LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA ONE HUNDRED FOURTH LEGISLATURE FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE BILL 265

Introduced by Campbell, 25.

Read first time January 14, 2015

Committee: Judiciary

1	A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to juveniles; to amend section 29-1926,
2	Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and sections 43-272.01,
3	43-285, 43-297.01, 43-2,108, 43-1301, 43-1302, 43-1303, 43-1304,
4	43-1308, 43-1309, 43-1313, 43-1318, 43-3001, and 43-4318, Revised
5	Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2014; to change powers and duties
6	for guardians ad litem, the Office of Probation Administration, the
7	Foster Care Review Office, and the office of Inspector General of
8	Nebraska Child Welfare; to define terms; to provide for
9	confidentiality of certain information; to harmonize provisions; and
10	to repeal the original sections.

11 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

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Section 1. Section 29-1926, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is
 amended to read:

29-1926 (1)(a) Upon request of the prosecuting or defense attorney and upon a showing of compelling need, the court shall order the taking of a videotape deposition of a child victim of or child witness to any offense punishable as a felony. The deposition ordinarily shall be in lieu of courtroom or in camera testimony by the child. If the court orders a videotape deposition, the court shall:

9 (i) Designate the time and place for taking the deposition. The 10 deposition may be conducted in the courtroom, the judge's chambers, or 11 any other location suitable for videotaping;

12 (ii) Assure adequate time for the defense attorney to complete13 discovery before taking the deposition; and

(iii) Preside over the taking of the videotape deposition in the
same manner as if the child were called as a witness for the prosecution
during the course of the trial.

(b) Unless otherwise required by the court, the deposition shall be 17 conducted in the presence of the prosecuting attorney, the defense 18 attorney, the defendant, and any other person deemed necessary by the 19 court, including the parent or quardian of the child victim or child 20 witness or a counselor or other person with whom the child is familiar. 21 Such parent, guardian, counselor, or other person shall be allowed to sit 22 with or near the child unless the court determines that such person would 23 24 be disruptive to the child's testimony.

(c) At any time subsequent to the taking of the original videotape deposition and upon sufficient cause shown, the court shall order the taking of additional videotape depositions to be admitted at the time of the trial.

(d) If the child testifies at trial in person rather than by
videotape deposition, the taking of the child's testimony may, upon
request of the prosecuting attorney and upon a showing of compelling

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1 need, be conducted in camera.

2 (e) Unless otherwise required by the court, the child shall testify in the presence of the prosecuting attorney, the defense attorney, the 3 4 defendant, and any other person deemed necessary by the court, including the parent or guardian of the child victim or child witness or a 5 counselor or other person with whom the child is familiar. Such parent, 6 guardian, counselor, or other person shall be allowed to sit with or near 7 the child unless the court determines that such person would be 8 9 disruptive to the child's testimony. Unless waived by the defendant, all 10 persons in the room shall be visible on camera except the camera operator. 11

(f) If deemed necessary to preserve the constitutionality of the child's testimony, the court may direct that during the testimony the child shall at all times be in a position to see the defendant live or on camera.

(g) For purposes of this section, child shall mean a person eleven
years of age or younger at the time the motion to take the deposition is
made or at the time of the taking of in camera testimony at trial.

(h) Nothing in this section shall restrict the court from conducting 19 the pretrial deposition or in camera proceedings in any manner deemed 20 likely to facilitate and preserve a child's testimony to the fullest 21 22 extent possible, consistent with the right to confrontation guaranteed in the Sixth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States and Article 23 I, section 11, of the Nebraska Constitution. In deciding whether there is 24 25 a compelling need that child testimony accommodation is required by pretrial videotape deposition, in camera live testimony, in camera 26 27 videotape testimony, or any other accommodation, the court shall make particularized findings on the record of: 28

29 (i) The nature of the offense;

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30 (ii) The significance of the child's testimony to the case;

(iii) The likelihood of obtaining the child's testimony without

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1 modification of trial procedure or with a different modification 2 involving less substantial digression from trial procedure than the 3 modification under consideration;

4 (iv) The child's age;

5 (v) The child's psychological maturity and understanding; and

6 (vi) The nature, degree, and duration of potential injury to the 7 child from testifying.

8 (i) The court may order an independent examination by a psychologist 9 or psychiatrist if the defense attorney requests the opportunity to rebut 10 the showing of compelling need produced by the prosecuting attorney. Such 11 examination shall be conducted in the child's county of residence.

(j) After a finding of compelling need by the court, neither party may call the child witness to testify as a live witness at the trial before the jury unless that party demonstrates that the compelling need no longer exists.

16 (k) Nothing in this section shall limit the right of access of the17 media or the public to open court.

18 (1) Nothing in this section shall preclude discovery by the19 defendant as set forth in section 29-1912.

(m) The Supreme Court may adopt and promulgate rules of procedure to
administer this section, which rules shall not be in conflict with laws
governing such matters.

(2)(a) No custodian of a videotape of a child victim or child 23 24 witness alleging, explaining, denying, or describing an act of sexual assault pursuant to section 28-319, 28-319.01, or 28-320.01 or child 25 abuse pursuant to section 28-707 as part of an investigation or 26 evaluation of the abuse or assault shall release or use a videotape or 27 copies of a videotape or consent, by commission or omission, to the 28 release or use of a videotape or copies of a videotape to or by any other 29 party without a court order, notwithstanding the fact that the child 30 victim or child witness has consented to the release or use of the 31

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videotape or that the release or use is authorized under law, except as provided in section 28-730 or pursuant to an investigation under the Office of Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare Act. Any custodian may release or consent to the release or use of a videotape or copies of a videotape to law enforcement agencies or agencies authorized to prosecute such abuse or assault cases on behalf of the state.

7 (b) The court order may govern the purposes for which the videotape 8 may be used, the reproduction of the videotape, the release of the 9 videotape to other persons, the retention and return of copies of the 10 videotape, and any other requirements reasonably necessary for the 11 protection of the privacy and best interests of the child victim or child 12 witness.

