broadly, the standards ensure that facilities operate in accordance with case law relevant to detention. The Jail Standards Division provides technical assistance, facilitates inspections, and collects facility data to ensure standards are upheld.

Nebraska has a unique classification of detention called "staff secure". This is defined in NRS §83-4,125(5) as:

*Staff secure juvenile facility means a juvenile residential facility operated by a political subdivision (a) which does not include construction designed to physically restrict the movements and activities of juveniles who are in custody in the facility, (b) in which physical restriction of movement or activity of juveniles is provided solely through staff, (c) which may establish reasonable rules restricting ingress to and egress from the facility, and (d) in which the movements and activities of individual juvenile residents may, for treatment purposes, be restricted or subject to control through the use of intensive staff supervision. Staff secure juvenile facility does not include any institution operated by the department.*

Sarpy County is the only standalone staff secure detention center. Madison County has a wing of staff secure beds, while Douglas and Lancaster County closed their staff secure units due to a significant decrease in admissions.

Nebraska Juvenile Detention Centers are also statutorily required per §43-4318 to submit information about death, serious injury, and the use of solitary confinement to the Nebraska Inspector General for Child Welfare. The inspector general issues an annual report and recommendations based on findings from investigations related to these issues.

June – December 2022 Update: Douglas County is in the process of building a new juvenile detention facility in downtown Omaha to replace the existing facility. The new detention center will be collocated with the court house and juvenile probation offices to provide better and faster access to services. Transition plans are in development to determine how best to structure the move of currently detained youth to the new building, as well as whether and how the existing detention center building can be repurposed.

Last Updated: January 24, 2024

January – July 2023 Update: Construction of the new juvenile detention facility (“Douglas County Youth and Family Support Center”) in Douglas County is scheduled to be completed in July 2023. As DCYC Administrative staff finalize their transition plans, the current plan is to start transitioning youth to the new facility as of November 1, 2023, with all youth moved by January 1, 2024 to allow for the closing of the current DCYC. Updated detention contracts with Sarpy County and the Office of Probation Administration, passed by the Douglas County Board of Commissioners, along with a resolution setting staggered population benchmarks between August 1 and December 1, will assist in ensuring a smooth transition of youth and building capacity in the community for detention alternatives to serve youth who wind up in DCYC for reasons such as losses of placement, unlawful absences, or non-criminal violations of probation. Douglas County is also exploring options for creating a holistic family-centered, culturally-competent, wrap-around service approach for preadjudicated youth with misdemeanor weapon and firearm possession offenses so they can remain under community supervision while awaiting court hearings in lieu of detention.

July – December 2023 Update: The DCYC Transition Team staff continues to review policies and procedures in preparation for moving to the new facility. Significant increases in the average daily population during this reporting period created challenges in transitioning youth into the smaller design-capacity facility. The Board of Commissioners continues to monitor population levels and guide progress of the transition to best practices are followed with regard to the management of detained youth.

January – June 2024 Update: The average daily population of DCYC remains higher than the design capacity of the new detention facility, resulting in a continued delay of transition. The Board of Commissioners continues to monitor population levels and has authorized transition to begin when the average daily population maintains 80% of the new facility’s design capacity for 6 consecutive months, or July 1, 2025, whichever comes first.

#### Courts:

The structure of courts in Nebraska are presented in Figure 2 (<https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/sites/default/files/courtflowchart2021.pdf>). Nebraska’s court system includes the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, district courts (general jurisdiction), county courts (limited jurisdiction), and other courts created by the legislature such as Separate Juvenile Courts and Workers Compensation. (Nebraska Legislature, 2019; State of Nebraska Judicial Branch, 2021a).

Judges are appointed by the governor and subsequently elected every six years, with the exception of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals which are lifetime appointments.

Each county has a county court, which has original jurisdiction on probate, guardianship, conservatorship, adoption, and eminent domain issues (Nebraska Legislature, 2019). These courts also process many misdemeanor cases. The county court oversees juvenile matters in the absence of a designated juvenile court.

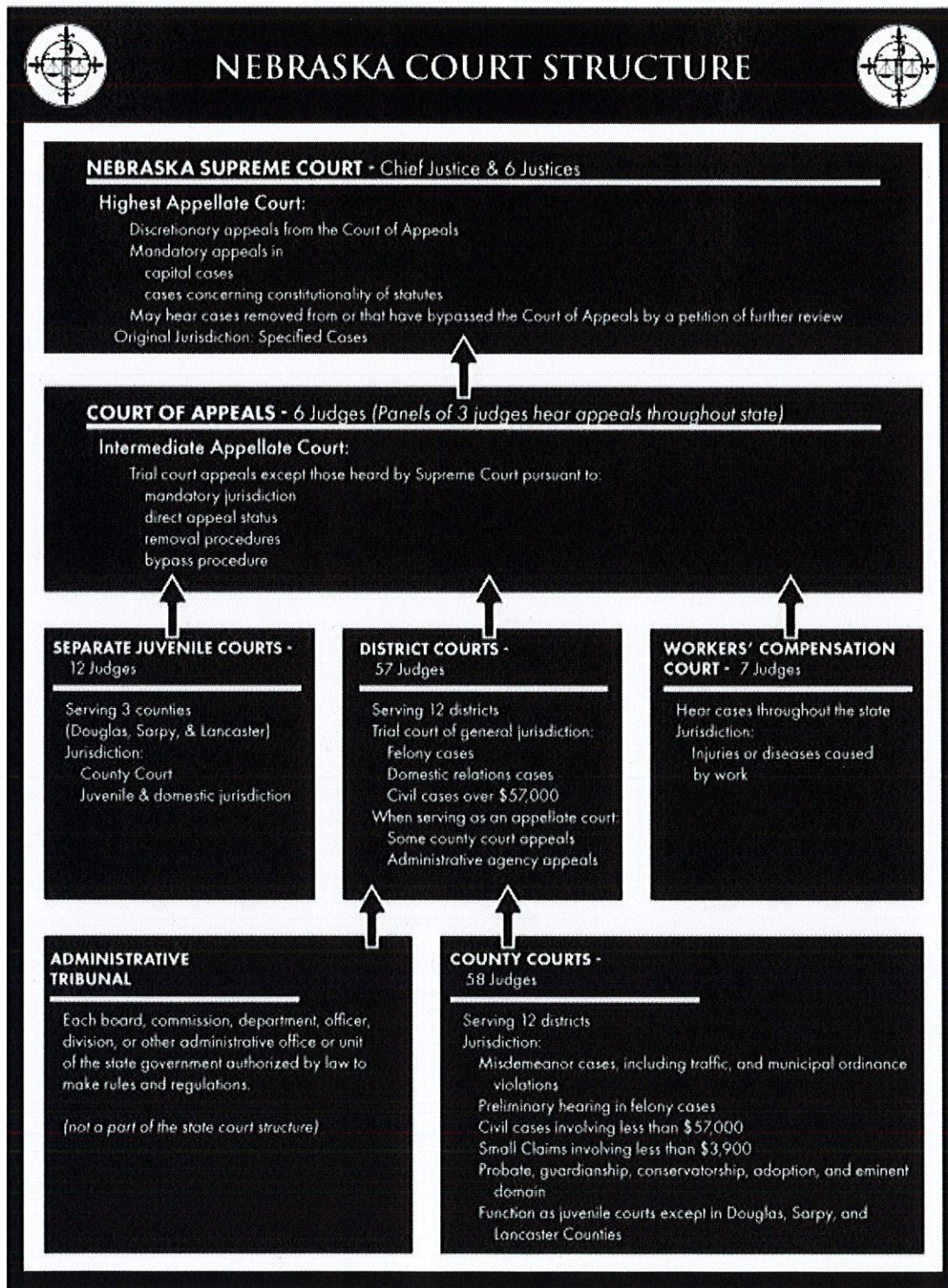
Last Updated: January 24, 2024

District courts are trial courts of general jurisdiction, which are responsible for processing felony, civil, and some misdemeanor cases (Nebraska Legislature, 2019).

Separate juvenile courts are responsible for handling neglected, dependent, and delinquent children (Nebraska Legislature, 2019). Additionally, these courts share concurrent jurisdiction with district courts matters pertaining to the care, support, custody or control of mentally deficient children younger than 18.

The jurisdiction of juvenile courts is established in Nebraska Revised Statute 43-247 (2016). Broadly, for delinquency juvenile courts in Nebraska have jurisdiction over any juvenile who has committed an act, when they were 11 years of age or older, that would constitute as a felony, misdemeanor, or any other law violation, except for some traffic violations. Additionally, juveniles with life circumstances (e.g., homelessness, lack parental care) are subject to the jurisdiction of juvenile courts for child welfare purposes.

Douglas, Lancaster and Sarpy counties each have a separate juvenile court. Douglas County has 6 judges; Lancaster County has 4 judges; and Sarpy county has 2 judges who preside over the juvenile courts (State of Nebraska Judicial Branch, 2021b). In counties without a separate juvenile court, the county retains original jurisdiction.



The Judicial Branch also supports a broadening continuum of specialty courts, including: Adult Drug and DUI Court, Family Drug Treatment Court, Juvenile Drug Treatment Court, Veterans Court, Reentry Court, Mental Health Court and Young Adult Court. In addition, the Judicial

Branch also houses programs and initiatives that support courts, probation, and constituents statewide:

- A. Office of Dispute Resolution - Supports courts with a network of mediation centers statewide to provide conflict resolution services;
- B. Interpreter Services Program;
- C. Judicial Branch Education – Provides initial and ongoing training and education to all employees of the Judicial Branch;
- D. Access to Justice Commission - focuses on addressing and finding solutions to disparity in the court system; and
- E. Court Improvement Project- supports the Supreme Court Commission on Children in the Courts and statewide multidisciplinary Through the Eyes of the Child Teams. These are judicial led efforts to improve state and local systems for youth impacted by the child welfare and/or juvenile justice system.

The AOCJ also lead several nationally recognized evidence-based initiatives aimed at juvenile justice system improvement. These include the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM), and RFK Probation Transformation Initiative.

County Attorneys:

Each county in Nebraska is served by a county attorney who is elected by their constituents in a 4-year election cycle (Nebraska County Attorneys Association, 2019). County attorneys are viewed as the front line of prosecution and may handle a variety of cases including those related to felony, misdemeanor, or juvenile court. Their engagement in juvenile court includes abuse, neglect, and delinquency matters. The county attorney prosecutes cases on behalf of the state, makes all filing determinations, and has the discretion to administer diversion programs.

Juvenile Defense:

The National Juvenile Defender Center provides the following summary of indigent defense for youth in Nebraska:

*In Nebraska, youth in juvenile court have the right to counsel in “all proceedings before the juvenile court.” Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 43-272(1). A youth must be informed of their right to counsel, using “developmentally appropriate language.” Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 43-248.01. In larger counties with a population of more than 150,000 inhabitants, a youth who appears in court without an attorney will have one appointed. Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 43-272(1)(b). In smaller counties with a population of fewer than 150,000 inhabitants, a youth who appears without an attorney will be advised of their right to counsel. If the court determines that the youth and parent or guardian would like, but cannot afford, an attorney, the court shall appoint one “for all proceedings before the juvenile court.” Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 43-272(1).*

*Nebraska provides counsel to indigent youth through a county-based system that includes elected public defenders, contract public defenders, and assigned counsel. Counties with populations in excess of 100,000 are required to have elected public defenders. Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 23-3401(1). Counties with populations below 35,000 may choose to have appointed public defenders. Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 23-3404(1). The judges in one or more judicial districts make*

Last Updated: January 24, 2024

*the determination of whether a public defender is needed and that “determination shall be certified to the Governor.” Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 29-3910. Youth who are deemed indigent are entitled to counsel by statute. Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 29-3915(3). If the attorney appointed by the court has a conflict, another attorney shall be appointed by the court. Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 29-3904(1).*

*Counties fund most of the costs of indigent defense, although the Nebraska Commission on Public Advocacy provides money and technical assistance to help counties provide effective counsel for indigent youth. Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 29-3923.*

In 2021, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB307 which ensures all youth in juvenile court are provided with the opportunity to have counsel. The Supreme Court is also required to develop a process, by court rule, that ensures youth have the opportunity to consult with counsel prior to waiving their right to counsel.

