

September 15, 2026

Brandon Metzler, Clerk of the Legislature
State Capitol, Room 2018
P.O. Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509



Dear Mr. Metzler:

Pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-4407, enclosed please find the annual report prepared by the Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers, comprised of the information provided by each of the seven Child Advocacy Centers.

Sincerely-

Ivy Svoboda
Executive Director
Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers

2025-26 ANNUAL NON-COURT CHILD WELFARE REPORT

*Pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-4407
September 15, 2026*



Prepared on behalf of Nebraska's Seven Child Advocacy Centers by:



Executive Summary

Pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-4407, Nebraska's seven child advocacy centers (CACs) are charged with reporting annually to the Legislature by September 15 on voluntary or non-court child welfare cases managed by the Children and Family Services (CFS) Division of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) in the counties they serve.

This reporting requirement helps ensure families with identified risk factors are offered voluntary services. Because these are voluntary, non-court cases, case plans and compliance scores serve as important accountability measures in the absence of judicial or Foster Care Review Office oversight.

The report that follows is the fifteenth annual report compiled by the Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers (Nebraska Alliance), on behalf of its members – Nebraska's CACs. The report contains information on non-court child welfare cases between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026, based on information provided to CACs by CFS, as well as information gathered through multidisciplinary team reviews of non-court cases.

Data Limitations and Recommendations:

2026 marks 15 years since the Legislature initially provided a framework to CFS and the CACs on reporting on non-court cases. Continued data limitations during this period presented challenges in completing this report.

- CACs consistently receive incomplete reports from CFS resulting in missing case plans and family compliance scores, preventing a comprehensive statewide picture.
- Variations in data-tracking practices across CACs present challenges in compiling this report.
- Current reporting measures do not fully capture outcomes in non-court cases. For example, while case plan presence is reported, the data does not indicate whether the case plan was completed within the required 60-day timeframe.

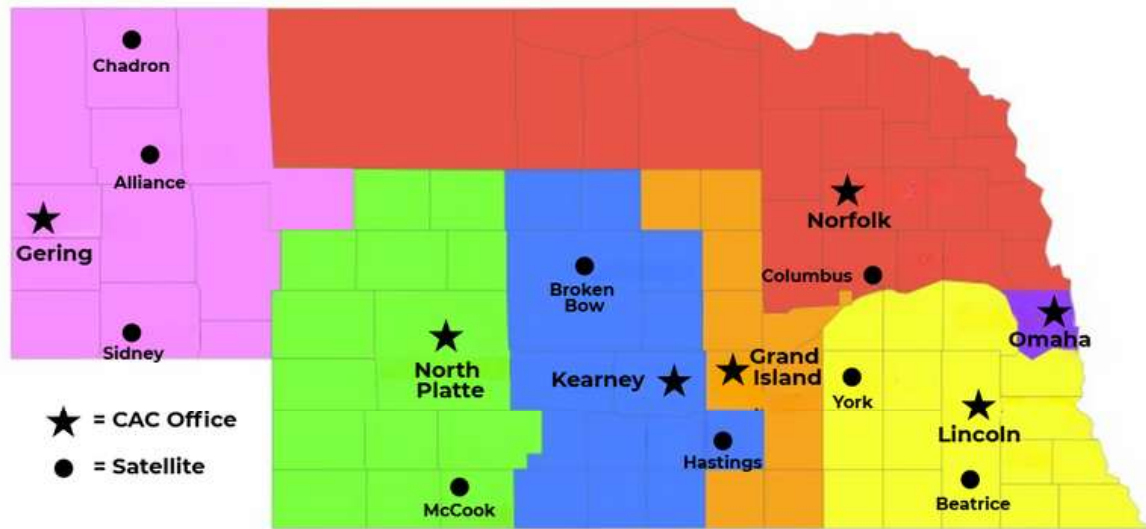
The Nebraska Alliance makes the below recommendations:

- The Nebraska Alliance will work with CFS Leadership to ensure all CACs receive family compliance scores, as three CACs have consistently experienced missing compliance scores in recent years. Without detailed information, transparency into whether families are receiving the services they need to mitigate the risk factors of future child maltreatment is insufficient
- Continue to require CFS provide monthly reports to CACs and local multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) on non-court cases in their area. These reports allow for collaboration across systems, especially between the county attorneys and CFS to ensure adequate services are recommended.
- Initiate regular legislative briefings on oversight of prevention, non-court, alternative response, and traditional response child welfare cases to help evaluate accountability and transparency in voluntary service delivery.