(c) Pursuant to section 29-1912, the defendant described in the
videotape may petition the district court in the county where the alleged
offense took place or where the custodian of the videotape resides for an
order releasing to the defendant a copy of the videotape.

17 (d) Any person who releases or uses a videotape except as provided18 in this section shall be guilty of a Class I misdemeanor.

Sec. 2. Section 43-272.01, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,20 2014, is amended to read:

43-272.01 (1) A guardian ad litem as provided for in subsections (2) and (3) of section 43-272 shall be appointed when a child is removed from his or her surroundings pursuant to subdivision (2) or (3) of section 43-248, subsection (2) of section 43-250, or section 43-251. If removal has not occurred, a guardian ad litem shall be appointed at the commencement of all cases brought under subdivision (3)(a) or (7) of section 43-247 and section 28-707.

(2) In the course of discharging duties as guardian ad litem, the
person so appointed shall consider, but not be limited to, the criteria
provided in this subsection. The guardian ad litem:

31 (a) Is appointed to stand in lieu of a parent for a protected

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juvenile who is the subject of a juvenile court petition, shall be present at all hearings before the court in such matter unless expressly excused by the court, and may enter into such stipulations and agreements concerning adjudication and disposition deemed by him or her to be in the juvenile's best interests;

6 (b) Is not appointed to defend the parents or other custodian of the 7 protected juvenile but shall defend the legal and social interests of 8 such juvenile. Social interests shall be defined generally as the usual 9 and reasonable expectations of society for the appropriate parental 10 custody and protection and quality of life for juveniles without regard 11 to the socioeconomic status of the parents or other custodians of the 12 juvenile;

(c) May at any time after the filing of the petition move the court of jurisdiction to provide medical or psychological treatment or evaluation as set out in section 43-258. The guardian ad litem shall have access to all reports resulting from any examination ordered under section 43-258, and such reports shall be used for evaluating the status of the protected juvenile;

19 (d) Shall make every reasonable effort to become familiar with the needs of the protected juvenile which (i) shall include consultation with 20 the juvenile in his or her respective placement within two weeks after 21 the appointment and once every three six months thereafter and inquiry of 22 the most current caseworker, foster parent, or other custodian, unless 23 24 the court approves other forms of consultation, and (ii) may include 25 inquiry of others directly involved with the juvenile or who may have information or knowledge about the circumstances which brought the 26 juvenile court action or related cases and the development of the 27 28 juvenile, including biological parents, physicians, psychologists, teachers, and clergy members; 29

30 (e) May present evidence and witnesses and cross-examine witnesses31 at all evidentiary hearings. In any proceeding under this section

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1 relating to a child of school age, certified copies of school records 2 relating to attendance and academic progress of such child are admissible 3 in evidence;

4 (f) Shall be responsible for making written reports and recommendations 5 to the court <u>at every dispositional, review, or</u> permanency planning hearing regarding the temporary and permanent 6 placement of the protected juvenile, the type and number of contacts with 7 the juvenile, the type and number of contacts with other relevant 8 9 stakeholders, and any further relevant information on a form prepared by 10 the Supreme Court. A copy of the written reports and recommendations to the court shall also be submitted to the Foster Care Review Office for 11 any juvenile in foster care placement as defined in section 43-1301 and 12 13 shall submit a written report to the court at every dispositional or review hearing, or in the alternative, the court may provide the guardian 14 15 ad litem with a checklist that shall be completed and presented to the court at every dispositional or review hearing; 16

17 (g) Shall consider such other information as is warranted by the18 nature and circumstances of a particular case; and

(h) May file a petition in the juvenile court on behalf of the
juvenile, including a supplemental petition as provided in section
43-291.

(3) Nothing in this section shall operate to limit the discretion of
the juvenile court in protecting the best interests of a juvenile who is
the subject of a juvenile court petition.

(4) For purposes of subdivision (2)(d) of this section, the court may order the expense of such consultation, if any, to be paid by the county in which the juvenile court action is brought or the court may, after notice and hearing, assess the cost of such consultation, if any, in whole or in part to the parents of the juvenile. The ability of the parents to pay and the amount of the payment shall be determined by the court by appropriate examination.

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Sec. 3. Section 43-285, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,
 2014, is amended to read:

3 43-285 (1) When the court awards a juvenile to the care of the 4 Department of Health and Human Services, an association, or an individual 5 in accordance with the Nebraska Juvenile Code, the juvenile shall, unless otherwise ordered, become a ward and be subject to the legal custody and 6 care of the department, association, or individual to whose care he or 7 she is committed. Any such association and the department shall have 8 9 authority, by and with the assent of the court, to determine the care, 10 placement, medical services, psychiatric services, training, and expenditures on behalf of each juvenile committed to it. Any such 11 association and the department shall be responsible for applying for any 12 13 health insurance available to the juvenile, including, but not limited to, medical assistance under the Medical Assistance Act. Such custody and 14 care shall not include the guardianship of any estate of the juvenile. 15

16 (2) Following an adjudication hearing at which a juvenile is 17 adjudged to be under subdivision (3)(a) or (c) of section 43-247, the court may order the department to prepare and file with the court a 18 proposed plan for the care, placement, services, and permanency which are 19 to be provided to such juvenile and his or her family. The health and 20 safety of the juvenile shall be the paramount concern in the proposed 21 plan. The department shall include in the plan for a juvenile who is 22 sixteen years of age or older and subject to the legal care and custody 23 24 of the department a written independent living transition proposal which 25 meets the requirements of section 43-1311.03 and, for eligible juveniles, the Young Adult Bridge to Independence Act. The juvenile court shall 26 provide a copy of the plan to all interested parties before the hearing. 27 28 The court may approve the plan, modify the plan, order that an alternative plan be developed, or implement another plan that is in the 29 juvenile's best interests. In its order the court shall include a finding 30 regarding the appropriateness of the programs and services described in 31

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1 the proposal designed to assist the juvenile in acquiring independent 2 living skills. Rules of evidence shall not apply at the dispositional 3 hearing when the court considers the plan that has been presented.

