NEBRASKA COALITION FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE ANNUAL REPORT

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NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Service.

COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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Introduction

The Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) was created in 2000 by LB1167 and codified at Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-2411 as an advisory committee to the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (Nebraska Crime Commission). The NCJJ was formed to recommend grant recipients to the Nebraska Crime Commission; identify juvenile justice issues, share information, and monitor and evaluate programs in the juvenile justice system; recommend guidelines and supervision procedures to be used to develop or expand local diversion programs for juveniles; and prepare an annual report including recommendations on administrative and legislative actions which would improve the juvenile justice system. Elaine Menzel (Nebraska Association of County Officials) serves as the Chair and Breanna Flaherty (Platte County Attorney) serves the Vice Chair of the NCJJ.

The NCJJ has five standing subcommittees who meet in addition to quarterly NCJJ meetings: Executive, Grant Review, Racial/Ethnic Disparities (R/ED), Diversion, Young Adult, and Community Planning.

The goal of the NCJJ is to improve all aspects of the juvenile justice system throughout Nebraska by assisting communities and the state with planning and implementation of systemic improvements, advocacy, education, and award recommendations of state funds for such purposes. The ultimate goal of the NCJJ is to improve the lives and futures of children, youth, and families involved with the juvenile justice system.

The NCJJ has been named the State Advisory Group (SAG) for federal Title II grant purposes. During this fiscal year the NCJJ was able to secure a federal Title II grant to support the SAG activities such as meetings and training for members. The NCJJ worked with the Office of the Governor to fill all vacancies, and young members with lived experience fill one fifth of the membership. Due to the recent departure of a young adult member, there are only four young adult members. The NCJJ and the Office of the Governor continue to receive, review, and approve applications as necessary to ensure the NCJJ meets both statutory and federal guidelines. The NCJJ added new community members to satisfy Title II requirements and reflect Nebraska's population.

Title II Formula Grants are awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and authorized by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (JJDPA) to support states and local jurisdictions with juvenile justice system improvement and delinquency prevention and intervention efforts. Within Title II, each state has a Designated State Agency (DSA) and State Advisory Group (SAG) to assist with the administration of funding, reporting, and programming. The Nebraska Crime Commission (NCC) is the DSA for Nebraska for Title II purposes.

As part of the application process, NCC staff collaborated with the NCJJ (SAG) to create and submit a three-year plan pursuant to Part B of the JJDP Act (34 U.S.C. §§11131-11133). This plan addresses the State of Nebraska's intentions to implement the thirty-three requirements and include four core requirements as listed in 34 U.S.C. §§11133(a). The four core requirements are:

- Deinstitutionalization of status offenders.
- Separation of juveniles from adult inmates.
- Removing juveniles from adult jail or lockup.
- Addressing racial and ethnic disparities.

Nebraska was deemed to be in compliance with the four core requirements during federal fiscal year 2022 (October 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023) and federal fiscal year 2023 (October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024). However, Nebraska was found out of compliance for federal fiscal year 2024 (October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025) which resulted in a reduction in the FY25 award to Nebraska. The issue was related to the deinstitutionalization of status offenders, and the NCC believes this issue has already been resolved and will not impact the FY26 award. Under the JJDPA, shelters and group homes with locked doors which prevent a youth from leaving on their own are considered secure. Nebraska had four group homes/shelters with secure doors that were holding status offenders. Three of the four have installed delayed egress doors, making them non-secure buildings and in compliance with the JJDPA; the fourth does not hold status offenders.

Additional goals in the three-year plan focus on building the structure and capacity needed to effectively administer the grant and be in compliance with the core requirements. Year one goals focused on developing a compliance monitoring plan, establishing a facility monitoring universe, creating a compliance manual, collecting monthly facility data, and creating a strategy to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in Nebraska. A Juvenile Justice Specialist has been hired, and data is being gathered and analyzed for the R/ED plan and an up-to-date crime analysis. The Jail Standards Division of the Nebraska Crime Commission has been designated to complete the necessary requirements of the Compliance Monitor. The compliance universe has been created and is updated on a regular basis, and the updated compliance manual was approved by OJJDP and will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated as necessary.

