

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

**Seventy-Sixth Session
May 11, 2011**

The Committee on Health and Human Services was called to order by Chair April Mastroluca at 1:48 p.m. on Wednesday, May 11, 2011, in Room 3138 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4406 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda ([Exhibit A](#)), the Attendance Roster ([Exhibit B](#)), and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at www.leg.state.nv.us/76th2011/committees/. In addition, copies of the audio record may be purchased through the Legislative Counsel Bureau's Publications Office (email: publications@lcb.state.nv.us; telephone: 775-684-6835).

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman April Mastroluca, Chair
Assemblywoman Peggy Pierce, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson
Assemblywoman Teresa Benitez-Thompson
Assemblyman Steven Brooks
Assemblyman Richard Carrillo
Assemblywoman Lucy Flores
Assemblyman Jason Frierson
Assemblyman Pete Goicoechea
Assemblyman John Hambrick
Assemblyman Scott Hammond
Assemblyman Pete Livermore
Assemblyman Mark Sherwood
Assemblywoman Debbie Smith

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Allison Combs, Committee Policy Analyst
Kirsten Coulombe, Committee Policy Analyst
Risa Lang, Committee Counsel
Mitzi Nelson, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Rosemary West, Executive Committee Member, Nevada KIDS COUNT
Stephen P.A. Brown, Ph.D., Executive Director, Nevada KIDS COUNT
Rennae Daneshvary, Ph.D., Director, Nevada KIDS COUNT
Tracey Green, M.D., State Health Officer, Health Division, Department of
Health and Human Services

Chair Mastroluca:

[Roll was called.] We will start today's meeting with a presentation by Nevada KIDS COUNT. Nevada KIDS COUNT publishes a wonderful collection of data that is frequently used by the Legislature. Many non- and for-profit companies also use this information to show how our state fares in comparison to other states and how it does over a period of time on many issues, such as teen birth rates. It is a very good collection of information. I really appreciate Nevada KIDS COUNT members taking the time to share this information with us. I would like to invite Ms. West to the table.

Rosemary West, Executive Committee Member, Nevada KIDS COUNT:

We are pleased to be here today to present to the Committee and provide you with a copy of *Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Book: 2010* ([Exhibit C](#)), printed with support from the Lincy Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). The Nevada KIDS COUNT booklet is a ready resource of data, which can provide you with valuable information in regard to the statewide status of children. There is a national data book, as well. The state book includes county-by-county data, as well as data organized by year. We hope this will provide a basis for your decisions now and in the coming weeks.

Nevada KIDS COUNT is primarily funded by a nationwide grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, with additional support from the Lincy Institute, which allows us to provide the book free of charge. At this time, I would like to introduce Dr. Stephen Brown who joined UNLV after more than 25 years at the

Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. He is an internationally recognized scholar in the area of energy economics and an expert on the economy of southern Nevada. Today, he will share some of the findings from the 2010 data book.

Stephen P.A. Brown, Ph.D., Executive Director, Nevada KIDS COUNT:

I should mention that we are not here to represent any bill. We are simply presenting an overview of the data that can be found in the *Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Book*. In 2009, there were nearly 750,000 children living in Nevada. If we break the data down by ethnic and racial groups, we have significant numbers of Asian and Pacific Islanders, over 45,000 children. [Dr. Brown continued to present data concerning children living in Nevada from the prepared presentation ([Exhibit D](#)).] Thank you very much. That concludes our prepared presentation. I would be happy to answer any of your questions.

Chair Mastroluca:

Thank you. I appreciate the information; it is helpful to know, provides some background, and helps our understanding of issues affecting children in our state. We have a couple of questions from the Committee.

Assemblyman Hammond:

I am curious about the high school dropout rate. When did you see it begin to drop off a little? Do you actually have some data that shows when it started to drop off?

Stephen Brown:

The chart on page 21 of the presentation ([Exhibit D](#)) shows that the dropout rate began declining in the 2005-2006 school year and has continued to decline through the 2008-2009 school year. I think that is a favorable trend.