4 (3) Within thirty days after an order awarding a juvenile to the 5 care of the department, an association, or an individual and until the juvenile reaches the age of majority, the department, association, or 6 individual shall file with the court a report stating the location of the 7 juvenile's placement and the needs of the juvenile in order to effectuate 8 9 the purposes of subdivision (1) of section 43-246. The department, association, or individual shall file a report with the court once every 10 six months or at shorter intervals if ordered by the court or deemed 11 appropriate by the department, association, or individual. Every six 12 13 months, the report shall provide an updated statement regarding the eligibility of the juvenile for health insurance, including, but not 14 limited to, medical assistance under the Medical Assistance Act. The 15 16 department, association, or individual shall file a report and notice of placement change with the court and shall send copies of the notice to 17 all interested parties at least seven days before the placement of the 18 juvenile is changed from what the court originally considered to be a 19 suitable family home or institution to some other custodial situation in 20 order to effectuate the purposes of subdivision (1) of section 43-246. 21 The court, on its own motion or upon the filing of an objection to the 22 23 change by an interested party, may order a hearing to review such a 24 change in placement and may order that the change be stayed until the 25 completion of the hearing. Nothing in this section shall prevent the court on an ex parte basis from approving an immediate change in 26 placement upon good cause shown. The department may make an immediate 27 28 change in placement without court approval only if the juvenile is in a harmful or dangerous situation or when the foster parents request that 29 the juvenile be removed from their home. Approval of the court shall be 30 sought within twenty-four hours after making the change in placement or 31

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1 as soon thereafter as possible. The department shall provide the 2 juvenile's guardian ad litem with a copy of any report filed with the 3 court by the department pursuant to this subsection.

4 (4) The court shall also hold a permanency hearing if required under5 section 43-1312.

6 (5) When the court awards a juvenile to the care of the department, 7 an association, or an individual, then the department, association, or 8 individual shall have standing as a party to file any pleading or motion, 9 to be heard by the court with regard to such filings, and to be granted 10 any review or relief requested in such filings consistent with the 11 Nebraska Juvenile Code.

12 (6) Whenever a juvenile is in a foster care placement as defined in 13 section 43-1301, the Foster Care Review Office or the designated local 14 foster care review board may participate in proceedings concerning the 15 juvenile as provided in section 43-1313 and notice shall be given as 16 provided in section 43-1314.

(7) Any written findings or recommendations of the Foster Care Review Office or the designated local foster care review board with regard to a juvenile in a foster care placement submitted to a court having jurisdiction over such juvenile shall be <u>admitted into evidence</u> <u>without being offered by any party of record admissible</u> in any proceeding concerning such juvenile if such findings or recommendations have been provided to all other parties of record.

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

30 Sec. 4. Section 43-297.01, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,
31 2014, is amended to read:

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1 43-297.01 (1) Following an adjudication, whenever any juvenile is 2 placed on juvenile probation subject to the supervision of a probation 3 officer, the Office of Probation Administration is deemed to have 4 placement and care responsibility for the juvenile.

5 (2) The court shall order the initial placement and level of care for the juvenile placed on juvenile probation. Prior to determining the 6 placement and level of care for a juvenile, the court may solicit a 7 8 recommendation from the Office of Probation Administration. The status of 9 each juvenile placed out-of-home shall be reviewed periodically, but not less than once every six months by the court in person, by video, or 10 telephonically. Periodic reviews shall assess the juvenile's safety and 11 the continued necessity and appropriateness of placement, ensure case 12 13 plan compliance, and monitor the juvenile's progress. The court shall 14 determine whether an out-of-home placement made by the office is in the best interests of the juvenile. The office shall provide all interested 15 16 parties with a copy of any report filed with the court by the office 17 pursuant to this subsection.

(3) The Office of Probation Administration may transition a juvenile 18 to a less restrictive placement or to a placement which has the same 19 level of restriction as the current placement. In order to make a 20 placement change under this section, the office shall file a notice of 21 placement change with the court and shall send copies of the notice to 22 all interested parties at least seven days before the change 23 of 24 placement. The court, on its own motion, or upon the filing of an 25 objection to the change by an interested party, may order a hearing to review such a change in placement and may order that the change be stayed 26 pending the outcome of the hearing on the objection. 27

(4) The Office of Probation Administration may make an immediate
change in placement without court approval only if the juvenile is in a
harmful or dangerous situation. Approval of the court shall be sought
within twenty-four hours after making the change in placement or as soon

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1 thereafter as possible. The office shall provide all interested parties 2 with a copy of any report filed with the court by the office pursuant to 3 this subsection.

4 (5) Whenever the Office of Probation Administration places a juvenile in a foster care placement as defined in section 43-1301, the 5 Foster Care Review Office or designated local foster care review board 6 7 may participate in proceedings concerning the juvenile as provided in section 43-1313 and notice shall be given as provided in section 43-1314. 8 9 (6) Any written findings or recommendations of the Foster Care 10 Review Office or the designated local foster care review board with regard to a juvenile in a foster care placement submitted to a court 11 having jurisdiction over such juvenile shall be admitted into evidence 12 without being offered by any party of record in any proceeding concerning 13 such juvenile if such findings or recommendations have been provided to 14 15 all other parties of record.

16 <u>(7) The executive director and any agent or employee of the Foster</u> 17 <u>Care Review Office or any member of any local foster care review board</u> 18 <u>participating in an investigation or making any report pursuant to the</u> 19 <u>Foster Care Review Act or participating in a judicial proceeding pursuant</u> 20 <u>to this section shall be immune from any civil liability that would</u> 21 <u>otherwise be incurred except for false statements negligently made.</u>

(<u>8</u> 5) Nothing in this section prevents the court on an ex parte
 basis from approving an immediate change in placement upon good cause
 shown.