Department of Health and Human Services/Division of Children and Family Services:  
The Department of Health and Human Services provides a wide variety of children, family, adult, and behavioral health services. The Division of Children and Family Services is specifically responsible for child welfare and the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers. Within the Protection and Safety Division, services include prevention, child and adult protective services, foster care and independent living, adoption, domestic violence, safety and treatment services, and education. Youth having contact in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems are identified as Crossover Youth. The Division and Children and Family Services and The Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation have worked collaboratively on state policy that encourages the efficiency and effectiveness of serving youth in both systems at the same time.

The Division of Children and Family Services also oversees the administration of the 3 youth facilities in: Kearney, Hastings, and Lincoln. The facilities aim “to help youth live better lives through effective services, giving youth the chance to become law-abiding citizens.” Youth between 12 and 19 years that have been adjudicated as delinquent and committed to the Office of Juvenile Services' custody may be placed in a Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC). The mission of the YRTCs is to provide individualized supervision, care, accountability, and treatment in a manner consistent with public safety to those youth in its care.

Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility:

Nebraska Revised Statute 83-905 (1997), indicates that the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services has oversight and control of secure youth confinement facilities. The Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility (NCYF) in Omaha, Nebraska is a minimum, medium, and maximum-security facility (Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, n.d.). The facility is physically secure and accredited by the American Correctional Association. It houses males up to the age of 21 years, 10 months, who have been adjudicated as adults. The facility provides youth with opportunities including: clinical treatment, work, educational, prosocial activity, and reentry service opportunities. Youth committed to NCYF are first assessed at the Diagnostic and Evaluation Center in Lincoln, NE. After the assessment is complete, they are transferred to the Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility.

#### Office of Inspector General for Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice

Created by the Legislature in 2012, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) provides an independent form of inquiry and review of the actions of individuals and agencies responsible for the care and protection of children in the Nebraska child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The OIG is a subdivision of the Office of Public Counsel (Ombudsman's Office).

The office investigates allegations or incidents of misconduct, misfeasance, malfeasance, statutory violations, and regulatory violations committed by any of the following:

- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services;
- Juvenile Probation;
- The Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice's Juvenile Justice Programs;
- Private agencies and service providers under state contract;
- Licensed childcare facilities;
- Foster parents; and
- Juvenile detention and staff secure detention centers.

The OIG also investigates incidents resulting in death or serious injury that occur in foster homes, private agencies, childcare facilities, or other programs under contract with Juvenile Probation and the Department of Health and Human Services, as well as cases involving an investigation under the Child Protection Act open for no more than one year. The OIG identifies systemic issues and makes recommendations for improvement. Nebraska statute also charges the OIG to collect data on the use of solitary confinement in juvenile facilities and report annually.

#### Community Based Service Continuum

Youth involved in the juvenile justice system receive services from a wide continuum of community, private, and governmental agencies. These services are funded through an equally wide continuum of sources including grant funding, private insurance, Medicaid, local county/city funding, and/or Probation funding. The goal is to develop a network of informal and formal supports in a youth's community to assist them in ongoing success after their exit from the system.

#### Non-Therapeutic Services

Prior to adjudication, youth receive non-therapeutic services through diversion or community programs funded through Community Based Aid grant funds from the Nebraska Crime Commission. These services could range from prevention, community service, mentoring, alternatives to detention, restorative justice, culturally specific, or other services identified in individual youth plans. Prior to adjudication, counties are responsible for payment of secure detention costs. At this same point, probation is responsible for payment of evaluations, shelter or other out of home placement costs per §43-290.01.

Last Updated: January 24, 2024

### Therapeutic Services

Youth may access a continuum of community-based and residential services through licensed providers. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services oversees the licensing of these providers. Nebraska has a significant shortage of community-based and residential therapeutic services for families and youth, particularly in rural areas. Efforts are ongoing to increase the availability of telehealth services to help bridge this gap. The Division of Behavioral Health oversees six Behavioral Health Regions designed to provide crisis and community based behavioral health services. Crisis teams are developed at the local level and involve partnerships between local law enforcement and community providers. Diversion may partner with community-based providers for therapeutic interventions. The Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation maintains a network of registered service providers to serve youth on probation. These services range from community-based counseling to acute residential placements both in and out of state.

January – June 2023 Update: Douglas County is awaiting the opening of a new non-profit organization, RADIUS, on July 1, 2023 to serve girls and boys between 12-18 years of age. RADIUS joins existing efforts in Douglas County, Nebraska, to strengthen the continuum of services and alternatives for youth involved in the juvenile justice system. RADIUS was created to keep Omaha youth, who are on juvenile probation, in the community to receive treatment and education while staying connected to family relationships and local support networks which are essential to their future success. The evidence-based program at RADIUS provides a combination of four services (residential, in-home, school, and behavioral health treatment) to help youth, and their families, before, during, and after their time in the program. Services include.

July – December 2023 Update: RADIUS has opened and is taking a measured approach to serving youth and gradually increasing the population to its full 24-bed capacity. Uta Halee, a residential campus for girls, has also reopened under the management of Rite of Passage. Currently, Uta Halee has 12 shelter beds available, and is working on getting their group-home facilities and curriculum in place to increase the availability of gender-responsive out-of-home placement options for girls in the community. Douglas County continues to explore ways to bring together public, system, and private partners to increase the community-based continuum of care available for youth, especially in the prevention and early intervention realms. During this reporting period, Douglas County noticed an increase in the number of youth in detention who have court orders to be released but are waiting for an appropriate alternative placement (e.g., shelter, group home, PRTF) to be arranged. On December 15, 14 youth (7 preadjudicated, 7 on juvenile probation) had been waiting an average of 52 days from the time the court ordered their release to an appropriate placement. Douglas County is working with other system partners and community-based providers to explore options for increasing capacity to help expedite the release of appropriate youth from detention.

January – June 2024 Update: Douglas County was awarded the OJJDP FY2023 Building Local Continuums of Care to Support Youth Success grant, which has provided funding for Douglas County to convene a group of stakeholders from various public, private, and non-profit organizations to examine how more resources can be invested across a community-based continuum of care for youth in neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by high rates of

Last Updated: January 24, 2024

crime, poverty, and detention. We have begun holding quarterly meetings with our advisory committee and monthly meetings with our steering committee to begin reviewing our community-based resources and identifying supports and opportunities outside the juvenile justice system that builds on the strengths of youth and the entire family, in ways that are culturally appropriate, effective, and responsive to the evolving needs of youth and families. During this reporting period, Douglas County noticed an increase in the number of youth in detention who have court orders to be released but are waiting for an appropriate alternative placement (e.g., shelter, group home, PRTF) to be arranged. On July 5, 2024, 13 youth (all under the jurisdiction of State Probation) had been authorized to be released from detention to their approved placement once a bed was available (6 to a psychiatric residential treatment facility, 4 to a shelter, 2 to out-of-state group homes, and 1 to the State's Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center [YRTC]). Two additional youth were pending commitments to the YRTC due to a lack of acceptance at other lower-level placement options. Douglas County is working with other system partners and community-based providers to explore options for increasing capacity to help expedite the release of appropriate youth from detention.



## Understanding the causes of disproportionate minority contact: Results of focus group discussions

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### Abstract

Using a qualitative methods approach, this study explored the causes of disproportionate minority contact (DMC) from the clientele perspective. The data were collected via focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with the stakeholders, to examine the causes of disproportionate minority contact and determine the needs of the community. The results revealed that the causes and mechanisms of DMC were multi-faceted and complex. These causes could be classified into six categories: system, social, family/parental, educational, individual, and economic factors. Each one of these categories played a significant role in contributing to the final outcome of DMC. A significant theme that emerged from the results drew attention to the fact that in order to bring about any change and reduce DMC, all sectors of the society—law enforcement system, juvenile justice system, families, neighborhoods, and parents needed to work together and take greater responsibilities in assuring that juveniles stay out of trouble. The results also underscored that educating the communities on the existing resources for children and families would prove advantageous in reducing DMC.

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### Introduction

In 1988, Congress responded to overwhelming evidence that minority youth were disproportionately confined in the secure facilities, by amending the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974. The amendment required states participating in the Formula Grants program to “address efforts to reduce the proportion of the youth detained or confined in secure detention facilities, secure correctional facilities, jails, and lockups who are members of minority groups if such proportion exceeds the proportion such groups represent in the general population” (Section 223(a)(23)). Starting in 1989, a federal government mandate through the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)

required states to “address” disproportionate minority confinement to be eligible for certain federal juvenile justice funds.

The United States Congress revisited the disproportionate minority confinement issue during the 1992 reauthorization of the Act, substantially strengthening efforts to address the issue by elevating it to the status of a “core requirement.” As was the case with each of the other core requirements of the JJDP Act (deinstitutionalization of status offenders, removal of juveniles from adult jails and lockups, and sight and sound separation of juveniles from adults in secure institutions), 25 percent of each state’s Formula Grants allocation was contingent upon compliance with this requirement. The JJDP Formula Grants Consolidated Regulation (28 CFR Part 31) delineated the specific requirements states must fulfill to maintain compliance with the DMC core requirement (1996).

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As a result, since 1988, most states engaged in some efforts to reduce disproportionate minority confinement/contact and several studies were conducted to evaluate the problem of disproportionate minority contact. Most of these studies were based on official statistics and a frequent explanation for the overrepresentation of minority juveniles was that minority youth committed more offenses and/or more serious offenses and thus their overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system reflected this differential offending pattern. Official statistics, however, provided only a part of the picture. Official records, though an excellent source of data (Kakar, 1996a, 1996b; Kakar, Friedemann, & Peck, 2002), failed to capture the communities' and victims'/offenders' perceptions of the problem. The present study was an endeavor to supplement the existing DMC literature by collecting data from the people and communities who were directly affected by the DMC problem. The study examined the causes of DMC from the clientele perspective, using qualitative data, especially the data collected from the stakeholders (law enforcement officers, school personnel, juvenile court personnel, and state attorneys), grass root organizations, community and faith-based organizations, parents, community leaders, and other service providers.

Over the years, the issue of Disproportionate Minority Confinement changed its name to Disproportionate Minority Contact. The reason for this change was the fact that the first contact with the system was a key entry point from which youth further penetrated the juvenile justice system. It was established that the decisions made at the first contact could have a profound impact on disproportionality throughout the system. Both aggregate national and individual state data showed that racial disparities increased at every stage of the juvenile justice process. It was hypothesized that if disparities at the first contact with the system could be reduced, the subsequent disparities should also decline.

### **What is disproportionate minority contact?**

Minorities in the criminal and juvenile justice system were an issue of concern to researchers and policymakers alike. Disproportionate minority contact means that a disproportionately large number of minority youth come into contact with the juvenile justice system in relation to their representation in the general population. The groups referred to as minorities are African American, Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islanders, Hispanic/Latinos, or any other non-Caucasian group (Gillespie, Wilson, & Yearwood, 2000). Disproportionate minority contact is defined as a ratio of the share of

the juvenile population that is minority relative to the share of the at-risk population that is minority. It is believed that considerations of police practices such as targeting patrols in low-income neighborhoods, locations of offenses, differences in delinquent behavior by minority and White youth, differential reactions of crime victims to offenses committed by White or minority youth, and racial bias by decision makers in the system lead to DMC.

### **Brief summary of DMC literature**

*What is known about disproportionate minority contact?*

*Historical view on DMC:*

#### **1. DMC exists and is on the increase.**

Nationwide, at every stage of the juvenile justice system, youth of color are overrepresented and receive disparate treatment. Nationally, minority juveniles make up an increasingly large segment of all juveniles incarcerated. In 1979, African-American youth represented 28 percent of all youth in juvenile facilities; by 1995 that figure had risen to 40 percent. The proportion of Hispanic youth increased from 9 percent to 17 percent over the same period. African-American youth made up 15 percent of the general juvenile population in 1980 and 1995. While in 1985 African-American juveniles were housed in detention facilities at a rate 2.5 times greater than the rate for their White peers, in 1995 their detention rate was eight times greater (Wordes & Jones, 1998, p. 555). Between 1987 and 1996, the number of delinquency cases involving detention increased 71 percent for African-American youth and 50 percent for youth of other races. For White juveniles, the increase was only 18 percent (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999, p. 9). While minority youth represented only 34 percent of the nation's juvenile population in 1997, they accounted for 67 percent of juveniles committed to public facilities and 62 percent of juveniles detained in the United States (Hsia, Bridges, & McHale, 2004; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999, p. 4).