Assemblyman Hammond:

Is there anything specific to which you can attribute the decline? Are there any programs that have been instituted? Does it have to do with the economy?

Stephen Brown:

Most likely, the highest contributing factor is the downturn in the economy. The opportunity to drop out of school and get a job is not very good in a down economy. The Nevada economy has been weak since about 2007 and is now beginning to pull out. However, that would not explain the decline experienced in the 2005-2006 school year.

Assemblyman Frierson:

Oftentimes in the urban areas, we hear that the smaller counties have a higher dropout rate. However, you have presented data showing some of the smaller counties having a zero dropout rate. Is that related to smaller numbers? Is there something being done in those counties that contributed to the zero rate?

Stephen Brown:

Regarding Eureka and Lander Counties, I suspect that their zero dropout rate could be attributed to a small-numbers phenomenon. Had we looked at an earlier time period, the answer might have been different. In general, rural counties do have high dropout rates because the job opportunities in rural areas can be a little bit better. There is also less emphasis on staying in school.

Assemblyman Hambrick:

To follow up on that question, if what you said is correct, then what accounts for the higher graduation rates at the community college level in smaller counties? They are significantly higher than the larger universities. Is this anecdotal or do you have statistics from other areas of the country?

Stephen Brown:

It is mostly anecdotal. I would have to think about the educational experience. Perhaps people who are going to drop out do so earlier in the rural areas. The ones who are going to continue in school go on to graduate as a way to get out of the community. A community college is the perfect step for doing that.

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

I have a question about the number of children living in poverty, 17.6 percent in 2009. That is 1 out of every 4 or 5 children, is that right?

Stephen Brown:

Doing the math quickly in my head, it would be approximately 1 out of about 5.5 children. We have a lot of children living in poverty. That number has increased during the recession.

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

It is amazing.

Stephen Brown:

We were previously talking among ourselves about what we would see with data from 2010. Based upon some of the surveys we have conducted in the Las Vegas area, we think that number will rise.

Chair Mastroluca:

On that note, the rise in the poverty level of children between 2008 and 2009 is quite high. Was that common in other states during that time period or was it unique to Nevada?

Stephen Brown:

It happened in a lot of states in the western United States. In this particular recession, the West was hit harder and has recovered more slowly than the rest of the country. Nevada is one of the tails in the economic recovery. We are just now beginning to see signs of recovery. Some of the other states in the West that have been slow to recover are currently a little bit ahead of us. There are certainly pockets of real problems in California. However, if you add the state up as a whole, California is a little bit ahead of us. The same is true of Arizona. There are quite a few pockets of problems there, but when you add the state up as a whole, Arizona is still doing a bit better than Nevada on the recovery. Consequently, we are seeing more children pushed into poverty. Their parents have been pushed into poverty by the weak economy.

Chair Mastroluca:

Using that idea, does Clark County bring the rest of the state down from a poverty-level standpoint? If we removed Clark County from the picture, would we have more average numbers? Are all the counties suffering the same?

Stephen Brown:

Clark County has suffered and the number of children living in poverty has gone up there. However, rural areas tend to have higher measured poverty levels than urban populations. Average incomes in Clark County are fairly comparable to the national numbers at this point in time.

Chair Mastroluca:

Regarding the average teen death rate, it has dropped but we are still higher than the national average. Is there anything we can attribute that to?

Stephen Brown:

I do not have an answer for that.

Rosemary West:

I have the data book in front of me. In 2008, of the 72 teens that died in violence, 46 were from accidents, 17 from assault or homicide, and 9 from suicide. Accidents seem to be the predominant cause of violent teen death.

Stephen Brown:

Accidents are the No. 1 cause of death nationwide, particularly for teen males.

Chair Mastroluca:

Are there additional questions from the Committee?

Assemblyman Hammond:

It appears that a lot of your data on children living in poverty came from the U.S. Census Bureau. At the bottom of page 13, the handout cites the source as the U.S. Census Bureau. Is that your source for the poverty statistics?