Sec. 5. Section 43-2,108, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,
26 2014, is amended to read:

43-2,108 (1) The juvenile court judge shall keep a minute book in which he or she shall enter minutes of all proceedings of the court in each case, including appearances, findings, orders, decrees, and judgments, and any evidence which he or she feels it is necessary and proper to record. Juvenile court legal records shall be deposited in

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1 files and shall include the petition, summons, notice, certificates or 2 receipts of mailing, minutes of the court, findings, orders, decrees, 3 judgments, and motions.

4 (2) Except as provided in subsections (3), and (4), and (5) of this section, the medical, psychological, psychiatric, and social welfare 5 reports and the records of juvenile probation officers as they relate to 6 individual proceedings in the juvenile court shall not be open to 7 inspection, without order of the court. Such records shall be made 8 9 available to a district court of this state or the District Court of the 10 United States on the order of a judge thereof for the confidential use of such judge or his or her probation officer as to matters pending before 11 such court but shall not be made available to parties or their counsel; 12 13 and such district court records shall be made available to a county court 14 or separate juvenile court upon request of the county judge or separate juvenile judge for the confidential use of such judge and his or her 15 probation officer as to matters pending before such court, but shall not 16 be made available by such judge to the parties or their counsel. 17

(3) As used in this <u>section</u> subsection, confidential record 18 19 information means shall mean all docket records, other than the pleadings, orders, decrees, and judgments; case files and records; 20 reports and records of probation officers; and information supplied to 21 the court of jurisdiction in such cases by any individual or any public 22 or private institution, agency, facility, or clinic, which is compiled 23 24 by, produced by, and in the possession of any court. In all cases under subdivision (3)(a) of section 43-247, access to all confidential record 25 information in such cases shall be granted only as follows: (a) The court 26 of jurisdiction may, subject to applicable federal and state regulations, 27 28 disseminate such confidential record information to any individual, or public or private agency, institution, facility, or clinic which is 29 providing services directly to the juvenile and such juvenile's parents 30 or guardian and his or her immediate family who are the subject of such 31

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record information; (b) the court of jurisdiction may disseminate such 1 2 confidential record information, with the consent of persons who are subjects of such information, or by order of such court after showing of 3 4 good cause, to any law enforcement agency upon such agency's specific 5 request for such agency's exclusive use in the investigation of any protective service case or investigation of allegations under subdivision 6 (3)(a) of section 43-247, regarding the juvenile or such juvenile's 7 immediate family, who are the subject of such investigation; and (c) the 8 9 court of jurisdiction may disseminate such confidential record 10 information to any court, which has jurisdiction of the juvenile who is the subject of such information upon such court's request. 11

12 (4) The court shall provide copies of predispositional reports and 13 evaluations of the juvenile to the juvenile's attorney and the county 14 attorney or city attorney prior to any hearing in which the report or 15 evaluation will be relied upon.

(5) In all cases under sections 43-246.01 and 43-247 the court or 16 the probation officer shall disseminate confidential record information 17 to (a) the office of Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare upon 18 19 request for the exclusive use in an investigation pursuant to the Office of Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare Act and (b) the Foster 20 Care Review Office pursuant to the Foster Care Review Act. Nothing in 21 this subsection shall prevent the notification of death or serious injury 22 of a juvenile to the Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare pursuant 23 to section 43-4318 as soon as reasonably possible after the Office of 24 25 Probation Administration learns of such death or serious injury.

(6 5) Nothing in <u>subsections</u> subsection (3) and (5) of this section shall be construed to restrict the dissemination of confidential record information between any individual or public or private agency, institute, facility, or clinic, except any such confidential record information disseminated by the court of jurisdiction pursuant to this section shall be for the exclusive and private use of those to whom it

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1 was released and shall not be disseminated further without order of such 2 court.

3 $(7 \ 6)(a)$ Any records concerning a juvenile court petition filed pursuant to subdivision (3)(c) of section 43-247 shall remain 4 confidential except as may be provided otherwise by law. Such records 5 shall be accessible to (i) the juvenile except as provided in subdivision 6 7 (b) of this subsection, (ii) the juvenile's counsel, (iii) the juvenile's parent or guardian, and (iv) persons authorized by an order of a judge or 8 9 court.

10 (b) Upon application by the county attorney or by the director of the facility where the juvenile is placed and upon a showing of good 11 cause therefor, a judge of the juvenile court having jurisdiction over 12 13 the juvenile or of the county where the facility is located may order that the records shall not be made available to the juvenile if, in the 14 judgment of the court, the availability of such records to the juvenile 15 will adversely affect the juvenile's mental state and the treatment 16 17 thereof.

Sec. 6. Section 43-1301, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2014, is amended to read:

43-1301 For purposes of the Foster Care Review Act, unless the
 context otherwise requires:

(1) Local board means a local foster care review board created
 pursuant to section 43-1304;

(2) Office means the Foster Care Review Office created pursuant to
 section 43-1302;

(3) Foster care facility means any foster family home as defined in
section 71-1901, residential child-caring agency as defined in section
71-1926, public agency, private agency, or any other person or entity
receiving and caring for foster children;

30 (4) Foster care placements means (a) all types of placements of
 31 juveniles described in sections 43-245 and section 43-247, (b) all types

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of placements of neglected, dependent, or delinquent children, including 1 2 those made directly by the Department of Health and Human Services or the Office of Probation Administration, by parents, or by third parties, (c) 3 4 and placements of children who have been voluntarily relinquished 5 pursuant to section 43-106.01 to the department Department of Health and Human Services or any child-placing agency as defined in section 71-1926 6 licensed by the department, and (d) all types of placements that are 7 considered to be a trial home visit, including those made directly by the 8 9 <u>department or office</u> Department of Health and Human Services;

10 (5) Person or court in charge of the child means (a) the Department of Health and Human Services, an association, or an individual who has 11 been made the guardian of a neglected, dependent, or delinquent child by 12 13 the court and has the responsibility of the care of the child and has the 14 authority by and with the assent of the court to place such a child in a suitable family home or institution or has been entrusted with the care 15 of the child by a voluntary placement made by a parent or legal guardian, 16 17 (b) the court which has jurisdiction over the child, or (c) the entity having jurisdiction over the child pursuant to the Nebraska Indian Child 18 Welfare Act, or (d) the Office of Probation Administration; 19