#### **2. DMC is widespread and present at all stages of the juvenile justice system.**

Results of several studies revealed that DMC was widespread and occurred within most juvenile justice systems across the nation. Several empirical studies documented that nationwide, at every stage of the juvenile justice system, minority youth were overrepresented and received disparate treatment, particularly

in secure confinement. It was also noted that minority youth experienced a “cumulative disadvantage” as they moved from arrest to referral on charges, to adjudication, to disposition or sentencing, and finally to incarceration. An examination of state studies revealed that African-American youth, and to a lesser extent, Hispanic youth were likely to be overrepresented at each stage of the juvenile justice process (Hamparian & Leiber, 1997).

3. *Some studies attributed overrepresentation to overinvolvement in crime.*

A frequent explanation of the overrepresentation of minority juveniles is that these youth are committing more offenses and/or more serious offenses, and thus, their representation in the juvenile justice system reflects this differential offending pattern. Other researchers (Bridges, Conley, Beretta, & Engen, 1993; Bridges, Conley, Engen, & Price-Spratlen, 1995; Bridges & Steen, 1998) suggested that prior history and seriousness of crimes committed play a critical role in minority overrepresentation in secure confinement. They stated that minorities, Black males particularly, commit serious and violent crimes at significantly higher rates than White males. Furthermore, minority males are imprisoned at higher rates than White males in areas where they have a disproportionate involvement in serious crime. In contrast, minorities are imprisoned at lower rates than Whites in those areas where they have disproportionately low levels of criminal involvement. Earlier studies indicated that after legal factors were controlled, the relationships between race and socioeconomic status and severity of disposition disappeared. These studies typically attributed higher incarceration rates of African American youths to the disproportionate involvement of youths of color in serious and violent crime (Conley, 1994).

4. *Some studies attribute juvenile crime to community risk factors.*

Several empirical studies had concluded that the presence of risk factors in the communities where juveniles reside often increases a youth’s chance of offending. Many of these studies also pointed to the interaction of risk factors, the multiplicative effect when several risk factors were present, and the process of how certain protective factors might work to offset risk factors. It was hypothesized that if a youth possessed certain risk factors and resided in a community that had higher presence of risk factors, then juveniles’ chances of becoming involved in crime and being arrested increased.

5. *Education and educational resources related to DMC.*

Some researchers cited education as yet another factor in minority overrepresentation in secure confinements. Educational factors such as early school failures, dropouts, and the lack of vocational education plague minority communities. These educational factors may lead to numerous minorities committing more crimes than Whites to overcome economic adversity. Devine, Coolbaugh, and Jenkins (1998) and Mata (1997) reported that either the failure of schools to adequately serve minority juveniles or the failure of minority juveniles to fully participate in the educational system resulted in delinquency and crime, which in turn, led to disproportionate minority representation. Examples of educational system failings included inadequate early childhood education, inadequate programs to prevent students from dropping out early, and a lack of appropriate cultural education, together with minority juvenile truancy, suspensions, and expulsions.

6. *Lack of adequate resources leads to DMC.*

Lack of resources in the juvenile justice system was also attributed to DMC. Devine et al. (1998) reported that significant examples of juvenile justice system contributing factors included the lack of adequate diversion programs for minority juveniles, the lack of culturally appropriate juvenile services, a lack of cultural understanding among juvenile justice system staff, and perceived barriers to parental advocacy because of minority parents’ often limited understanding of the system.

7. *Socioeconomic status and family structure along with the minority status lead to DMC.*

Other researchers suggested variables such as family background, socioeconomic status, and education to be the most significant causes of delinquency. Winters, Dean, Hirschel, and Brame (1996) reported that the most significant variables of delinquency and recidivism of delinquents usually included combinations of inner city residence, welfare income, minority status, broken families, criminality in the family, and low socioeconomic status.

According to Devine et al. (1998), single-parent families and high poverty levels were recognized as potential contributing factors, “because justice-involved minority juveniles reside disproportionately in single-parent, low-income households.” Family background, for example, might determine if a judge would assign a juvenile delinquent to secure confinement or to other alternate correctional methods such as house arrest or community service.

Caliber Associates (1996) reported that there was a disproportionate percentage of minority youths from impoverished families and single-parent families where juveniles lacked parental guidance and supervision. This might raise questions for the judges, as well as other decision-makers in the juvenile justice process and they might decide that this lack of parental supervision and guidance might have led to delinquent behavior in the first place. Therefore, officials might feel that it was the state's responsibility to provide guidance to the juvenile and assign him or her to a correctional or training institution.

Kurtz, Giddings, and Sutphen (1993) reported that socioeconomic status of a family played a critical role in minority overrepresentation. Minority parents who earned low salaries might find it difficult to take a day off from work and attend juvenile court, whereas White parents who earned high salaries could afford time off to show their support. In addition, minority parents who earned low salaries might not have the assets to obtain counseling from outside sources as would White parents. The defendant's ability to obtain representation was greatly affected by the defendant's income and socioeconomic status.

Myers and Talarico (1986) reported that urbanization of minorities was considered an important contextual source of unequal treatment in punishment between minorities and Whites, which might lead to minority overrepresentation in secure confinement. Their study revealed that urbanization tended to increase the imprisonment risks for Blacks, as well as other minorities, while decreasing the probability of imprisonment for Whites (Myers & Talarico, 1986).

8. *System is biased against minority offenders.*

Several empirical studies were conducted over the past fifty years investigating the issue of minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system and examining the degree to which race affected juvenile justice decision-making. The results of many of these studies indicated that the justice system was biased against minority offenders (the race-related selection bias perspective). Snyder and Sickmund (1999) reported that African American youth were more likely to be arrested than other youth. In 1997, African Americans represented only 15 percent of the national juvenile population but accounted for 44 percent of the juvenile arrests for violent crimes. Snyder and Sickmund (1999) and Hsia et al. (2004) reported that in 1997, minorities accounted for 67 percent of juveniles committed to public facilities nationwide—nearly twice their representation in the juvenile population. In addition, national data showed that

minority juvenile offenders were more likely than White non-Hispanic offenders to be placed in public (rather than private) custodial facilities. In 1997–98, African American youth represented 15 percent of the total youth population, but 26 percent of the youth arrested, 31 percent of the youth referred to juvenile court, 44 percent of the youth detained, 46 percent of the youth judicially waived to criminal court, and 58 percent of the youth admitted to state prison. According to a study conducted by Wordes and Jones (1998), in 1985 White youth were detained at the rate of 45 per 100,000, while African American and Hispanic rates were 114 and 73, respectively. By 1995, rates for Whites had decreased by 13 percent, while the rates for African Americans (180 percent increase) and Hispanics (140 percent increase) had skyrocketed. Much of the research conducted so far suggested system bias as a possible explanation for minority overrepresentation in the system (Austin, Leonard, Pope, & Feyerherm, 1995; Bridges et al., 1995; Conley, 1994; Pope, Lovell, Stojkovic, & Rose, 1996; Sealock & Simpson, 1998; Wordes, Bynum, & Conley, 1994).

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1990), minority youths were more likely than non-minority youths to be formally processed and held in detention. A study in North Carolina during the period of 1990–91 revealed that in the majority of counties, minority youth were more likely to have been arrested, detained, and committed to a training school (Caliber Associates, 1996). A second study in 1993 replicated the results of the previous study and concluded that minority youth were more likely than White youth to be arrested and presented to a juvenile intake facility (Caliber Associates, 1996).

Another study conducted by Hsia and Hamparian (1998) on minority overrepresentation, revealed that although minorities represented only 32 percent of the youth population, they represented more than 68 percent of the juvenile population in detention and 68 percent of those in secure institutions such as training schools. Another study conducted by the Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research revealed that between the years of 1989 and 1995, more than five times as many minority juveniles were transferred to criminal court compared to the rest of the general population (Hsia & Hamparian, 1998).

Dunn, Perry, Cemkovich, and Wicks (1993) reported that the results of another study conducted in Ohio revealed that during the four stages of the juvenile justice process (official referral, pre-adjudicatory detention, adjudication, and disposition), minority

youths “are over-represented relative to their proportion to the population.” The researchers added that in decisions leading to confinement, more than 55 percent of all juveniles detained prior to adjudication were minorities and 60 percent of all juveniles receiving a disposition to confinement were minorities.

Pope and Feyerherm (1990) conducted a meta-analysis of DMC-related studies published between January 1969 and February 1989. The results of their analysis of forty-six research articles revealed that there were substantial differences in the processing of minority youth within many juvenile justice systems. They stated that the observed differences could not be attributed solely to the presence of legal characteristics or other factors. Instead, approximately two-thirds of the reviewed research indicated that a youth’s racial status made a difference at selected stages of juvenile processing.

9. *Causes and mechanisms of DMC are much more complex than just system bias.*

More recently Pope, Lovell, and Hsia (2002) conducted another review of the existing literature. They reported that in the DMC literature review, a greater proportion of the studies showed “mixed” effects (seventeen out of thirty-four in the current review compared with eight out of forty-six in the earlier review). Nevertheless, the preponderance of the research over three decades documents evidence of racial disparities, at least at some stages within the juvenile justice system. Pope et al. (2002) stated that even though literature provided some support for the concept that there existed potential biases in juvenile justice processing, the causes and mechanisms of these disparities were complex. They suggested that the important contributing factors might include inherent system bias, effects of local policies and practices, and social conditions (such as inequality, family situation, or underemployment) that might place youth at risk. They added that overrepresentation might result from the interaction of factors and the most significant factors might vary by jurisdiction.

### **Focus of the present study**

The present study was designed to add to the existing research on the issue of disproportionate minority contact. The purpose of this research was to conduct an exploratory examination of the causes of DMC from the clientele (stakeholders, communities, and parents) perspective. It also explored the existing community assets and positive affects that could be utilized to help juveniles and law enforcement personnel who deal with

juveniles. The overarching aim of this research was to better understand the causes of DMC. Such an understanding is imperative for designing programs that will target vulnerable juveniles and aid in controlling and reducing the problem of DMC.

### **Justification for the present study**

There were several reasons why the present study was warranted. First, existing literature on the issue provided one clear thesis—there was evidence of minority overrepresentation. Researchers, however, differed on the causes of such overrepresentation. Some studies attributed minority overrepresentation to system bias, while others purported that it had nothing to do with bias in the system. These latter studies asserted that minorities committed more crimes in number and more serious crimes. As a result, minority overrepresentation was an artifact of such a fact of life rather than an outcome of any specific bias in the system. Since most of the studies were based on official statistics, it was not clear what communities, neighborhoods, and the key players in the juvenile system perceived to be the causes of DMC. This study was designed with an objective to supplement the existing DMC literature by collecting data from the people and communities who were directly involved and affected most by the DMC problem. The present study was intended to explore the causes of DMC from the clientele perspective. Second, existing research was based on official statistics which lacked some of the most important information that could be collected through qualitative means. In contrast to earlier studies, this study used qualitative data, especially the data collected from stakeholders (law enforcement officers, school personnel, juvenile court personnel, and state attorneys), grass root organizations, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, parents, community leaders, and other service providers to understand the causes of DMC. Third, most of the existing research that suggested system bias recommended changing the system to reduce DMC. These studies overlooked the fact that there might be latent community resources that could be exploited to reduce DMC if community members were invigorated. This study was an attempt to understand the problem and explore the resources and strategies to reduce the problem from a “clientele perspective.”