Grant Review Subcommittee

The Grant Review Subcommittee is responsible for making funding recommendations to the Nebraska Crime Commission for the Community-based Juvenile Services Aid Grant (CBA) and the Juvenile Services Grant (JS). Annually, CBA funds are announced and distributed on a formula basis; if any county or tribe does not request their CBA formula amount, those funds are put into a competitive funding opportunity called Enhancement-based Grant (EB) funds. Counties and tribes are able to apply for EB funds in addition to their CBA formula allocation. The JS grant is open competitively to counties, tribes, and non-profit agencies. Counties, tribes, and agencies are also eligible for the Title II passthrough funding through the JJPDA, and the grant review subcommittee provides funding recommendations for this competitive funding.

Community-based Juvenile Services Aid

Community-based Juvenile Services Aid is state funds appropriated by the Nebraska Legislature and administered by the Nebraska Crime Commission. The Community-based Juvenile Services Aid Program promotes the development and implementation of community-based programs designed to prevent unlawful behavior and to effectively minimize the depth and duration of the juvenile's involvement in the juvenile justice system. Funds are awarded to aid recipients who prioritize programs and services that will divert juveniles from the juvenile justice system, reduce the population of juveniles in juvenile detention and secure confinement, and assist in transitioning juveniles from out-of-home placements. Eligible applicants are limited to individual counties, multiple counties, federal or state recognized Indian tribes, or any combination of the entities listed.

This year the grant review subcommittee assisted in the review of Community-based Juvenile Services Grant requests in the amount of $6,477,860 from 31 CBA and 17 EB grant applications. Of these, 32 counties received $5,350,379 in CBA awards and 10 counties and one tribe received additional awards

totaling $447,621 in EB for a total of $5,798,000 awarded for the project period of July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026 (refer to distribution of funds table on pages 6-8). Due to multi-county collaboratives, 78 of Nebraska's counties are covered by CBA and EB funds.

Juvenile Services Funds

Juvenile Services funds are state funds appropriated by the Nebraska Legislature and administered by the Nebraska Crime Commission. Availability of funds is announced on an annual basis and applications are accepted through a competitive grant process. Funds received through the Juvenile Services Grant Program (JS) shall be used exclusively to assist the recipient in the implementation and operation of programs or the provision of services identified in the recipient's community plan, including: programs for local planning and service coordination; screening, assessment and evaluation; diversion; alternatives to detention; family support services; treatment services; reentry services; truancy prevention and intervention programs; and other services documented by data that will positively impact juveniles and families in the juvenile justice system. Applicants are limited to community-based agencies or organizations, political subdivisions, school districts, federally recognized or state-recognized Indian tribes, or any combination of the entities listed. Projects funded through juvenile services include, but are not limited to, programs for assessment and evaluation, family support services, alternatives to detention, mentoring, school programs, diversion, and addressing Racial and Ethnic Disparities. For fiscal year 2026, the JS grant received 26 requests, totaling $1,750,658, which were reviewed and awarded to 11 counties, tribes, and/or organizations for a total of $564,300 for the project period of July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026 (refer to distribution of funds table).

Title II Formula Grants Program

Title II also requires that funds be passed through to counties, tribes, and agencies serving youth to advance the goals of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA). The Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) and the Nebraska Crime Commission (NCC) collaborated to identify funding priorities and selected prevention, positive youth development, and reducing racial and ethnic disparities as Nebraska's focus areas. For State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2026, Nebraska had $409,122 in Title II funding to passthrough.

The NCJJ Grant Review Subcommittee evaluated 11 Title II grant applicants requesting a total of $568,322.78. Following review, the subcommittee recommended awarding $347,725 to six applicants across Nebraska. Funded projects support a range of juvenile justice initiatives, including gender-specific programming for girls, job training, family support services, alternatives to detention, mentoring, school-based programs, diversion, and efforts to reduce racial and ethnic disparities. Throughout the year, one applicant deobligated their funding due to staffing issues, but the money was used to expand another applicant's school-based and mentoring program funding. The final amount awarded was $319,097. This Title II funding opportunity was the first allocation made available to community service providers since 2017 when Nebraska left the Title II program.