(6) Voluntary placement means the placement by a parent or legal
guardian who relinquishes the possession and care of a child to a third
party, individual, or agency;

(7) Family unit means the social unit consisting of the foster child and the parent or parents or any person in the relationship of a parent, including a grandparent, and any siblings with whom the foster child legally resided prior to placement in foster care, except that for purposes of potential sibling placement, the child's family unit also includes the child's siblings even if the child has not resided with such siblings prior to placement in foster care;

30 (8) Residential child-caring agency has the definition found in
 31 section 71-1926;

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(9) Child-placing agency has the definition found in section
 71-1926;—and

3 (10) Siblings means biological siblings and legal siblings,
4 including, but not limited to, half-siblings and stepsiblings; and -

5 (11) Trial home visit means a court-involved juvenile that goes from 6 a foster care placement back to his or her legal parent or parents or 7 guardian but remains as a ward of the state or a ward of the court for a 8 period not exceeding six months.

9 Sec. 7. Section 43-1302, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,
10 2014, is amended to read:

43-1302 (1)(a) The Foster Care Review Office is hereby established. 11 The purpose of the office is to provide information and direct reporting 12 13 to the courts, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Probation Administration, and the Legislature regarding the foster care 14 system in Nebraska; to provide oversight of the foster care system; and 15 to make recommendations regarding foster care policy to the Legislature. 16 The executive director of the Foster Care Review Office office shall 17 reporting services, provide analysis 18 provide information and of 19 information obtained, and oversee foster care file audit case reviews and tracking of cases of children in the foster care system. The executive 20 director of the office shall, through information analysis and with the 21 22 assistance of the Foster Care Advisory Committee, (i) determine key issues of the foster care system and ways to resolve the issues and to 23 24 otherwise improve the system and (ii) make policy recommendations.

(b) All equipment and effects of the State Foster Care Review Board on July 1, 2012, shall be transferred to the Foster Care Review Office, and all staff of the board, except the executive director and interim executive director, shall be transferred to the office. The State Foster Care Review Board shall terminate on July 1, 2012. Beginning on July 1, 2012, the data coordinator of the board, as such position existed prior to such date, shall serve as the executive director of the office until the Foster Care Advisory Committee hires an executive director as prescribed by this section. It is the intent of the Legislature that the staff of the board employed prior to July 1, 2012, shall continue to be employed by the office until such time as the executive director is hired by the committee.

6 (c) It is the intent of the Legislature that the funds appropriated
7 to the State Foster Care Review Board be transferred to the Foster Care
8 Review Office for FY2012-13.

9 (2)(a) The Foster Care Advisory Committee is created. The committee 10 shall have five members appointed by the Governor. The members shall have 11 no pecuniary interest in the foster care system and shall not be employed 12 by the office, the Department of Health and Human Services, a county, a 13 residential child-caring agency, a child-placing agency, or a court.

(b) The Governor shall appoint three members from a list of twelve 14 local board members submitted by the Health and Human Services Committee 15 of the Legislature, one member from a list of four persons with data 16 analysis experience submitted by the Health and Human Services Committee 17 of the Legislature, and one member from a list of four persons who are 18 19 residents of the state and are representative of the public at large submitted by the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature. 20 The Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature shall hold a 21 confirmation hearing for the appointees, and the appointments shall be 22 subject to confirmation by the Legislature, except that the initial 23 24 members and members appointed while the Legislature is not in session 25 shall serve until the next session of the Legislature, at which time a majority of the members of the Legislature shall approve or disapprove of 26 27 the appointments.

(c) The terms of the members shall be for three years, except that the Governor shall designate two of the initial appointees to serve initial terms ending on March 1, 2014, and three of the initial appointees to serve initial terms ending on March 1, 2015. The Governor

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1 shall make the initial appointments within thirty days after July 1, 2 2012. Members shall not serve more than two consecutive terms, except 3 that members shall serve until their successors have been appointed and 4 qualified. The Governor shall appoint members to fill vacancies in the 5 same manner as the original appointments to serve for the remainder of 6 the unexpired term.

7 (d) The Foster Care Advisory Committee shall meet at least four 8 times each calendar year. Each member shall attend at least two meetings 9 each calendar year and shall be subject to removal for failure to attend 10 at least two meetings unless excused by a majority of the members of the 11 committee. Members shall be reimbursed for their actual and necessary 12 expenses as provided in sections 81-1174 to 81-1177.

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(e) The duties of the Foster Care Advisory Committee are to:

14 (i) Hire and fire an executive director for the office who has15 training and experience in foster care; and

(ii) Support and facilitate the work of the office, including the
 tracking of children in foster care and reviewing foster care file audit
 case reviews.

19 (3) The executive director of the office shall hire, fire, and 20 supervise office staff and shall be responsible for the duties of the 21 office as provided by law, including the annual report and other 22 reporting, review, tracking, data collection and analysis, and oversight 23 and training of local boards.

24 Sec. 8. Section 43-1303, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 25 2014, is amended to read:

43-1303 (1) The office shall maintain the statewide register of all foster care placements occurring within the state, and there shall be a <u>weekly monthly</u> report made to the registry of all foster care placements by the Department of Health and Human Services, <u>the Office of Probation</u> <u>Administration,</u> any child-placing agency, or any court in a form as developed by the <u>Foster Care Review Office</u> of fice in consultation with

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representatives of entities required to make such reports. For each child 1 2 entering and leaving foster care, such monthly report shall consist of placement 3 identifying information, information, and the plan or 4 permanency plan developed by the person or court in charge of the child 5 pursuant to section 43-1312. The department, Office of Probation Administration, and every court and child-placing agency shall report any 6 7 foster care placement within three working days. The report shall contain the following information: 8

9 (a) Child identification information, including name, social 10 security number, date of birth, gender, race, and religion<u>, and</u> 11 <u>ethnicity</u>;

12 (b) Identification information for parents and stepparents,
 13 including name, social security number, address, gender, and status of
 14 parental rights;

(c) Placement information, including initial placement date, current
 placement date, and the name and address of the foster care <u>placement</u>
 provider;

(d) Court status information, including which court has
jurisdiction, initial custody date, court hearing date, and results of
the court hearing;

21 (e) Agency or other entity having custody of the child; and

(f) Case worker, probation officer, or person providing direct case
 management or supervision functions. ; and

24 (g) Permanency plan objective.