### *Process for identification of participants*

Deduced from the existing literature, it was established that minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system is the result of both system and nonsystem

factors. As a result, it was hypothesized that the problem could not be adequately identified, understood, and remedied by analyzing data from the juvenile justice system alone. Thus, there was a need to involve those who worked with youth in some significant capacities and others who might have an interest or stake in DMC efforts. The study took place in metropolitan South Florida (Carol City). A list of individuals who were available and willing to participate in the study was created. The researcher, with the help from a local faith-based organization that provides services to delinquent children, identified potential stakeholders, partners, and grass root community leaders.

These stakeholders, partners, and leaders were contacted and their support was solicited. Others, particularly state or community leaders who were unavailable due to other commitments, were asked to delegate someone to represent them or identify other key people who should be involved. All the identified stakeholders, partners, and leaders were contacted and were invited to a meeting and the researcher provided information about the DMC initiative pilot study, and a proposal to understand the causes of DMC. The stakeholders and partners were informed that the study would target a specific area for the pilot study site.

The stakeholders and partners were asked for their input on the suitability of targeting a specific area. It was agreed that the target area should be determined by the analysis of quantitative data available from the state, county, and local juvenile justice offices. The area with the highest concentration of minority contact with the juvenile and/or criminal justice system was selected as the pilot study site. The stakeholders and partners agreed that the intervention activities should relate to the realities that existed in the community. Thus, it was essential to not only analyze quantitative data but also to solicit input from those community entities that were most likely to be impacted by crime and any proposed interventions. It was decided that the stakeholders, community partners, and grass root community agencies should be consulted individually as well as via focus group meetings. It was agreed that focus group meetings should be held to assess the needs and risk factors, as well as to determine the community assets and positive effects.

## Research design

### *Data collection and sample*

The study utilized a mixed methods descriptive design. It used juvenile justice records to gauge the

problem. Additionally, focus group discussions with the stakeholders, business leaders, service providers, parents, and school board personnel were held. The existing research on DMC was limited to official records or qualitative data. Each source of data in itself was lacking and did not present a complete picture of the problem. Official records, though an excellent source of data (Kakar, 1996a, 1996b; Kakar et al., 2002), failed to capture the communities/neighborhoods and the service providers' perceptions of the causes. Similarly, qualitative data presented problems of reliability and validity (Kakar, 1996a, 1996b; Kakar et al., 2002). A combination of two data sources—official records and focus group discussions coupled with individual interviews—would perhaps be the preferred choice. Therefore, this research used a qualitative methods approach to supplement the official data with in-depth material from focus group discussions.

Focus group discussions were an excellent source of data collection and were increasingly used to raise issues that were difficult to address with close-ended survey questions (Aubel, 1994; Belknap, 1996; Morgan, 1988). There were two main rationales for conducting focus group interviews (FGIs). First, FGIs could help corroborate information collected through the official records, or alternatively might point to weaknesses in the quantitative data, and second, FGIs could be a potent source of information in their own right, especially insofar as they provided an opportunity to engage members in their own analysis of the situation or the problem at hand, and to generate debate and discussion among them.

## Focus groups

Four independent groups of a maximum of fifteen stakeholders participated in focus groups at three-week intervals. Each group included representatives from the law enforcement, juvenile justice, school personnel, families and communities, community and faith-based organizations, business community, and grass root organizations.

## Sample selection

The sample used for this study was an opportunity sample. All identified stakeholders, partners, and leaders were contacted and invited to participate. In total, sixty people agreed to participate and these were divided into four focus groups, each group comprised of fifteen participants.

### Sample description

The sample included sixty representatives in total. There were eight representatives from schools (principals and assistant principals); two representatives from the juvenile assessment center; two representatives from the state attorney's office; eight police officers; four school resource officers; eight representatives from community-based organizations; seven representatives from faith-based organizations; three representatives from mental health service providers; four representatives from the Department of Corrections; six parents; four church ministers, and four business representatives. These data are presented in Table 1. Table 1 presents characteristics of the sample.

### Procedure

Two researchers conducted the focus group interviews. (One of the researchers was Asian and the other was Black. One of the researchers was female and the other was male). A semi-structured discussion outline indicated the lead questions in the areas of minority disproportionate contact, the effects of crime and delinquency on families and communities, community and neighborhood participation in revitalizing communities, role of the law enforcement and social service agents in protecting and serving the community, existing and new laws regarding juvenile crime and violence, and legal and social services available in the community. Part of the discussion questions focused on identifying community assets and suggestions for strategies to address identified causes. Each participant was given an opportunity to answer each question followed by a general discussion. The participants were encouraged to

share their views in an effort to make them feel more comfortable. The questions addressed DMC, juvenile crime, effect of juvenile crime on communities, role of families and communities in crime prevention, law enforcement personnel and departments in the perspective areas and neighborhoods, availability of legal and social services, and support groups. Four focus group discussions, each lasting one and one-half hours, were conducted.

One of the two researchers collected the data via note taking and manual recording the individual stories, descriptions, and arguments, while the other one conducted the group discussions. Permission for tape-recording was not given. At the end of the session, a summary of the notes was read to the group to ensure the accuracy of the data. The data were transcribed and supplemented with observations immediately following the discussion. Once compiled, a qualitative content analysis was conducted.

### Limitations of the sample/study

Although this study used a distinctive methodological approach—use of official records coupled with focus group discussions and interviews—it had its own limitations. A significant limitation was the opportunity sample for the focus groups. As evident from Table 1 and earlier discussion, the sample consisted of stakeholders from all aspects of the community selected for the pilot study. It was possible, however, that the sample might have had an inherent bias. As mentioned earlier, a list of prospective participants was created with the help from a local faith-based organization in South Florida. It was possible that the solicited stakeholders were the ones who had exhibited some strong interest, concern, or even bias towards DMC. Since some of the solicited stakeholders declined the invitation to participate in the study, it was possible that the stakeholders who accepted the invitation had a stronger interest and/or concern towards DMC as compared to the ones who declined. Despite these biases, the sample represented important aspects of the selected community for this study.

### Results of focus group discussions

#### *Factors that contribute to DMC*

During the focus group discussions, the participants identified several causes of DMC. In general, the discussions revolved around two main facets of the juvenile justice system—a systemic bias and the characteristics of the community and the juveniles. Stakeholders

Table 1  
Sample description

Participants in sample	#
Juvenile assessment center representatives	2
School board representatives (principals)	8
State attorney and/or representatives	2
Police officers	8
School resource officers	4
Community-based organizations' representatives	8
Faith-based organizations' representatives	7
Mental health service providers' representatives	3
Corrections representatives	4
Parents	6
Church ministers	4
Business representatives	4
Total	60

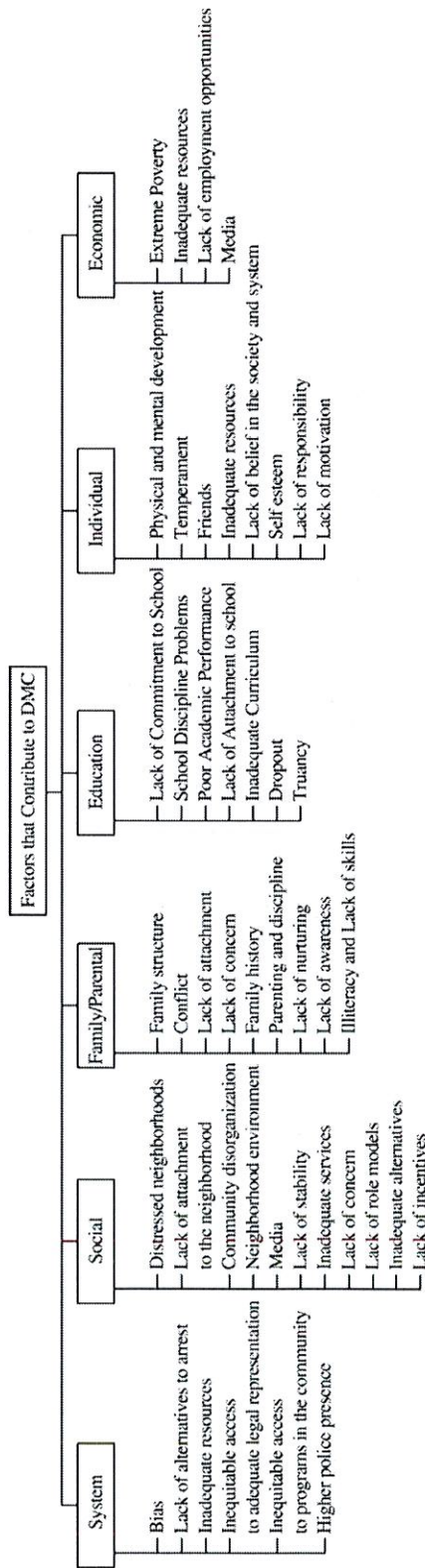


Fig. 1. Results of focus group discussions.

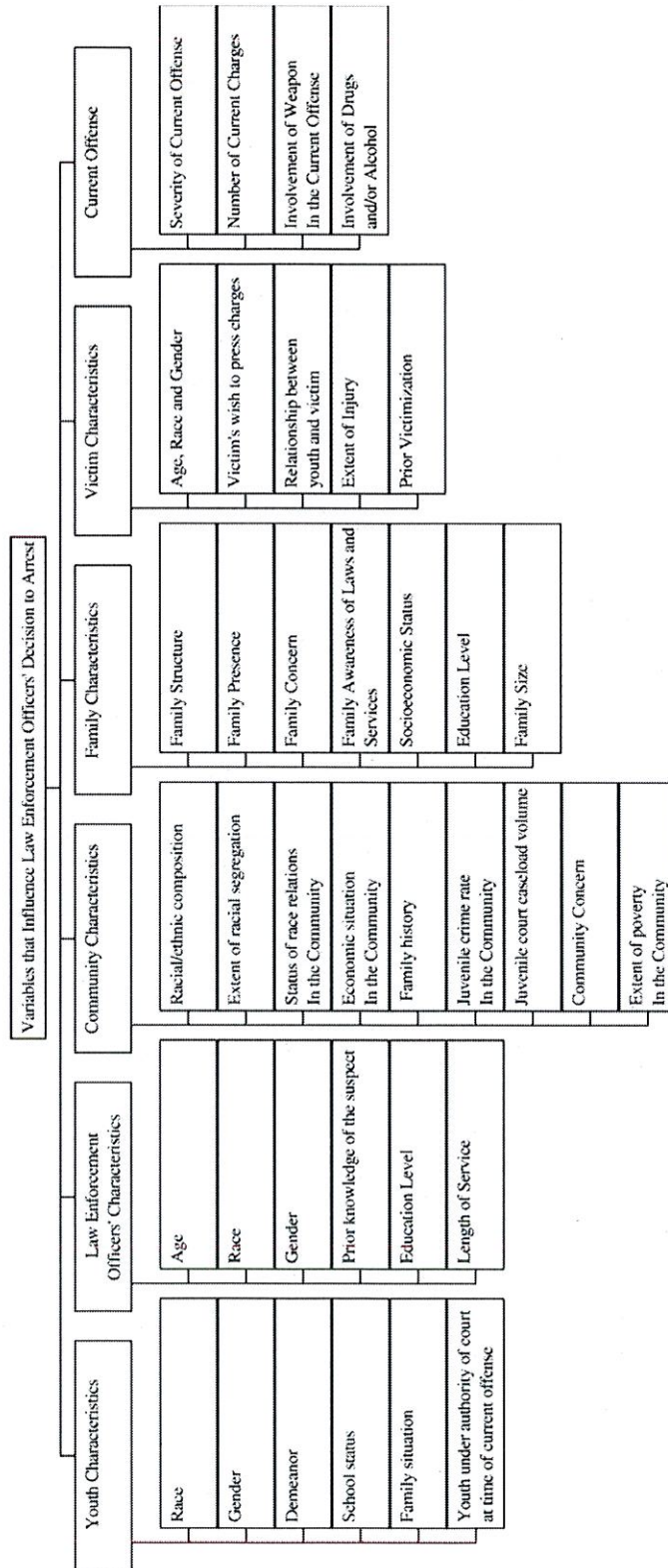


Fig. 2. Results of focus group discussions.

and partners alike agreed that crime was concentrated in certain areas and these certain areas were predominantly inhabited by minorities. There was a higher police presence in areas of a higher concentration of crime, which increased the probability of juveniles coming in contact with the police officer and being arrested. This implied several things:

1. Children in these areas commit more crime as compared to children in other areas.
2. More police officers are present in the areas that have concentration of crime.
3. The areas that have more crime and more police presence generally have more minorities residing.
4. There is more crime and more police presence in these areas, thus, more arrests are made and the outcome is disproportionate minority contact.