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	Page 2
Contents	Page 3
Nebraska's Child Advocacy Center Service Regions	Page 4
What is a Non-Court Child Welfare Case?	Page 5
What is a Child Advocacy Center?	Page 5
Roles of CACs and Multidisciplinary Teams in Non-Court Cases	Page 6
Key MDT Players in the Non-Court Case	Page 6
Data: Cases Opened	Page 7
Data: Average Length of Cases	Page 7
Data: Case Plans	Page 8
Data: Family Compliance with Case Plans	Page 9

Nebraska's CAC Service Regions



Gering
(308) 632-7274



North Platte
(308) 534-4064



Kearney
(308) 865-7492



Grand Island
(308) 385-5238



Lincoln
(402) 476-3200



Omaha
(402) 595-1326



Norfolk
(402) 371-4880

What is a Non-Court Child Welfare Case?

Non-court or voluntary cases are cases where ongoing child welfare services and assessment are provided to families without the involvement of the juvenile court.

According to CFS policy, non-court cases are opened at the conclusion of an investigation or initial assessment of a report of child abuse or neglect when the NDHHS determines that ongoing services are required to maintain the safety of the child or alleviate the risk of future abuse or neglect and the family voluntarily agrees to participate in ongoing services without a filing in juvenile court.

Per policy, non-court cases close when:

- NDHHS determines the child is safe and the risk of future maltreatment is low or moderate; or
- The family requests the non-court involved case close.

CFS policy on non-court cases is laid out in the Department of Health and Human Services Rules and Regulations titled "Title 395 - Children and Family Services: Protection and Safety" under Chapter 6. This went into effect on June 27, 2021.

What is a Child Advocacy Center?

Child advocacy centers (CACs) provide a cadre of services to assist with high quality, trauma-informed investigations of child abuse and neglect. Services provided include forensic interviews, medical evaluations, advocacy and mental health. Nebraska's CACs are all nationally accredited through the National Children's Alliance.

CACs are also mandated by Nebraska law to assist county attorneys in the coordination of local multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) focusing on investigation and treatment of child abuse and neglect. MDTs are convened by local county attorneys and made up of different professionals, service providers, and local experts working on child welfare. Per Neb. Rev. Stat. § 28-728, each of Nebraska's 93 counties is assigned to a local CAC for MDT coordination, as shown on page 4.

Role of CACs and Multidisciplinary Teams in Non-Court Cases

In 2012, the Legislature took action to require local MDTs focused on child abuse and neglect treatment to develop protocols for addressing non-court cases. Protocols are to address teams, staff cases, coordinate and monitor safety plans and treatment offered to children and families.

Teams across the state vary in the approach they have taken to protocols on non-court cases. Some areas have dedicated non-court teams. Some MDTs review every non-court case, and others are more selective due to the high volume of non-court cases in their area.

The law also requires CFS to provide CACs with monthly reports on non-court cases in their jurisdiction. This information is used by CACs to help set agendas for multidisciplinary team staffings. CACs are required to report the data to the Legislature.

Key MDT Players in the Non-Court Case



The **Family's** voice is key to success. Non-court is voluntary and families can decline services. A family engaging in non-court services can mitigate a safety threat or reduce the risk of future child maltreatment.



The **Child and Family Services Specialist** is the family's case manager with CFS. Their job is to engage the family and connect them with wraparound services to address any safety threat and strengthen the family.



The **Child Advocacy Center MDT Coordinator** is responsible for the overall functioning of the MDT. The coordinator tracks information on non-court cases, helps set review agendas, and facilitates the sharing of information and recommendations.