(2)(a) The <u>Foster Care Review Office</u> office shall designate a local
board to conduct foster care file audit case reviews for each case of
children in foster care placement.

(b) The office may adopt and promulgate rules and regulations forthe following:

(i) Establishment of training programs for local board members which
 shall include an initial training program and periodic inservice training

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2

1 programs;

(ii) Development of procedures for local boards;

3 (iii) Establishment of a central record-keeping facility for all
4 local board files, including foster care file audit case reviews;

(iv) Accumulation of data and the making of annual reports on 5 children in foster care <u>placements</u>. Such reports shall include, <u>but not</u> 6 7 be limited to, (A) personal data on length of time in foster care, (B) number of placements, (C) frequency and results of foster care file audit 8 9 case reviews and court review hearings, (D) number of children supervised by the foster care programs in the state annually, (E) trend data 10 impacting foster care, services, and placements, (F) analysis of the 11 data, and (G) recommendations for improving the foster care system in 12 13 Nebraska;

14 <u>(v) Accumulation of data and making of quarterly reports regarding</u> 15 <u>the children in foster care placements;</u>

16 $(\underline{vi} +)$ To the extent not prohibited by section 43-1310, evaluation 17 of the judicial and administrative data collected on foster care and the 18 dissemination of such data to the judiciary, public and private agencies, 19 the department, and members of the public; and

20 (<u>vii</u> vi) Manner in which the office shall determine the 21 appropriateness of requesting a court review hearing as provided for in 22 section 43-1313.

(3) A local board shall send a written report to the office for each
foster care file audit case review conducted by the local board. A court
shall send a written report to the office for each foster care review
hearing conducted by the court.

(4) The office shall report and make recommendations to the
Legislature, <u>the</u> department, <u>the Office of Probation Administration, the</u>
<u>courts,</u> local boards, and county welfare offices. Such reports and
recommendations shall include, but not be limited to, the annual judicial
and administrative data collected on foster care pursuant to subsections

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(2) and (3) of this section and the annual evaluation of such data. The 1 2 report and recommendations submitted to the Legislature shall be submitted electronically. In addition, the Foster Care Review Office 3 4 office shall provide copies of such reports and recommendations to each 5 court having the authority to make foster care placements. The executive 6 director of the office or his or her designees from the office may visit 7 and observe foster care facilities in order to ascertain whether the individual physical, psychological, and sociological needs of each foster 8 9 child are being met. The executive director shall also provide, at a time 10 specified by the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature, regular electronic updates regarding child welfare data and information 11 at least quarterly, and a fourth-quarter report which shall be the annual 12 13 report. The executive director shall include issues, policy concerns, and problems which have come to the office and the executive director from 14 analysis of the data. The executive director shall recommend alternatives 15 16 to the identified problems and related needs of the office and the foster 17 care system to the committee. The Health and Human Services Committee shall coordinate and prioritize data and information requests submitted 18 19 to the office by members of the Legislature. The annual report of the office shall be completed by December 1 each year, beginning December 1, 20 2012, and shall be submitted electronically to the committee. 21

(5) The executive director of the office or his or her designees
 from the office may visit and observe foster care facilities in order to
 ascertain whether the individual physical, psychological, and
 sociological needs of each foster child are being met.

26 Sec. 9. Section 43-1304, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 27 2014, is amended to read:

43-1304 There shall be local foster care review boards to conduct the foster care file audit case reviews of children in foster care placement and carry out other powers and duties given to such boards under the Foster Care Review Act. <u>Members of local boards serving on July</u>

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1, 2012, shall continue to serve the unexpired portion of their terms. 1 The executive director of the office shall select members to serve on 2 local boards from a list of applications submitted to the office. Each 3 4 local board shall consist of not less than four and not more than ten members as determined by the executive director. The members of the local 5 board shall reasonably represent the various social, economic, racial, 6 7 and ethnic groups of the county or counties from which its members may be appointed. A person employed by the office, the Department of Health and 8 9 Human Services, a residential child-caring agency, a child-placing 10 agency, or a court shall not be appointed to a local board. A list of the members of each local board shall be sent to the department and the 11 Office of Probation Administration. 12

Sec. 10. Section 43-1308, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,
2014, is amended to read:

43-1308 (1) Except as otherwise provided in the Nebraska Indian
Child Welfare Act, the designated local board shall:

(a) Conduct a foster care file audit case review at least once every
six months for the case of each child in a foster care placement to
determine what efforts have been made to carry out the plan or permanency
plan for rehabilitation of the foster child and family unit or for
permanent placement of such child pursuant to section 43-1312;

22 (b) Submit to the court having jurisdiction over such child for the purposes of foster care placement, within thirty days after the foster 23 24 care file audit case review, its findings and recommendations regarding 25 the efforts and progress made to carry out the plan or permanency plan pursuant to section 43-1312 together with any other 26 established recommendations it chooses to make regarding the child. The findings and 27 28 recommendations shall include whether there is a need for continued outof-home placement, whether the current placement is safe and appropriate, 29 the specific reasons for the findings and recommendations, including 30 factors, opinions, and rationale considered in the foster care file audit 31

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case review, whether the grounds for termination of parental rights under
 section 43-292 appear to exist, and the date of the next foster care file
 audit case review by the designated local board;

4 (c) If the return of the child to his or her parents is not likely,
5 recommend referral for adoption and termination of parental rights,
6 guardianship, placement with a relative, or, as a last resort, another
7 planned, permanent living arrangement; and

8 (d) Promote and encourage stability and continuity in foster care by 9 discouraging unnecessary changes in the placement of foster children and 10 by encouraging the recruitment of foster parents who may be eligible as 11 adoptive parents.