A common theme emerging out of the discussion was that the causes lie more in the characteristics of the community and juveniles residing in the community than the system. The participants discussed that systemic bias might be present, but its contribution to DMC as compared to community and neighborhood factors was small. The participants stated that the most common causes of DMC were found in different domains of the communities and neighborhoods. According to the focus group discussions, factors that contribute to DMC can be divided into six categories: (1) system factors, (2) social factors, (3) family/parental factors, (4) education factors, (5) individual factors, and (6) economic factors.

*System factors* include bias, lack of alternatives to arrest, inadequate resources, inequitable access to adequate legal representation, inequitable access to programs in the community, and higher police presence. *Social factors* include distressed neighborhoods represented by lack of stability, lack of role models, inadequate services, lack of concern, inadequate alternatives, lack of incentives, and lack of attachment to the neighborhood, community disorganization, neighborhood environment, and media. *Family/parental factors* include family structure, conflict, lack of attachment, lack of concern, family history, parenting and discipline, lack of nurturing, lack of awareness, illiteracy, and lack of skills. *Education factors* include school discipline problems, poor academic performance, lack of commitment to school, lack of attachment to school, inadequate curriculum, dropout, and truancy. *Individual factors* include physical and mental development, temperament, friends, inadequate resources, lack of belief in the society and system, self-esteem, lack of responsibility, and lack of motivation.

*Economic factors* include extreme poverty, inadequate resources, lack of employment opportunities, and media. A summary of these factors is presented in Fig. 1.

#### *Variables that influence law enforcement officers' decisions to arrest*

A part of the focus group discussions focused on the variables that enhance juveniles' chances for getting arrested. Discussions that focused on these questions revealed that there were key variables that influenced the law enforcement officers' decisions to arrest. These included characteristics of youth such as race, gender, demeanor, family situation, characteristics of contact, type of crime, reason for referral and arrest, involvement of a weapon, place of contact, and presence of bystanders. This decision to arrest could also be affected by officer's characteristics such as age, race, gender, education, length of service, prior knowledge of the suspect, victim's characteristics such as age, race, gender, victim's wish to press charges, and relationship between youth and victim. The discussions also revealed that community characteristics such as economic situation, racial/ethnic composition, extent of racial segregation, and the status of race relations might also affect the officer's decision to apprehend the juvenile. Family and offender characteristics, as well as characteristics of the current offense, might also affect the officer's decision. A summary of these variables is presented in Fig. 2.

#### *Community assets*

Some of the focus group discussion questions focused on identifying existing social capital in the form of community assets. The participants identified community and faith-based organizations as significant assets held by

Table 2  
Results of focus group and one-on-one meetings

Community assets
After-school programs
Churches
Parks and recreations (sports)
Library
Police Department
Job Corp
Colleges/universities
Area businesses
Banks
Pro player stadium (pro teams)
Fraternal organizations
Civic organizations
Corporations

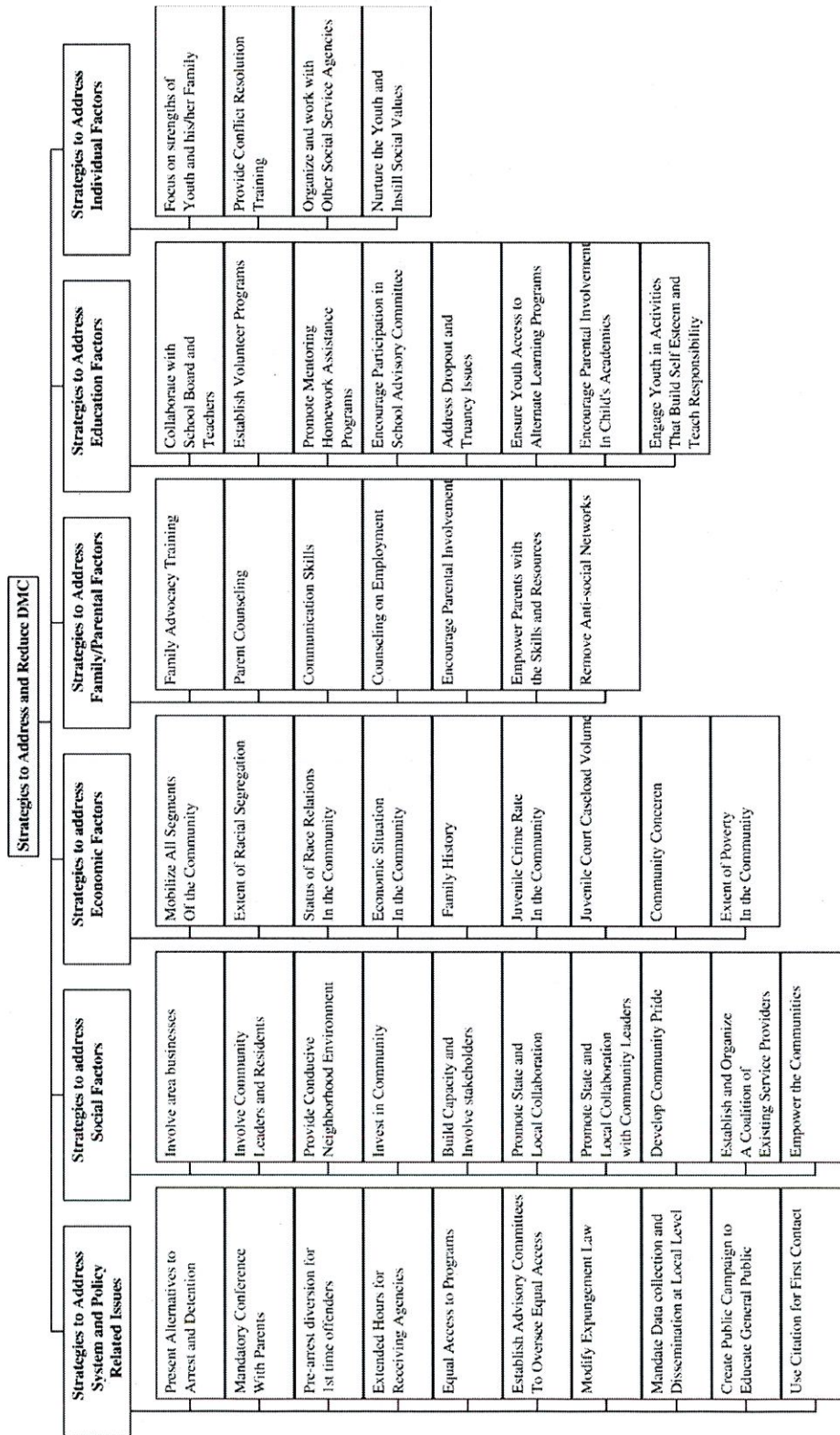


Fig. 3. Results of focus group discussions.

the communities. Other identified community assets were local businesses, after school programs, and local parks. A noteworthy theme that emerged regarding community assets was that most respondents believed that these community resources could be used to help juveniles and families who might be in need and/or at risk. They also expressed that if community assets were used effectively and efficiently, DMC could be reduced. A list of identified resources is presented in Table 2.

### *Proposed strategies to reduce DMC*

Another part of the focus group discussions centered on identifying the solutions to the causes of DMC. Based on the analysis of the discussions, it could be deduced that the overrepresentation of minority youth in juvenile institutions is caused by many factors which exist in multiple domains: the juvenile justice system, the communities and neighborhoods, educational system, individual personality, and the families. It was also recognized that minority overrepresentation is not the *end result*—rather it is an *interim outcome* of pre-existing problems in the community, youths, and/or the juvenile justice system. The problems preceding DMC might escalate into more serious problems if not addressed adequately and in a timely manner. Using the medical analogy of “vital signs” for DMC, it was hypothesized that DMC was a *wake up call alerting communities to perform careful and complete diagnostic analyses to determine the causes, required interventions, and the exact place where these interventions should be focused to prevent more serious problems*. It was recognized that in order to reduce disproportionate minority contact, the stakeholders, partners, community, faith-based, and grass root organizations must work collaboratively to address causes, enhance prevention, and use diversion programs, and expand alternatives to secure detention and corrections, particularly in minority neighborhoods. In order to be successful in reducing DMC, the causes have to be understood and addressed at the grass root level.

The analysis of the results suggested that in order to reduce DMC, each category of the contributing factors must be addressed. In order to address system and policy-related factors, it was suggested that there should be alternatives to arrest and detention. Pre-arrest diversion should be used for first time offenders (minor offenses) so that youth who had problematic households could be diverted to community and/or faith-based organizations. The receiving organizations should have extended hours from 7:00 a.m. to midnight and ultimately to twenty-four hours daily to provide alternatives to the arresting officers. It was suggested that the juvenile justice system should

make programs equally accessible to minorities. An advisory committee composed of members from the faith and community-based organizations as well as representation from local schools and universities should be established to oversee any disparity.

The group discussions suggested that the juvenile justice system should modify local policies and allow the use of a “citation” for first contact (minor offenses) and there should be a mandatory conference with parent/guardian along with representation from church and/or community-based organizations. The participants made suggestions to address the DMC causes in each category. These are presented in Fig. 3.

### **Conclusion**

This study provided some significant insights into DMC causes. First, it confirmed the results of earlier studies that asserted that DMC was widespread. The results of this study unequivocally substantiated that claim. Second, and more importantly, this study suggested that the relationship between system bias and DMC and/or between community characteristics and DMC was neither simple nor inevitable. It also portrayed that the causes and mechanisms that lead to DMC were multi-dimensional and lay within the communities and system. This research suggested that there might be more serious interaction between community attributes and systemic bias than the authors earlier assumed. The efforts to reduce DMC must not entirely focus on the system and/or the community. The solution to the problem lies in sincere effort and cooperation between both the communities and the system. This was in contrast to what earlier research had pointed out. The earlier research either attributed DMC to the system—the race-related selection bias perspective or attributed DMC to the communities (minorities committing more severe crimes and more in number). The results of this study suggested that neither of the perspectives was absolutely right or absolutely wrong. The causes lie somewhere in between.

The results of this study underscored the fact that in order to reduce the DMC problem, communities have the same responsibility as the system. Both, communities and the system, have to work together if the problem is to be solved. It also confirmed the premise that DMC is an *interim outcome* of pre-existing problems in the community, youths, and/or the *juvenile justice system* rather than the end result. It is recognized that in order to reduce disproportionate minority contact, the stakeholders, partners, community, faith-based, and grass root organizations must work collaboratively to address causes, enhance prevention, create diversion programs, and

expand alternatives to secure detention and corrections—particularly in minority neighborhoods. In order to be successful in reducing DMC, the causes have to be understood and addressed at the grass root level.

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## Statute cited

- Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, Pub. L. No. 93-415, 42 U.S.C. § 5601 *et seq.* (1974).

## Douglas County Juvenile Services Community Forum Series

During the summer of 2024, Douglas County Juvenile Services hosted a series of three Community Forum meetings to allow community members to provide their input on the priority areas for this Community Plan. These meetings were held on June 22, 2024, at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in South Omaha; July 20, 2024, at Metropolitan Community College in North Omaha; and on August 10, 2024, at Concord Mediation Center in West Central Omaha. A total of 104 individuals attended the three meetings. An online survey was also available through September 30, 2024 to collect feedback from those unable to attend the in-person meetings; an additional 14 provided input through this format. Meeting attendees and survey respondents represented community-based providers, interested members of the public, youth and family members with lived experience, governmental agencies, funders, and school districts, among others. In all formats, members of the public were provided information about the domains of mental/behavioral health, school attendance, supportive peer and family relationships, and prosocial activities, based on available juvenile justice system data and findings from studies in the community. The feedback provided by 103 (87%) of these community members reinforced findings that the four domains listed above are the most important needs areas in Douglas County.