Diversion Subcommittee

The Juvenile Diversion Subcommittee of the NCJJ is a working group established in 2013. The duties of the subcommittee, as outlined in Neb. Rev. Stat. §81-1427, include assisting in regular strategic planning related to supporting, funding, monitoring, and evaluating the effectiveness of plans and programs receiving funds from the Community-based Juvenile Services Aid Program.

In January 2018, the subcommittee developed a strategic plan identifying core priorities to establish goals and direction moving forward. Those goals were then assigned to working groups to begin the process of achieving statewide goals. The Diversion Subcommittee Strategic Plan can be found *here*. The new Nebraska Screen and Assessment Tool (N-SAT) was completed by Dr. Zachary Hamilton in June 2021. Since that time, 69 users across 72 counties have received initial training in the NSAT. The NSAT continues to be utilized with 2,477 screeners and 65 assessments entered into the online portal.

The NSAT recently went through a review process based on feedback received from diversion programs through a survey. If updates need to be made, the Diversion Subcommittee members will be asked to weigh in and assist with this process. The University of Nebraska at Omaha is in the process of validating the NSAT and will make additional recommendations on scoring, the structure/process, and updates.

For more information about Juvenile Diversion in Nebraska, please see the Annual Report *here*.

Community Planning Advisory Subcommittee

Pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-2404.01, the Director of the Community-based Juvenile Services Aid Program shall develop and coordinate a statewide working group as a subcommittee of the NCJJ to assist in regular strategic planning related to supporting, funding, monitoring, and evaluating the effectiveness of plans and programs receiving funds from the Community-based Juvenile Services Aid Program. The working group was developed in 2013 and is comprised of individuals across Nebraska. This statewide working group is referred to as the Community Planning Advisory Subcommittee of the NCJJ. As 2024 was a community plan writing year, this past year the members of the Community Planning Advisory Subcommittee assisted NCC staff with the creation of a new template and manual for communities and tribes to utilize for their community plans. A webinar to review changes was also held at the request of the Subcommittee members. Subcommittee members also assisted with reviewing the submitted plans and providing feedback for the counties.

This upcoming year will include a focus on best practices for utilization of community plans. There are a handful of communities struggling to maintain a community team, and approximately six community team chairs noted that their plans are only utilized at grant writing time which is not the intent of the plans. The Community Planning Advisory Subcommittee will work on tips and processes these counties can follow to get a more engaged team and better utilization of plans. For more information about the Community-based Juvenile Services Aid Program, please see the Annual Report *here.*

R/ED Subcommittee

The Juvenile Justice Specialist has been assigned the Racial and Ethnics Disparities Coordinator for the purposes of Title II, and as such will lead the Racial and Ethnic Disparities (R/ED) Subcommittee. The R/ED Subcommittee established a 6-member group made up of various NCJJ members. The group is working on the goals in the R/ED Plan, including promoting data-driven decision-making to guide grant-funded services aimed at reducing racial and ethnic disparities, increasing education and awareness among grantees and stakeholders, and providing both resources and advocacy support.

At the start of SFY 2026, NCC began discussion with Dr. christian bijoux of Bijoux Consulting Group to conduct a comprehensive review of racial and ethnic disparities in Nebraska's juvenile justice system, ways to support Nebraska in effectively addressing the issues, and to support the subcommittee's strategic goals. Throughout the year, NCC met with Dr. bijoux weekly to work on the report, address any barriers in information, and develop goals to support Nebraska in future R/ED work. In the last year, Dr. bijoux joined an R/ED Subcommittee meeting and held an open meeting in collaboration with NCC to

present his review. The review has allowed a look at a plan to support Nebraska moving forward with R/ED as well as future funding.

During the last year, the R/ED Subcommittee met quarterly to review updated data, evaluate R/ED Plan requirements and compliance monitoring for OJJDP, and collaborate with the NCJJ to identify grant funding opportunities informed by the data findings.

Young Adult Subcommittee

The Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) Chair and Vice-Chair established the Young Adult Subcommittee to elevate youth and family voice in juvenile justice discussions and decision-making. NCJJ member Steve Solorio agreed to serve as Chair of the subcommittee and partnered with the Juvenile Justice Specialist to develop a recruitment strategy, including age requirements, membership goals, and outreach efforts to engage young adults.