12 (2) When the office or designated local board determines that the 13 interests of a child in a foster care placement would be served thereby, 14 the office or designated local board may request a court review hearing 15 as provided for in section 43-1313.

16 (3) Due to the confidential and protected nature of child-specific 17 and family-specific information regarding mental and behavioral health 18 services, if such information is discussed at a local board meeting or a 19 portion of a meeting, any local board meeting or portion of a meeting at 20 which such information is discussed shall be exempt from the Open 21 Meetings Act.

Sec. 11. Section 43-1309, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,
2014, is amended to read:

24 43-1309 Upon the request of the office or designated local board, 25 any records pertaining to a case assigned to such local board shall be furnished to the office or designated local board by the Department of 26 27 Health and Human Services or Office of Probation Administration , or upon the request of the Department of Health and Human Services, any records 28 pertaining to a case assigned to the department, shall be furnished to 29 30 the office or designated local board or department by the agency charged with the child or any public official or employee of a political 31

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subdivision having relevant contact with the child. Upon the request of 1 2 the Foster Care Review Office office or designated local board, and if information is obtainable elsewhere, 3 such not the court having jurisdiction of the foster child shall release such information to the 4 5 office or designated local board as the court deems necessary to determine the physical, psychological, and sociological circumstances of 6 7 such foster child.

8 Sec. 12. Section 43-1313, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,9 2014, is amended to read:

10 43-1313 When a child is in foster care placement, the court having jurisdiction over such child for the purposes of foster care placement 11 shall review the dispositional order for such child at least once every 12 13 six months. The court may reaffirm the order or direct other disposition of the child. Any review hearing by a court having jurisdiction over such 14 child for purposes of foster care placement shall be conducted on the 15 16 record as provided in sections 43-283 and 43-284, and any recommendations of the office or designated local board concerning such child shall be 17 admitted into evidence without being offered by any party of record 18 19 included in the record. The court shall review a case on the record more often than every six months and at any time following the original 20 placement of the child if the office or local board requests a hearing in 21 22 writing specifying the reasons for the review. Members of the office or 23 local board or its designated representative may attend and be heard at 24 any hearing conducted under this section and may participate through 25 counsel at the hearing with the right to call and cross-examine witnesses and present arguments to the court. 26

27 Sec. 13. (1) It is the intent of the Legislature to establish an 28 independent external oversight data warehouse and analysis pilot project 29 within the office. The purpose of the pilot project is to determine 30 whether policy outcomes meet the well-being outcomes for juvenile and 31 child-welfare involved children in out-of-home placements in order to:

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1	<u>(a) Identify outcomes for policymakers to make systemic decisions</u>
2	based on data in order to improve the child welfare and juvenile justice
3	systems;
4	<u>(b) Track individual children and families within the system no</u>
5	matter how they came into the system;
6	(c) Pinpoint indicators for success and determine whether children
7	are better off after an out-of-home placement; and
8	<u>(d) Use data to predict future needs for children and families</u>
9	across the state.
10	<u>(2) A child welfare and juvenile justice data warehouse shall be</u>
11	created within the office for the purpose of identifying, tracking, and
12	<u>analyzing children in out-of-home placement. All pertinent data systems</u>
13	<u>shall be utilized. The following agency data systems shall provide data</u>
14	extracts and any other information and data to the office regarding out-
15	of-home placement of children upon request:
16	<u>(a) Supreme Court;</u>
17	(b) Office of Probation Administration;
18	(c) Division of Children and Family Services of the Department of
19	Health and Human Services;
20	<u>(d) Division of Developmental Disabilities of the Department of</u>
21	Health and Human Services;
22	<u>(e) Division of Behavioral Health of the Department of Health and</u>
23	<u>Human Services;</u>
24	(f) Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care of the Department of
25	<u>Health and Human Services;</u>
26	(g) Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice; and
27	(h) State Department of Education.
28	(3) A subject-matter advisory group shall be created in order to
29	formulate what initial indicators should be analyzed, what corresponding
30	factors should be compared, and further ways to identify system
31	<u>indicators. The advisory group shall consist of, but not be limited to, a</u>

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2015	2013
1	representative from the office of Inspector General of Nebraska Child
2	Welfare, Division of Children and Family Services of the Department of
3	Health and Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities of the
4	Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health of
5	the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Medicaid and
6	Long-Term Care of the Department of Health and Human Services, State
7	Court Administrator's office, Office of Probation Administration, State
8	Department of Education, and Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and
9	<u>Criminal Justice.</u>
10	<u>(4) The Foster Care Review Office shall keep all individual data</u>
11	confidential. Data reports to the advisory group or to the public shall
12	be reported in the aggregate and not on an individual basis.
13	(5) A report shall be submitted electronically by the advisory group
14	to the Legislature by December 15, 2015, and every December 15
15	thereafter. Such report shall include challenges in data collection,
16	barriers to data sharing, indicators for success that have been
17	identified, and an identification of future needs across the state.
18	Sec. 14. Section 43-1318, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,
19	2014, is amended to read:
20	43-1318 Sections 43-1301 to 43-1321 and section 13 of this act shall
21	be known and may be cited as the Foster Care Review Act.
22	Sec. 15. Section 43-3001, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,
23	2014, is amended to read:
24	43-3001 (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law regarding the
25	confidentiality of records and when not prohibited by the federal Privacy
26	Act of 1974, as amended, juvenile court records and any other pertinent
27	information that may be in the possession of school districts, school
28	personnel, county attorneys, the Attorney General, law enforcement
29	agencies, child advocacy centers, state probation personnel, state parole
30	personnel, youth detention facilities, medical personnel, treatment or

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placement programs, the Department of Health and Human Services, the

Department of Correctional Services, the Foster Care Review Office, local foster care review boards, child abuse and neglect investigation teams, child abuse and neglect treatment teams, or other multidisciplinary teams for abuse, neglect, or delinquency concerning a child who is in the custody of the state may be shared with individuals and agencies who have been identified in a court order authorized by this section.