For each domain, participants were asked to rate each of the following barriers to service delivery on a scale from one (not an issue) to ten (extreme barrier): availability, accessibility, capacity, quality, cultural and gender competency, and funding adequacy. Detailed breakdowns of respondent ratings, by forum location, is provided below. Some participants did not provide input on all domain items, so the number of respondents is reflected in each table.

### Mental/Behavioral Health

Provide mental/behavioral health services to youth and families; increase capacity, quality, and cultural/gender competency among providers.

Forum Location	Availability	Accessibility	Capacity	Quality	Cultural/Gender Competency	Funding
South Omaha (n=5)	8.00	8.20	6.20	4.80	8.20	6.40
North Omaha (n=39)	7.54	7.77	6.55	6.81	5.94	7.24
West/Central (n=34)	7.21	7.48	7.03	6.03	7.55	7.50
Online Survey (n=11)	8.18	6.55	7.09	7.45	3.90	7.55
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7.52</b>	<b>7.53</b>	<b>6.78</b>	<b>6.48</b>	<b>6.46</b>	<b>7.33</b>

### School Attendance

Address barriers to school attendance and provide services to help youth reenroll and/or reengage with school.

Forum Location	Availability	Accessibility	Capacity	Quality	Cultural/Gender Competency	Funding
South Omaha (n=4)	5.75	6.50	7.00	9.00	7.25	6.75
North Omaha (n=33)	4.77	5.19	4.84	6.39	5.55	5.21
West/Central (n=26)	5.27	6.62	6.00	7.40	8.24	7.48
Online Survey (n=6)	5.67	4.50	5.33	6.67	2.40	4.00
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5.10</b>	<b>5.75</b>	<b>5.45</b>	<b>6.88</b>	<b>6.45</b>	<b>6.06</b>

### Supportive Peer/Family Relationships

Improve peer and family relationships through holistic, wrap-around supports and prosocial engagement with others.

Row Labels	Availability	Accessibility	Capacity	Quality	Cultural/Gender Competency	Funding
South Omaha (n=4)	7.00	7.00	7.50	5.00	8.75	9.00
North Omaha (n=28)	6.71	6.29	6.29	6.71	6.21	6.54
West/Central (n=26)	6.92	7.72	7.00	6.35	6.92	7.28
Online Survey (n=5)	5.20	5.00	4.20	5.40	3.00	4.20
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6.70</b>	<b>6.80</b>	<b>6.48</b>	<b>6.35</b>	<b>6.45</b>	<b>6.81</b>

### Prosocial Activities

Increase availability and diversity of prosocial activities for youth to engage in positive activities during their free time.

Forum Location	Availability	Accessibility	Capacity	Quality	Cultural/Gender Competency	Funding
South Omaha (n=4)	7.75	8.00	6.50	7.00	6.75	7.50
North Omaha (n=25)	7.56	7.20	5.58	6.92	6.92	7.48
West/Central (n=24)	7.96	7.63	7.25	6.75	7.30	7.88
Online Survey (n=4)	3.67	2.00	2.50	4.50	2.50	2.50
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7.54</b>	<b>7.07</b>	<b>6.14</b>	<b>6.68</b>	<b>6.75</b>	<b>7.30</b>

# Douglas County Justice Center

## PROGRAMS & SERVICES



### I. PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION

#### CURRENT PROGRAMS

- A. Community-Based Grant Funding
- B. Douglas County Community Plan
- C. Juvenile Assessment Center
- D. Missing Youth Initiative
- E. Restorative Justice Programs

#### NEW INITIATIVES/PROGRAMS

- A. BRIDGE - Family Resource Network
- B. OJJDP Missing/Runaway Youth Grants
- C. Job Training Programs
- D. OJJDP Grant - Gun and Violence Prevention and Early Intervention Programs
- E. OJJDP Title II Grant - Targeted Community-Based Services for Racial & Ethnic Disparities

### II. INTERVENTIONS FOR SYSTEM-INVOLVED YOUTH

#### CURRENT PROGRAMS

- A. Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative
- B. Cross-Over Youth Initiative (Youth Impact!)
- C. HOME Program
- D. Douglas County Expeditor

#### NEW INITIATIVES/PROGRAMS

- A. OJJDP Title II Grant - Stability Services
- B. Mental/Behavioral Health Screening Tools
- C. Process for Youth Charged in Adult Criminal System
- D. Process to Review Detained Dually-Adjudicated Youth
- E. OJJDP Grant - Expansion of Gun and Violence Community-Based Programs

### III. DOUGLAS COUNTY YOUTH CENTER (DCYC)

#### CURRENT PROGRAMS

- A. Behavioral Health Initiative
- B. Job Training Programs
- C. Family Liaison
- D. Education Programs
- E. Family Programs
- F. Social/Emotional Programs

#### NEW INITIATIVES/PROGRAMS

- A. OJJDP Room Confinement Grant
- B. Mental/Behavioral Health Screening Tools
- C. Establishment of Mental Health Team - Psychologist and Therapists
- D. Motivational Interviewing Training for All Staff
- E. T.A.R.G.E.T. Training for All Staff
- F. Implementation of Case Management System
- G. Phoenix New Freedom Curriculum for Conflict Resolution
- H. BJA Justice & Mental Health Collaborative Grant
- I. Education Rights Counsel to meet educational needs of youth



**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

*Resolved*

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Nebraska State Statute, this Board first adopted a Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan for Douglas County in 1996; and

**WHEREAS**, Nebraska Statutes further require that a Douglas County Comprehensive Community Plan (the "Plan") be regularly and routinely updated with the Nebraska Crime Commission no less than every four years, and,

**WHEREAS**, Nebraska Statutes further require that an approved Plan is received by the Nebraska Crime Commission in order to be eligible to receive Community-based Grant funds through the Nebraska Crime Commission; and

**WHEREAS**, the Douglas County Community Team, with input from members of various community agencies and the public, has prepared and submitted the updated 2025-2030 Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan as evidenced and incorporated hereunto in the attached Exhibit A; and,

**WHEREAS**, Public Discussions regarding said Plan were conducted on June 22, 2024 in South Omaha; July 20, 2024 in North Omaha; and August 10, 2024 in Central/West Omaha at which time any and all interested parties had an opportunity to give input regarding the Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2025-2030 Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan has been approved by the Juvenile Justice Stewardship Group on December 3, 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, this Board desires to approve and adopt the 2025-2030 Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THIS BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA** that the updated 2025-2030 Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan evidenced in the attached Exhibit A is hereby approved and adopted.

DATED this 10th day of December, 2024

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024  
Yeas: Borgeson, Boyle, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers  
Absent: Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
Douglas County Clerk

Resolution No: 0695  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024



# Final Agenda

## BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA

**TUESDAY, December 10, 2024**  
**LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER, OMAHA-DOUGLAS CIVIC CENTER**  
**1819 FARNAM, OMAHA, NE**

**9:00 a.m.**

As provided by *Neb. Rev. Stat.* §84-1411(7) a public body may allow a member of the public or any witness to appear before the public body by means of virtual conferencing. Pursuant to §84-1411(7), this meeting is also available via Zoom.

<https://zoom.us/j/94512986711?pwd=YU1NUjN1ZnZ2RldDhISDZGZVcyZz09>

Meeting ID: 945 1298 6711      Password: 187214

or

Dial +1 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 945 1298 6711      Password: 187214

***A copy of the Open Meetings Act is located on the north wall of the Legislative Chambers, and on the County Board's website at***

[https://www.douglascountyclerk.org/images/stories/Open\\_Meetings\\_Act/2024\\_Open\\_Meetings\\_Act\\_-\\_effective\\_7-19-2024.pdf](https://www.douglascountyclerk.org/images/stories/Open_Meetings_Act/2024_Open_Meetings_Act_-_effective_7-19-2024.pdf)

***--Please silence all electronic devices--***

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

### **NOTE TO CITIZENS:**

***--Any agenda item may be moved at any time at the discretion of the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners--***

***--An Automatic External Defibrillator is available on the back wall of the Legislative Chambers--***

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### **RULES OF DEBATE**

- A.** On items requiring discussion/action, the process for debate is as follows:
- 1.** The introducer of the item may speak up to four minutes when he or she first presents the item to the Board of Commissioners.
  - 2.** The Board will hear from proponents and then opponents (citizens are encouraged not to repeat previous comment/testimony). No additional comment/testimony will be permitted unless a Board member requests additional information.
  - 3.** The introduced item shall be motioned and seconded to proceed to debate.
  - 4.** Each Commissioner shall be allowed to speak on introduced item up to three times (four minutes, four minutes, and two minutes).
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**AGENDA**  
**FOR**  
**DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF EQUALIZATION**  
*(9:00 a.m.)*

**Note to Citizens:**  
***--Any agenda item may be moved at any time at the discretion of the  
Chair of the Board of County Commissioners--***

Roll Call

- A. Approval of the minutes of the Board of Equalization meeting held Tuesday, December 3, 2024.
- B. Call for a meeting and set **Tuesday, December 17, 2024**, as date for hearing on Certified Assessment Corrections reflecting the addition of omitted property to the tax rolls or increased value on property.

**RESOLUTIONS:**

- C. Request for the Board to approve the Treasurer's recommendation to deny application Form 453 for vehicle tax Exempt status: Yongduo Liu submitted a form 453 for a 2024 Tesla (last 8 of VIN RAO38531). Mr. Liu was unable to provide a supporting statement from the VA stating that his disabilities fall within the approved requirements.  
(Treasurer's Office) **2024-R180**
- D. Request for the Board to approve the Treasurer's recommendation to deny application Form 457 for vehicle tax exempt status. The form 457's for Angel Guardians, Inc. for these vehicles, a 2019 Ford (last eight of VIN KKB25724) and a 2017 Ford (last eight of VIN HKB09535, was sent in after the submission deadline had passed.  
(Treasurer's Office) **2024-R181**
- E. Approving corrections to Personal Property affecting the tax list based on taxpayer submitted personal property returns, amend returns, clerical error or changes to status of business. (Assessor/Register of Deeds) **2024-R182**
- F. Certified Assessment Corrections reflecting a correction in the values and approval.  
(Assessor/Register of Deeds) ***(Held over from Tuesday, December 3, 2024, Meeting)***  
**2024-R183**

24285	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24286	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24287	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24288	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24289	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24290	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24291	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24292	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24293	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024

24294	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24295	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24296	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24297	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24298	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24299	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24300	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24301	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024

**G. Approving applications for tax Exemptions Form 457 on motor vehicles recommended for approval by the County Treasurer. 2024-R184**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

We reserve the right to enter an executive session in order to protect the public interest with respect to discussion regarding labor negotiations, litigation and personnel.

ADJOURN

**AGENDA**  
**FOR**  
**DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF CORRECTIONS**  
*(Immediately following the conclusion of the Board of Equalization meeting)*

**Note to Citizens:**  
***--Any agenda item may be moved at any time at the discretion of the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners--***

Roll Call

1. Approval of the minutes of the Board of Corrections' meeting held Tuesday, November 19, 2024.
2. Report from the Director of Corrections.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

We reserve the right to enter an executive session in order to protect the public interest with respect to discussion regarding labor negotiations, litigation and personnel.