Stephen Brown:

That is correct.

Chair Mastroluca:

Are there any further questions from the Committee?

Assemblyman Flores:

Do you disaggregate this data by race?

Stephen Brown:

We do not. Some of the data is available disaggregated by race, but in this particular version of the KIDS COUNT book, the idea is to make the book as compact as possible.

Assemblyman Flores:

You said the reason is to have a more compact book, but the data included in this book can very often be correlated with race, simply because so many of the issues correlate with poverty. Oftentimes, we refer to the disproportionate impact affecting black, Hispanic, and other races. That is because those races are disproportionately represented in low-income families and areas. I would find the information even more helpful if it was disaggregated by race. Then you can actually see the particular areas where children of color are disproportionately represented across all of the data points. It is sort of hard to get that picture with the data included in this book.

Stephen Brown:

I think that is a point well taken. I will turn the table over to Ms. Daneshvary.

Rennae Daneshvary, Ph.D., Director, Nevada KIDS COUNT:

We produce a larger data book every other year that includes more data by race and ethnicity. That book will come out next in January 2012.

Stephen Brown:

However, I think your point is well taken.

[Assemblywoman Pierce assumed the Chair.]

Vice Chair Pierce:

Do you have a question, Mr. Sherwood?

Assemblyman Sherwood:

I appreciate the fact that the report is compact and it includes a baseline. To dovetail on the larger report, is divorce also one of the indicators in addition to race? I would think that would have a huge impact on the data. Do you break out divorced and single-parent families in the larger data book?

Rennae Daneshvary:

Yes.

Vice Chair Pierce:

Thank you very much. Next we will have a presentation on sentinel events. Dr. Green, would you please come forward?

Tracey Green, M.D., State Health Officer, Health Division, Department of Health and Human Services:

I have put together a presentation that takes you through the incremental policy development of sentinel events ([Exhibit E](#)), because I think that is one of the easiest ways to explain how sentinel events came to be. It is a very summarized presentation. At the end of the packet, I have also provided a reprint of all the *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) that deal with this issue, by date. That will give you an overall history. I have also provided a flow sheet that is basically the algorithm for determining whether an event should be classified as a sentinel event ([Exhibit F](#)).

When the book *To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System* came out in 2000, many states—including Nevada—became focused on serious medical errors. The Institute of Medicine stated in 2000 that 98,000 people died annually due to medical errors. [Dr. Green continued to read from her presentation.] There is a difference between sentinel event reporting, which is covered by NRS Chapter 439, and the transparency website, which is covered by NRS Chapter 439A. The transparency website is administered by the Division of Health Care Financing and Policy of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHCFP). The Division maintains the Nevada Compare Care website, which is a source of knowledge to assist the consumer in making informed health care decisions.

The first sentinel event legislation was adopted in the 18th Special Session (2002). The transparency web site was adopted during the 23rd Special Session (2007). Sentinel event legislation was a response to human and medical errors, while transparency deals with price and quality of care. With sentinel events, we actively participate in identifying issues for facilities. The transparency website is intended to provide information for consumers so that they may actively monitor price and quality. There is a different audience and a different selection of data provided by each, although there is some interchange. The Health Division reports data in aggregate to the DHCFP. However, there is no mandated requirement to report in the opposite direction. That concludes my presentation. I am happy to answer any questions.

Vice Chair Pierce:

Are there any questions for Dr. Green? I do not see any. Thank you. Is there any public comment? I do not see any. With that, we will adjourn the meeting [at 2:31 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Mitzi Nelson
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman April Mastroluca, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Committee Name: Committee on Health and Human Services

Date: May 11, 2011

Time of Meeting: 1:48 p.m.

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster
	C	Rosemary West	<i>Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Book: 2010</i>
	D	Stephen P.A. Brown	<i>Nevada KIDS COUNT Data Book: 2010 Presentation</i>
	E	Tracey Green	Sentinel Events Presentation
	F	Tracey Green	Sentinel Events Algorithm