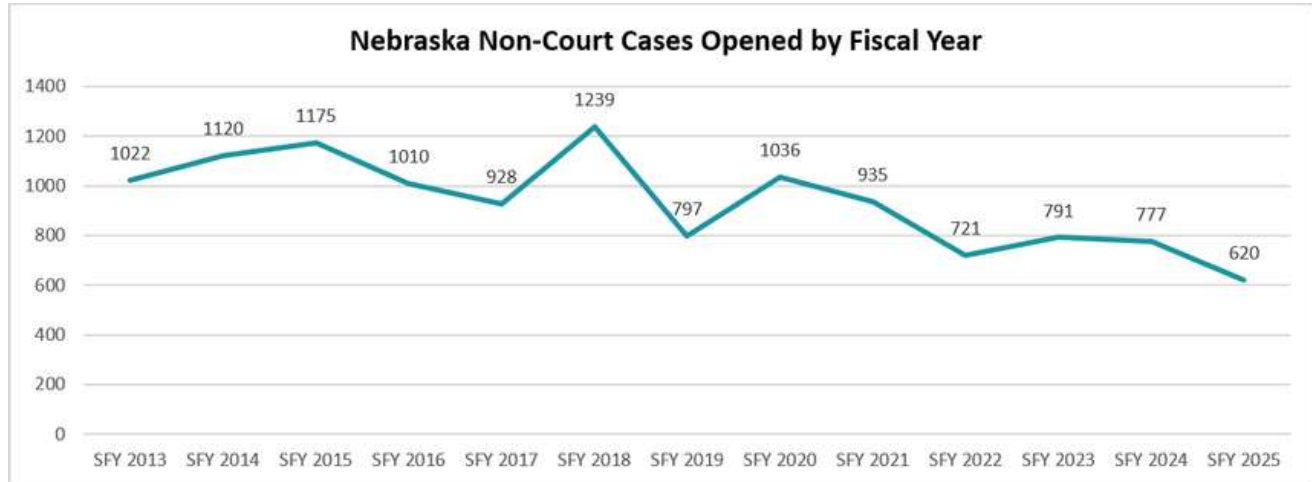
The **Service providers** and **Informal Supports** help meet the family's needs and provide services to reduce risk and address safety. They may be paid professionals or community members and those in the family's network. Often, professional service providers will participate in MDT meetings.



The **County Attorney** makes the final decision on whether or not charges will be filed to involve a family with juvenile court. Many factors impact this decision, including the evidence that a safety concern exists and the success of services provided so far. The County Attorney convenes local MDTs and uses information from the MDT to inform their decisions.