ADJOURN

**AGENDA**  
**FOR**  
**DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
*(Immediately following the conclusion of the Board of Corrections meeting)*

**Note to Citizens:**  
**--Any agenda item may be moved at any time at the discretion of the  
Chair of the Board of County Commissioners--**

Roll Call

**I. MINUTES AND CLAIMS:**

- A. Approval of minutes of the Board of Commissioners' meeting held Tuesday, December 3, 2024.
- B. Approval of claims submitted for payment processed through Tuesday, December 10, 2024. Complete listing is on file in the office of the County Clerk/Comptroller and available on the Douglas County Clerk/Comptroller's web page at:  
<http://www.douglascountyclerk.org/supplierchecks>

**II. CONSENT AGENDA:** *Any individual item may be removed by a Commissioner for special discussion and consideration. Unless there is an exception, these items will be approved as one with a single vote of the Board of Commissioners.*

- A. Review for approval Access to the Douglas County Payroll system for automatic deduction of fees for Douglas County Sheriff's Office sworn members to the Police and Fireman's Insurance Association. (Chief Deputy William Rinn, Sheriff's Office)  
**(Laid over from Tuesday, November 19, 2024, meeting.) 2024-R0641**
- B. Eric Carlson, Purchasing Agent, Bid Acceptance:
  - 1. VIERREGGER ELETRIC CO. to provide West Campus Solar LED Light Fixtures & Installation in the amount of \$74, 573.34. (Budgeted) **2024-R0691**
- C. Resolution for Surplus Property. (Eric J. Carlson, Purchasing) **2024-R0692**
- D. Resolution approving a contract extension with Three+One for annual cashVest Liquidity & Treasury Analysis. (\$25,000 for 2025 – Not Budgeted) (Patrick Bloomingdale, CAO) **2024-R0693**
- E. Acceptance of the 2024/25 State Community-Based Grant Enhancement Fund award in the amount of \$35,000.00. (Budgeted) (Kim B. Hawekotte, County Administration) **2024-R0694**
- F. Approval of five-year Douglas County Comprehensive Community Plan with the Nebraska Crime Commission. (Budgeted) (Kim B. Hawekotte, County Administration) **2024-R0695**

- G. Approval of the 2025/26 State Community-Based Grant Fund application to the Nebraska Crime Commission in the amount of \$1,363,751.00. (Budgeted)  
(Kim B. Hawekotte, County Administration) **2024-R0696**
- H. Todd Pfitzer, Douglas County Engineer, requests approval of the following:
  - 1. Contracts for rental of supplemental snow removal equipment for the winter season 2024-2025. (Budgeted) **2024-R0697**
- I. Appointment of Rachelle O'Dell to the Douglas County Planning Commission.  
(Commissioner Roger Garcia) **2024-R0698**
- J. Resolution to approve "Demand for Refunds." (\$5,775.63 – Budgeted) (Property Tax Division – Treasurer) **2024-R0699**
- K. Payment of Tort Claim – Claimant – John Bartolo, damages from damaged property - \$7,785.88, Department – County Attorney. (Budgeted) (Matt Mundt, County Administration) **2024-R0700**
- L. Daniel A. Esch, County Clerk, presenting the following tort claim(s) for referral to the County's Risk Manager for review, determination and if necessary, final disposition:
  - 1. Courtney Nelsen [\$none requested]
  - 2. Jacob Subbert [\$none requested]

**III. RECOGNITION/PROCLAMATIONS:**

**IV. PRESENTATIONS:**

**V. PUBLIC HEARING:**

- A. Open the Public Hearing to vacate eight (8) portions of right-of-way along South 190<sup>th</sup> St and Jones St within the Grove Ridge Addition to public comments, with action to be taken Tuesday, December 17, 2024. (Todd Pfitzer, Douglas County Engineer)

**VI. COMMITTEE DISCUSSION/ACTION:**

**A. FINANCE:**

*Commissioner PJ Morgan, Chair*

- 1. Budget Report. (Budget and Finance Director)

**B. ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES:**

*Commissioner Chris Rodgers, Chair*

**C. CHILD AND YOUTH SERVICES:**

*Commissioner Roger Garcia, Chair*

**D. COMMUNITY SERVICES:**

*Commissioner James Cavanaugh, Chair*

**E. CRIMINAL JUSTICE:**

**Commissioner Mike Friend, Chair**

**F. HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES:  
Commissioner Maureen Boyle, Chair**

**G. HUMAN RESOURCES:  
Commissioner Mary Ann Borgeson, Chair**

1. Weekly Personnel Report from Civil Service.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

We reserve the right to enter an executive session in order to protect the public interest with respect to discussion regarding labor negotiations, litigation, personnel and real estate.

ADJOURN

*This agenda, which shall be kept continually current, shall be available for public inspection in the Office of the County Commissioners, Omaha-Douglas Civic Center, 1819 Farnam, LC 2, Omaha, NE during normal business hours. Also, available for public inspection will be any corresponding documentation that is provided to the Commissioners' Office prior to the weekly County Board meeting.*

*Members of the public requiring special accommodation(s), such as translators or hearing interpreters, shall if possible, notify the office of the Board by noon the Friday before the scheduled Board Meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Contact 402-444-7025 if arrangements need to be made.*

**DECEMBER, 2024**

<u>Sun.</u>	<u>Mon.</u>	<u>Tues.</u>	<u>Wed.</u>	<u>Thurs.</u>	<u>Fri.</u>	<u>Sat.</u>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24 No Board Meeting	25	26	27	28
29	30	31 No Board Meeting				

**NOTICE**

The last scheduled meeting in 2024 for the Douglas County Board of Commissioners will be held on Tuesday, December 17, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

The first scheduled meeting in 2025 of the Douglas County Board of Commissioners will be held on Tuesday, January 7, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

# BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

## DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA

Resolved

**WHEREAS**, the attached Exhibit "A" lists individuals which have made an application for motor vehicle tax exemptions.

**WHEREAS**, the application Form 453 for tax exemptions listed in Exhibit "A" have been reviewed by the Douglas County Treasurer.

**WHEREAS**, it is the recommendation of the Douglas County Treasurer that the tax exemptions listed in Exhibit "A" should be denied.

**IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED BY THE DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF EQUALIZATION THAT** the tax exemption application Form 453 contained in Exhibit "A" is hereby denied. Yongduo Liu submitted a form 453 for a 2024 Telsa (last 8 of VIN RA038531). Mr. Liu was unable to provide a supporting statement from the VA stating that his disabilities fall within the approved requirements.

Dated this 10<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2024.

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024  
Yeas: Borgeson, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers  
Absent: Boyle, Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
**Douglas County Clerk**

Resolution No: 180  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024

# BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

## DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA

Resolved

**WHEREAS**, the attached Exhibit "A" lists organizations which have made applications for motor vehicle tax exemptions.

**WHEREAS**, the application Form 457 for tax exemptions listed in Exhibit "A" have been reviewed by the Douglas County Treasurer.

**WHEREAS**, it is the recommendation of the Douglas County Treasurer that the tax exemptions listed in Exhibit "A" should be denied.

**IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED BY THE DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF EQUALIZATION THAT** the tax exemption application (Form 457) contained in Exhibit "A" is hereby denied. The form 457's for Angel Guardians, Inc, for these vehicles, a 2019 Ford (last eight of VIN KKB25724) and a 2017 Ford (last eight of VIN HKB09535, was sent in after the submission deadline had passed.

Dated this 10<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2024.

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024  
Yeas: Borgeson, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers  
Absent: Boyle, Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
**Douglas County Clerk**

Resolution No: 181  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024

## BOARD OF EQUALIZATION DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA

Resolved

WHEREAS:

The County Assessor/County Clerk is authorized to correct clerical errors and /or erroneous assessments, with the approval of the County Board.

The County Assessor hereby recommends the following Certified Assessment Corrections for the reasons set forth in the CAC.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THIS BOARD OF EQUALIZATION OF DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA, that the below described certified assessment corrections are hereby approved and the corresponding corrections on the various tax lists are hereby authorized.

CAC 53528	New Beauty for You #30013	Error in value	Delete for 2021(-1,980)
CAC 53531	Total Property Maintenance #5139	Error in value	Delete for 2021(-62,210)
CAC 53532	SGM Inc #300275	Error in value	Delete for 2021(-890)
CAC 53533	SGM Inc #300275	Error in value	Delete for 2022(-1,060)
CAC 53534	Total Property Maintenance #5139	Error in value	Delete for 2022(-74,650)
CAC 53535	New Beauty for You #30013	Error in value	Delete for 2022(-2,380)
CAC 53536	Rocket 3 Minute Wash #202246	Error in value	Delete for 2022(-100,000)
CAC 53537	VOID	VOID	VOID
CAC 53538	Greenwood Park Studio #503706	Error in value	Delete for 2022(-10,000)
CAC 53539	Yellow Brick Road Child Care Inc #403289	Error in value	Add for 2022(+6,860)
CAC 53540	Yellow Brick Road Child Care Inc #403257	Error in value	Add for 2022(+5,890)
CAC 53541	Yellow Brick Road Child Care Inc #403257	Error in value	Add for 2023(+4,590)
CAC 53542	Yellow Brick Road Child Care Inc #307820	Error in value	Reduce for 2023(-44,650)
CAC 53543	SGM Inc #300275	Error in value	Delete for 2023(-1,270)
CAC 53544	Risk Exchange #500480	Error in value	Delete for 2023(-6,090)

CAC 53545	Yellow Brick Road Child Care Inc #402324	Error in value	Reduce for 2023(-192,430)
CAC 53546	U Own It Auto Sales LLC #401567	Error in value	Delete for 2023(-840)
CAC 53547	Rocket Carwash (Office) #504095	Error in value	Reduce for 2023(-185,230)
CAC 53548	Rocket 3 Minute Wash #202246	Error in value	Delete for 2023(-120,000)
CAC 53549	Greenwood Park Studio #503706	Error in value	Delete for 2023(-12,000)
CAC 53550	New Beauty For You #30013	Error in value	Delete for 2023(-2,850)
CAC 53551	Total Property Maintenance #5139	Error in value	Delete for 2023(-89,580)
CAC 53552	Sapphire Grill LLC #503231	Error in value	Reduce for 2021(-25,000)
CAC 53553	Sapphire Grill LLC #503231	Error in value	Reduce for 2022(-30,000)
CAC 53554	Sapphire Grill LLC #503231	Error in value	Reduce for 2023(-36,000)
CAC 53555	Cleancore Solutions #30092	Error in value	Delete for 2023(-2,720)
CAC 53556	Victory Plumbing Inc #201391	Error in value	Delete for 2023(-21,600)
CAC 53563	Dave the Carpenter #501788	Error in value	Delete for 2021(-12,000)
CAC 53564	Dave the Carpenter #501788	Error in value	Delete for 2022(-14,400)
CAC 53565	Dave the Carpenter #501788	Error in value	Delete for 2023(-17,280)
CAC 53566	Live Hydration Spa #402400	Error in value	Delete for 2023(-12,050)
CAC 53568	Allmon, Megan #31484	Error in value	Delete for 2022(-2,790)
CAC 53569	Allmon, Megan #31484	Error in value	Delete for 2023(-3,350)

Dated this 10<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2024.

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024

Yeas: Borgeson, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers

Absent: Boyle, Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
Douglas County Clerk

Resolution No: 182  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024

# BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

## DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA

Resolved

WHEREAS:

The County Assessor-Register of Deeds/County Clerk is authorized to correct clerical errors and/or erroneous assessments, with the approval of the County Board of Equalization on December 10, 2024.

The County Assessor/Register of Deeds hereby recommends the following Certified Assessment Correction reflecting a correction in the values and approval.

Cac #	Owner	(Other) Reason on CAC
24285	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24286	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24287	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24288	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24289	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24290	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24291	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24292	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24293	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24294	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24295	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24296	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24297	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24298	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24299	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24300	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024
24301	Malcolm X Memorial Foundation	No 2024 exemption application filed. Needs value for 2024

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THIS BOARD OF EQUALIZATION OF DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA, THAT the above-described certified assessment corrections are hereby approved and the corresponding corrections on the various tax lists are hereby authorized.

Dated this 10<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2024.

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024  
Yeas: Borgeson, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers  
Absent: Boyle, Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
Douglas County Clerk

Resolution No: 183  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024

# BOARD OF EQUALIZATION DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA

Resolved

**WHEREAS**, the attached Exhibit "A" lists organizations which have made applications for motor vehicle tax exemptions.

**WHEREAS**, the application Form 457 for tax exemptions listed in Exhibit "A" have been reviewed by the Douglas County Treasurer.