(2) In any judicial proceeding concerning a child who is currently, 7 or who may become at the conclusion of the proceeding, a ward of the 8 9 court or state or under the supervision of the court, an order may be issued which identifies individuals and agencies who shall be allowed to 10 receive otherwise confidential information concerning the child for 11 legitimate and official purposes. The individuals and agencies who may be 12 identified in the court order are the child's attorney or guardian ad 13 the parents' attorney, foster parents, appropriate 14 litem, school 15 personnel, county attorneys, the Attorney General, authorized court personnel, law enforcement agencies, state probation personnel, state 16 17 parole personnel, youth detention facilities, medical personnel, court appointed special advocate volunteers, treatment or placement programs, 18 19 the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Juvenile Services, the Department of Correctional Services, the Foster Care Review 20 Office, local foster care review boards, the office of Inspector General 21 22 of Nebraska Child Welfare, child abuse and neglect investigation teams, child abuse and neglect treatment teams, other multidisciplinary teams 23 for abuse, neglect, or delinquency, and other individuals and agencies 24 for which the court specifically finds, in writing, that it would be in 25 the best interest of the juvenile to receive such information. Unless the 26 order otherwise states, the order shall be effective until the child 27 28 leaves the custody of the state or supervision of the court or until a new order is issued. 29

30 (3) All information acquired by an individual or agency pursuant to31 this section shall be confidential and shall not be disclosed except to

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other persons who have a legitimate and official interest in the 1 2 information and are identified in the court order issued pursuant to this section with respect to the child in question. A person who receives such 3 4 information or who cooperates in good faith with other individuals and 5 agencies identified in the appropriate court order by providing information or records about a child shall be immune from any civil or 6 7 criminal liability. The provisions of this section granting immunity from 8 liability shall not be extended to any person alleged to have committed 9 an act of child abuse or neglect.

(4) In any proceeding under this section relating to a child of
 school age, certified copies of school records relating to attendance and
 academic progress of such child are admissible in evidence.

(5) Except as provided in subsection (4) of this section, any person
who publicly discloses information received pursuant to this section
shall be guilty of a Class III misdemeanor.

Sec. 16. Section 43-4318, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2014, is amended to read:

18 43-4318 (1) The office shall investigate:

(a) Allegations or incidents of possible misconduct, misfeasance, malfeasance, or violations of statutes or of rules or regulations of the department by an employee of or person under contract with the department, a private agency, a licensed child care facility, a foster parent, or any other provider of child welfare services or which may provide a basis for discipline pursuant to the Uniform Credentialing Act; and

(b) Death or serious injury in foster homes, private agencies, child
care facilities, juvenile detention facilities, staff secure juvenile
facilities, and other programs and facilities licensed by or under
contract with the department or the Office of Probation Administration;
and

31 (c) Death death or serious injury in any case in which services are

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provided by the department to a child or his or her parents or any case 1 2 involving an investigation under the Child Protection and Family Safety Act, which case has been open for one year or less and the death or 3 serious injury was determined to have not occurred by chance. The 4 department and the Office of Probation Administration shall report all 5 cases of death or serious injury of a child in a foster home, private 6 agency, child care facility or program, or other program or facility 7 licensed by the department to the Inspector General as soon as reasonably 8 9 possible after the department or the Office of Probation Administration learns of such death or serious injury. For purposes of this subdivision, 10 serious injury means an injury or illness caused by suspected abuse, 11 neglect, or maltreatment which leaves a child in critical or serious 12 condition. 13

(2) Any investigation conducted by the Inspector General shall be
independent of and separate from an investigation pursuant to the Child
Protection and Family Safety Act. The Inspector General and his or her
staff are subject to the reporting requirements of the Child Protection
and Family Safety Act.

19 (3) Notwithstanding the fact that a criminal investigation, a criminal prosecution, or both are in progress, all law enforcement 20 agencies and prosecuting attorneys shall cooperate with any investigation 21 conducted by the Inspector General and shall, immediately upon request by 22 the Inspector General, provide the Inspector General with copies of all 23 24 law enforcement reports which are relevant to the Inspector General's 25 investigation. All law enforcement reports which have been provided to the Inspector General pursuant to this section are not public records for 26 purposes of sections 84-712 to 84-712.09 and shall not be subject to 27 discovery by any other person or entity. Except to the extent that 28 disclosure of information is otherwise provided for in the Office of 29 Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare Act, the Inspector General 30 31 shall maintain the confidentiality of all law enforcement reports

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1 received pursuant to its request under this section. Law enforcement 2 agencies and prosecuting attorneys shall, when requested by the Inspector 3 General, collaborate with the Inspector General regarding all other information relevant to the Inspector General's investigation. If the 4 Inspector General in conjunction with the Public Counsel determines it 5 appropriate, the Inspector General may, when requested to do so by a law 6 enforcement agency or prosecuting attorney, suspend an investigation by 7 the office until a criminal investigation or prosecution is completed or 8 has proceeded to a point that, in the judgment of the Inspector General, 9 reinstatement of the Inspector General's investigation will not impede or 10 infringe upon the criminal investigation or prosecution. Under 11 no circumstance shall the Inspector General interview any minor who has 12 already been interviewed by a law enforcement agency, personnel of the 13 Division of Children and Family Services of the department, or staff of a 14 child advocacy center in connection with a relevant ongoing investigation 15 of a law enforcement agency. 16

Sec. 17. Original section 29-1926, Reissue Revised Statutes of
Nebraska, and sections 43-272.01, 43-285, 43-297.01, 43-2,108, 43-1301,
43-1302, 43-1303, 43-1304, 43-1308, 43-1309, 43-1313, 43-1318, 43-3001,
and 43-4318, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2014, are repealed.