

NEBRASKA SENTENCING REFORM TASK FORCE

MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 13, 2024

1:00 P.M. CDT

NEBRASKA STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 1113

1. **Call to Order, Introduction and Roll Call**

Attorney General Mike Hilgers called the meeting of the Nebraska Sentencing Reform Task Force (Task Force) to order at 1:08 p.m. and requested a roll call. Members Present: Senator Carolyn Bosn, Douglas County Sheriff Aaron Hanson, Attorney General Mike Hilgers, Lt. Governor Joe Kelly, and Colfax County Attorney Bruce Prenda. Members Absent: Douglas County Attorney Don Kleine, Lincoln County Public Defender Robert Lindemeier, Senator Terrell McKinney (late arrival), Douglas County Public Defender Tom Riley, Kearney Police Chief Brian Waugh, and Senator Justin Wayne.

2. **Announcement of the Open Meetings Act**

Attorney General Hilgers announced that the meeting was being conducted in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

3. **Notice of Meeting**

On September 6, 2024, a notice of this meeting with the agenda was provided to the Task Force members and the public by posting to the Nebraska Public Meeting Calendar ([Nebraska.gov/calendar](https://nebraska.gov/calendar)). Notice of the meeting with the agenda was also available for public inspection at the Attorney General's Office, State Capitol Room 2115, and was kept continually current.

4. **Adoption of Agenda**

A motion to adopt the meeting agenda was made by Sheriff Hanson and seconded by Lt. Governor Kelly. Members voting in favor of the motion: Bosn, Hanson, Hilgers, Kelly, and Prenda. Members voting in opposition to the motion: none. Members absent: Kleine, Lindemeier, McKinney, Riley, Waugh, and Wayne.

5. **Approval of February 9, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

A motion to approve the meeting minutes from the February 9, 2024, meeting was made by Sheriff Hanson and seconded by Senator Bosn. Members voting in favor of the motion: Bosn, Hanson, Hilgers, Kelly, and Prenda. Members voting in opposition to the motion: none. Members absent: Kleine, Lindemeier, McKinney, Riley, Waugh, and Wayne.

6. Presentation from Rosalyn Cotton, Chair of the Nebraska Board of Parole.

Chair Cotton provided the Task Force with a Board of Parole FY23-24 Snapshot document. Discussion started around this document and the different statistics that it covered. This led to a discussion of the Parole Hearing and Review processes, including how those meetings are run and the factors considered when deciding what programming is needed for the individuals. This includes how letters from victims may affect the meeting outcome and if access to the pre-sentence investigation reports is helpful and always readily available. Programming and “core” programming were also widely discussed, including the discontinuation of the Violence Reduction Program and how that has affected the Board’s processes and requirements. Also discussed was how Nebraska compares to other parole programs and how good time works in parole. A significant focus of the discussion was programming and housing, how those work together, and any barriers that currently exist for parolees' success. A couple of these barriers identified were housing and transportation. Focusing mainly on housing, the Task Force discussed transitional and structured housing, the availability of these houses, the differences, and the issues that affect them. A question was asked about detainers and how those worked within parole, specifically regarding federal, immigration, and county detainers. There was also conversation on the best ways to improve the parole system, one idea being to make parole hearings mandatory.

7. Presentation from Bob Denton, Deputy Administrator for Adult Probation Services.

Deputy Administrator Denton provided the Task Force with a packet that included multiple statistics regarding Adult Probation Services and Problem-Solving Courts. The discussion started with an overview of the statistics, costs of problem-solving courts, and recidivism rates. There was a focus on problem-solving courts and the different roadblocks they have faced, including the shortage of judges. Mr. Denton briefed the Task Force on the Nebraska Supreme Court working strategic group on problem-solving courts and what the subcommittees are focusing on. There was a discussion on Post-Release Supervision that revolved around the data on population and cost, as well as the collaboration between the Department of Correctional Services re-entry team and probation. This led to a conversation on re-entry court and multiple problem-solving court pilot programs running in Nebraska. Of these programs, there was a specific focus on DUI, Veterans Treatment, and Young Adult courts. There were conversations on support facilities, such as transitional living and reporting centers. Questions were also asked about specific issues facing these support facilities, such as zoning issues and lack of community support. This also tied into post-release supervision and early-release programs.

8. Subcommittee Updates

The Data Collection subcommittee updated that they have data on the topics of geriatric inmates, mental health, juvenile justice, and drugs. That is their only update. The Criminal Justice System Resource Allocation and Recidivism Reduction subcommittee had a couple of updates. They are finding it hard to find national research; the Data Collection subcommittee may be able to help. They are looking at what helps and does not help recidivism rates. The Sentencing Reform Subcommittee had no updates but said that the data would also be necessary to them. The Public Safety subcommittee had no updates but wanted to ensure its recordings had been shared with the group.

9. Discussions of objectives for next meeting.

The objective of the next meeting, scheduled for September 30, is to speak with Director Rob Jeffreys about the Department of Correctional Services. There will be additional meetings on October 7 via Zoom, with some members attending in person at the Nebraska State Penitentiary and another meeting on October 24 at the State Capitol. The Task Force's final report is due in November, and staff is currently working on the framework for the report.

10. Adjournment

The Task Force, having concluded its business as provided on the adopted agenda, adjourned on a motion by Senator Bosn, seconded by Senator McKinney. A roll call vote was requested. Members voting in favor of the motion: Bosn, Hanson, Hilgers, Kelly, McKinney, and Prenda. Members voting in opposition to the motion: none. Members absent: Kleine, Lindemeier, Riley, Waugh, and Wayne. The meeting adjourned at 3:53 p.m.