**WHEREAS**, it is the recommendation of the Douglas County Treasurer that the tax exemptions listed in Exhibit "A" should be granted.

**IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED BY THE DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF EQUALIZATION THAT** the tax exemption applications Form 457 contained in Exhibit "A" are hereby granted.

Dated this 10<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2024.

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024  
Yeas: Borgeson, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers  
Absent: Boyle, Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
**Douglas County Clerk**

Resolution No: 184  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

***Resolved***

***WHEREAS***, Police and Fire employees represent a specific subset of First Responders having unique medical and psychological responses to work-related injuries and work-related stress; and,

***WHEREAS***, Access to medical services and work-related insurance tailored to career specific employees has a positive impact on morale, recruitment, and retention as well as shortening the return to work cycle for injured employees; and,

***WHEREAS***, In October, 2024, Douglas County Board of Commissioners granted a presentation hosted by the Douglas County Sheriff's Office which featured The Police and Fireman's Insurance Association representative Jeffrey Warnock; and,

***WHEREAS***, The Police and Fireman's Insurance Association is prepared to offer a number of insurance options uniquely tailored to Douglas County Sheriff's Office sworn members in addition to insurance benefits offered by Douglas County through their natural course of employment; and,

***WHEREAS***, Granting access approval to the Douglas County Payroll system as a method of automatic deduction would facilitate DCSO sworn members benefiting from programs offered by The Police and Fire supplementary insurance program; and,

***NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THIS BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA***, authorizes the Police and Fire's Insurance Association access to the Douglas County payroll system for DCSO sworn members to elect automatic deduction and is hereby approved and adopted, and the Chair of this Board is authorized and directed to execute said authorization on behalf of Douglas County, Nebraska

DATED this 10th day of December, 2024

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024  
Yeas: Borgeson, Boyle, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers  
Absent: Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
**Douglas County Clerk**

Resolution No: 0641  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

*Resolved*

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THIS BOARD OF DOUGLAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS THAT:**

WHEREAS, on: Wednesday, October 16, 2024, an Invitation to Bid was made on West Campus Solar LED Light Fixtures & Installation

and,

WHEREAS, on: Wednesday, October 30, 2024, the bids received were opened and submitted for review and recommendation; and

In accordance with their bid and specifications on file in the office of the Purchasing Agent, recommendation is to accept the lowest and best bid meeting specifications of: VIERREGGER ELECTRIC CO, 4349 South 139<sup>th</sup> Street, Omaha, NE 68137 in the amount of \$74,573.34.

Recommendation for the acceptance of this award is made by Kent Holm, Director of DC Environmental Services

Therefore be it resolved that the Board accepts and approves the recommendation.

DATED this 10th day of December, 2024

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024

Yeas: Borgeson, Boyle, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers

Absent: Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
**Douglas County Clerk**

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

*Resolved*

**WHERE AS**, the County owns personal property which is not usable by the County and/or is obsolete; and,

**WHERE AS**, said property consists of the property listed in Exhibit "I" attached and incorporated herein; and,

**WHERE AS**, the County intends to dispose of said property as surplus pursuant to Neb. Rev. stat. 23-3107 (as amended).

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THIS BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS THAT** the property listed in Exhibit "I" is unusable by the County and/or obsolete and is therefore declared surplus property.

**IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the County Purchasing Agent is directed to dispose of said property in accordance with the laws of the State of Nebraska.

**IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED THAT THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS** accepts and approves this recommendation.

DATED this 10th day of December, 2024

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024

Yeas: Borgeson, Boyle, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers

Absent: Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
**Douglas County Clerk**

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

*Resolved*

**WHEREAS**, three+one and Douglas County previously entered into a Professional Services Agreement for the cashVest program; and,

**WHEREAS**, the parties subsequently entered into a one-year extension to the Agreement, to cover the 2023 calendar year; and,

**WHEREAS**, the parties continued that relationship in calendar year 2024, with three+one providing the agreed-upon service with the agreed-upon compensation paid the County but, due to an administrative oversight, a written extension was never submitted to the County Board for approval; and,

**WHEREAS**, the parties now desire to formally approve that extension for the 2024 calendar year; and,

**WHEREAS**, the parties also wish to extend the agreement for calendar year 2025.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THIS BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, DOUGLAS COUNTY NEBRASKA**, that the attached "Amendment No. 2" to the original agreement with three+one is hereby approved and adopted, and the Chair of this Board is hereby authorized and directed to execute said Amendment on behalf of Douglas County.

DATED this 10th day of December, 2024

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024

Yeas: Borgeson, Boyle, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers

Absent: Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
Douglas County Clerk

Resolution No: 0693  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

*Resolved*

**WHEREAS**, Douglas County submitted an application to the Nebraska Crime Commission for the 2024/25 Supplemental Community-Based Juvenile Services Enhancement grant funds; and

**WHEREAS**, Douglas County was awarded 2024/25 Supplemental Community-Based Juvenile Services Enhancement grant funds in the amount of Thirty-Five Thousand (\$35,000) for six months from January 1, 2025 through June 30, 2025; said amount is in addition to the Community-Based Juvenile Service Grant funds awarded June 2024 to support programming for juvenile services in Douglas County; and

**WHEREAS**, this Board desires to accept said 2024/2025 Supplemental Community-Based Juvenile Services Enhancement grant monies awarded to Douglas County.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THIS BOARD OF DOUGLAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS** that this Board approves, and authorizes the Chair to execute documents associated with, the 2024/25 Supplemental Community-Based Juvenile Services Enhancement grant award.

DATED this 10th day of December, 2024

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024

Yeas: Borgeson, Boyle, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers

Absent: Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
**Douglas County Clerk**

Resolution No: 0694  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

*Resolved*

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Nebraska State Statute, this Board first adopted a Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan for Douglas County in 1996; and

**WHEREAS**, Nebraska Statutes further require that a Douglas County Comprehensive Community Plan (the “Plan”) be regularly and routinely updated with the Nebraska Crime Commission no less than every four years, and,

**WHEREAS**, Nebraska Statutes further require that an approved Plan is received by the Nebraska Crime Commission in order to be eligible to receive Community-based Grant funds through the Nebraska Crime Commission; and

**WHEREAS**, the Douglas County Community Team, with input from members of various community agencies and the public, has prepared and submitted the updated 2025-2030 Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan as evidenced and incorporated hereunto in the attached Exhibit A; and,

**WHEREAS**, Public Discussions regarding said Plan were conducted on June 22, 2024 in South Omaha; July 20, 2024 in North Omaha; and August 10, 2024 in Central/West Omaha at which time any and all interested parties had an opportunity to give input regarding the Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2025-2030 Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan has been approved by the Juvenile Justice Stewardship Group on December 3, 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, this Board desires to approve and adopt the 2025-2030 Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THIS BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA** that the updated 2025-2030 Douglas County Comprehensive Juvenile Services Community Plan evidenced in the attached Exhibit A is hereby approved and adopted.

DATED this 10th day of December, 2024

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024

Yeas: Borgeson, Boyle, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers

Absent: Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
**Douglas County Clerk**

Resolution No: 0695  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024

# BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

## DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA

### *Resolved*

**WHEREAS**, Douglas County 2025/26 Nebraska Community-Based Grant Application is due to the Nebraska Crime Commission on December 20, 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, Douglas County was awarded the 2025/26 Nebraska Community-Based Grant funds in the amount of One Million Three Hundred Sixty-Three and Seven Hundred Fifty-One Dollars (\$1,363,751) to be spent over the next one year to support prevention and early intervention programming for juvenile services youth and families in Douglas County; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the Douglas County Community-Based Grant Standard Operating Procedures, all sub-grantee applications for Douglas County 2025/26 Nebraska Community-Based Grant Application Grants were due to the County by 5:00 p.m. on November 15, 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the Douglas County Community-Based Grant Standard Operating Procedures, the Advisory Council, for all timely filed applications, reviewed, scored and completed recommendations on each of the sub-grantee applications on November 22, 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the Douglas County Community-Based Grant Standard Operating Procedures the Juvenile Justice Stewardship Group as the designated “Community Team” reviewed the recommendations of the Advisory Council and completed its recommendations for the County Board in an open meeting held on December 3, 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the Douglas County Community-Based Grant Standard Operating Procedures, the Douglas County Board of Commissioners must approve the funding for the sub-grantees under the County’s 2025/26 Nebraska Community-Based Grant Application as detailed in the attached document; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THIS BOARD OF DOUGLAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS** that this Board approves and authorizes the Chair to execute documents associated with the County 2025/26 Nebraska Community-Based Grant award for the sub-grantees as listed in the attached document.

DATED this 10th day of December, 2024

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024

Yeas: Borgeson, Boyle, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers

Absent: Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
Douglas County Clerk

Resolution No: 0696  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

*Resolved*

BE IT RESOLVED BY THIS BOARD OF DOUGLAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS THAT the attached letter contracts from the following firms are hereby approved for rental of equipment in the event that the listed equipment is needed for handling of snow and ice on county roads and subdivision streets during the winter of 2024-2025.

JMN CONSTRUCTION LLC  
VALLEY CORPORATION.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the County Engineer is hereby authorized to implement any or all of the contracts in the event of a snow emergency.

DATED this 10th day of December, 2024

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024  
Yeas: Borgeson, Boyle, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers  
Absent: Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
**Douglas County Clerk**

Resolution No: 0697  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

***Resolved***

WHEREAS, there is currently an opening on the Douglas County Planning Commission; and,

WHEREAS, Rachele O'Dell, 10720 N. 216<sup>th</sup> Street, Omaha, Nebraska has indicated her interest in filling the vacancy on the Douglas County Planning Commission.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THIS BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA, THAT Rachele O'Dell be appointed to fill the vacancy on the Douglas County Planning Commission with the term ending 12/31/2027.

DATED this 10th day of December, 2024

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024  
Yeas: Borgeson, Boyle, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers  
Absent: Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
**Douglas County Clerk**

Resolution No: 0698  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

*Resolved*

WHEREAS, Real and Personal Property taxes paid as a result of clerical error, misunderstanding, or honest mistake are refundable provided a claim for refund is made in writing to the County Treasurer pursuant to section 77-1734.01 of State Statute; and

WHEREAS, claimant's arguments are found to have merit on the records of the Douglas County Treasurer, a recommendation of affirmation of the claim shall be forwarded to the County Board of Commissioners.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Douglas County Board of Commissioners, that the recommendation of the County Treasurer for funds requested in the attached application in the amount of \$5,775.63 be sustained for the reasons stated by the County Treasurer.

DATED this 10th day of December, 2024

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024  
Yeas: Borgeson, Boyle, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers  
Absent: Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
**Douglas County Clerk**

Resolution No: 0699  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024

Resolution No: 0700  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

*Resolved*

**WHEREAS**, on November 13, 2024, John Bartolo filed a tort claim alleging Douglas County's negligence regarding damages from damaged property; and,

**WHEREAS**, Douglas County desires to settle this claim for \$7,785.88.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THIS BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA**, that EMC Risk Services, the County's third-party administrator, is hereby directed to issue a check to, American National Bank in the amount of, Six Thousand Eight Hundred Ninety-Three and 05/100 dollars (\$6,893.05), John Bartolo in the amount of, Two Hundred Ten and 99/100 dollars (\$210.99), Iowa Damage Appraisers, LLC in the amount of, One Hundred Eighty-One and 84/100 dollars (\$181.84), and Enterprise Rent-A-Car for no more than Five Hundred and 00/100 dollars (\$500.00) out of the County's loss fund in full and complete settlement of this November 13, 2024 tort claim, and the County shall thereafter submit a payment of no more than \$7,785.88 to EMC Risk Services to replenish that loss fund.

DATED this 10th day of December, 2024

Motion by Rodgers, second by Morgan to approve. I move the adoption of the resolution.

Adopted: December 10, 2024  
Yeas: Borgeson, Boyle, Cavanaugh, Friend, Morgan, Rodgers  
Absent: Garcia

(CERTIFIED COPY)



Daniel A. Esch  
**Douglas County Clerk**

Resolution No: 0700  
ADOPTED: December 10, 2024