Throughout the year, the Juvenile Justice Specialist collaborated with universities and other youth advocacy organizations across Nebraska to recruit members and support the subcommittee's development. The subcommittee gained seven young adult members and six NCJJ members.

The subcommittee's purpose is to empower young adults to actively shape the future of Nebraska's juvenile justice system. The young adult members have begun identifying goals, assessing juvenile justice programs throughout the state, and providing input on future funding priorities by identifying service gaps and areas of need. Over time, the subcommittee is expected to strengthen youth representation and increase meaningful young adult participation within the NCJJ.

Distribution of Grant Funds Table	
Project Period of July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026	
FY2026 Juvenile Services Awards	
African Immigrant Family Services	$ 70,000
Buffalo County	$ 44,217
Columbus Area United Way	$ 45,428
Completely KIDS	$ 30,761
International Council for Refugees and Immigrants	$ 48,885
Lancaster County	$ 92,000
Latino Center of the Midlands	$ 61,883
Omaha Tribe of Nebraska	$ 39,558
Saunders County	$ 40,722
Urban League	$ 50,000
York County	$ 40,846
TOTAL	**$ 564,300.00**

FY2026 Community-Based Juvenile Services Aid (CB) Awards			
Recipient	**CB Award**	**EB Award**	**Total**
Adams County – Lead (Clay, Nuckolls, Webster, Fillmore & Franklin)	$ 135,638	$ 58,678	$ 194,316
Box Butte County	$ 22,971		$ 22,971
Buffalo County (Sherman)	$ 169,969	$ 17,000	$ 186,969
Cheyenne County - Lead (Deuel, Kimball)	$ 42,470		$ 42,470
Colfax County	$ 54,797		$ 54,797
Custer County - Lead (Blaine, Dawson, Gosper, Greeley, Hooker, Logan, Loup, McPherson, Thomas & Valley)	$ 172,653		$ 172,653
Dakota County	$ 83,185		$ 83,185
Dawes County	$ 25,162		$ 25,162
Dodge County	$ 117,885	$ 51,330	$ 169,215
Douglas County	$ 1,363,751		$ 1,363,751
Gage County	$ 54,405		$ 54,405
Hall County	$ 188,885	$ 29,638	$ 218,523
Holt County - Lead (Boyd, Brown, Wheeler)	$ 40,339	$ 8,585	$ 48,924

Howard County	$ 36,485	$ 12,692	$ 49,177
Jefferson County - Lead (Thayer)	$ 28,900		$ 28,900
Kearney County - Lead (Phelps & Harlan)	$ 62,164	$ 10,290	$ 72,454
Keith County - Lead (Arthur, Dundy, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Chase, Perkins, Red Willow)	$ 85,052		$ 85,052
Lancaster County	$ 1,051,923	$ 71,825	$ 1,123,748
Lincoln County	$ 116,526		$ 116,526
Madison County - Lead (Antelope, Pierce, Stanton, Boone, Knox, & Wayne)	$ 230,485		$ 230,485
Merrick County - Lead (Hamilton & Nance)	$ 66,864	$ 30,258	$ 97,122
Nemaha County - Lead (Richardson, Johnson, & Pawnee)	$ 61,396		$ 61,396
Omaha Tribe of Nebraska	$ -	$ 104,000	$ 104,000
Otoe County	$ 50,004		$ 50,004
Platte County	$ 108,216		$ 108,216
Saline County	$ 53,343		$ 53,343
Sarpy County	$ 540,252		$ 540,252
Saunders County	$ 83,389		$ 83,389
Scotts Bluff County - Lead (Banner, Morrill)	$ 92,115		$ 92,115
Seward County - Lead (Butler)	$ 85,029		$ 85,029
Washington County	$ 69,146		$ 69,146
York County - Lead (Polk)	$ 56,980	$ 53,325	$ 110,305
Total	**$ 5,350,379**	**$ 447,621**	**$ 5,798,000**

Title II Formula Grant	
Recipient	**Total**
Completely KIDS	$ 58,425
Chicano Awareness Center DBA Latino Center of the Midlands	$ 115,930
Douglas County Juvenile Justice	$ 50,000
Lancaster County	$ 55,166
New Life Family Alliance	$ 39,576
Total	**$ 319,097**

Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice Membership

Member Name	Title and Organization	Representation
Lincoln Arneal	**Assistant VP of Policy and Leadership**, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation	**At Large Member**
Melodie Bellamy (Vice Chair)	**Kearney County Attorney**, Kearney County	**One county attorney**
Karen Bredthauer	**County Commissioner**, Hall County	**One county commissioner or supervisor**
Ingrid Gansebom	**Regional Administrator**, Region 4 Behavioral Health	**One member of a regional behavioral health authority established under section 71-808**
Destiny Fisher		**Youth Advocate**
Monika Gross	**Executive Director**, Foster Care Review Office	**The executive director of the Foster Care Review Office**
Amy Hoffman	**Director of Juvenile Programs and Interventions**, Nebraska Crime Commission	**The executive director of the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice or his or her designee**
Nandi Kumondan	**Administrative Assistant,** Nebraska Supreme Court	**Youth Advocate**
Camella Jacobe	**Interim Director of Facilities**, Department of Health and Human Services	**The chief executive officer of the Department of Health and Human Services or his or her designee**
Denise Manthei		**Youth Advocate**
Elaine Menzel (Chair)	**Legal Counsel**, Nebraska Association of County Officials	**The Executive Director of the Nebraska Association of County Officials or his or her designee**
Jaiden Nelsen		**Youth Advocate**
Kaleciana Perry		**At least one member who is under 24yrs with JJ experience**
Wathina Porter	**Executive Director,** Indian Center	**At Large Member, Tribal Representative**
Sara Quiroz	**Assistant Deputy Administrator**, Juvenile Probation, Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation	**The probation administrator of the Office of Probation Administration or his or her designee**
Adama Sawadogo	**Founder & Executive Director**, African Immigrant Family Services	**Community-based, private nonprofit organizations who work with juvenile offenders and their families (2nd District)**
Teshawna Sawyer	**Executive Director,** Arc of Central Nebraska	**Community-based, private nonprofit organizations who work with juvenile offenders and their families (3rd District)**
Daniel Schleusener	**Chief Deputy**, Buffalo County Sheriff	**Representative from law enforcement**
Erika Schwarting	**Director of Operations**, Youth Emergency Services	**At Large Member**
Dr. Jane Stavem	**Deputy Commissioner**, Nebraska Department of Education	**The Commissioner of Education or his or her designee**
Tami Steensma	**Director**, Sarpy County Juvenile Justice Center	**The director or his or her designee from a secure juvenile detention facility or a staff secure youth confinement facility;**
Steve Solorio	**Youth Program Manager**, El Centro de las Américas	**Community-based, private nonprofit organizations who work with juvenile offenders and their families (1st District)**
Lauren Walag	**Assistant Public Defender**, Douglas County	**One public defender**
Judge Candice Novak	**Judge of the Separate Juvenile Court**, Douglas County Court	**One separate juvenile court judge**
Judge Joel B. Jay	**County Judge,** 11th Judicial District Court	**One county court judge**

Membership is current as of 8/19/2026.

Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice Statutory Authority

Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-2412

(1) Consistent with the purposes and objectives of the Juvenile Services Act and the federal act, the coalition shall:

(a) Make recommendations to the commission on the awarding of grants under the Commission Grant Program to eligible applicants;

(b) Prepare at least one report annually to the Governor, the Legislature, the Office of Probation Administration, and the Office of Juvenile Services. The report submitted to the Legislature shall be submitted electronically;

(c) Ensure widespread citizen involvement in all phases of its work; and

(d) Meet at least two times each year.

(2) Consistent with the purposes and objectives of the acts and within the limits of available time and appropriations, the coalition may:

(a) Assist and advise state and local agencies in the establishment of volunteer training programs and the utilization of volunteers;

(b) Apply for and receive funds from federal and private sources for carrying out its powers and duties;

(c) Provide technical assistance to eligible applicants;

(d) Identify juvenile justice issues, share information, and monitor and evaluate programs in the juvenile justice system; and

(e) Recommend guidelines and supervision procedures to be used to develop or expand local diversion programs for juveniles from the juvenile justice system.

(3) In formulating, adopting, and promulgating the recommendations and guidelines provided for in this section, the coalition shall consider the differences among counties in population, in geography, and in the availability of local resources.