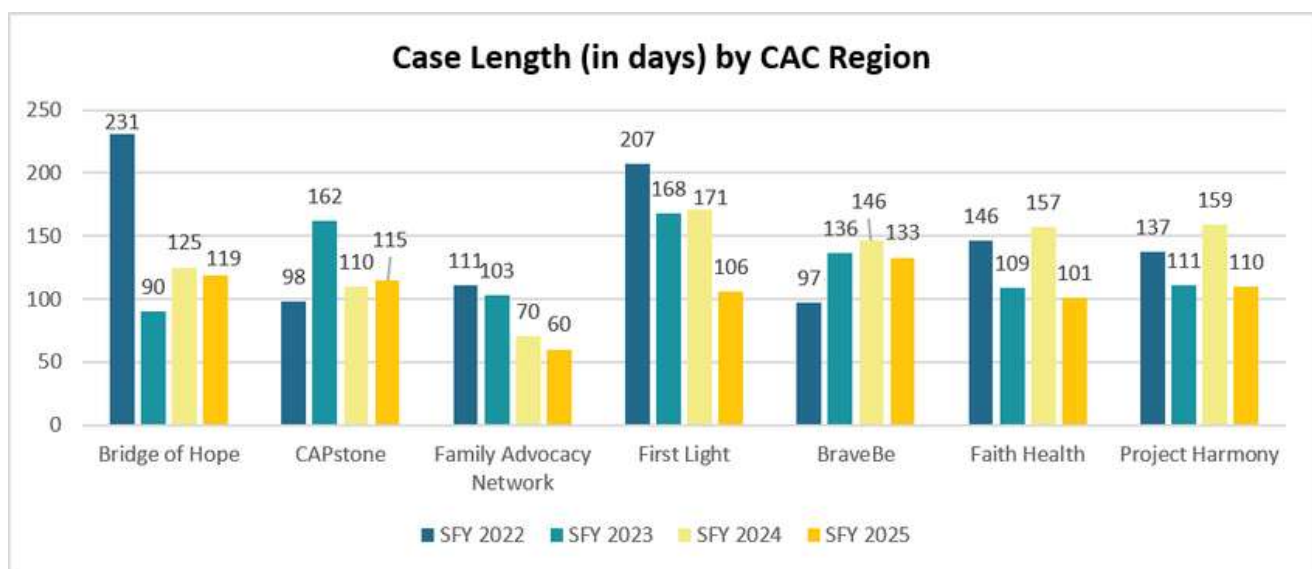
Opened Cases

620 non-court cases opened in Nebraska between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026.



Average Length of Closed Cases

492 non-court cases closed between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026. The average time a non-court case was open across the state was 155 days.

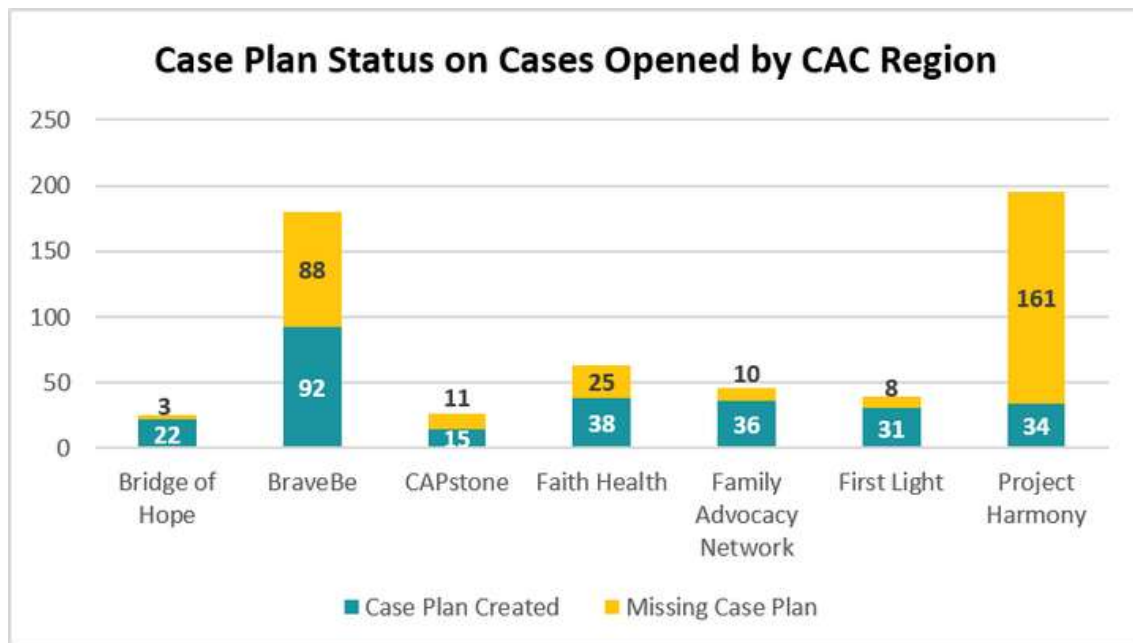


Case Plans

Neb. Rev. Stat §68-1207 and CFS policy requires every non-court case to have a case plan created no later than 60 days after the case opens and updated every 6 months.

From the information provided by CFS, 47% of cases had a case plan in place during SFY 2025-2026, equivalent to a 32% decrease from SFY 2024-2025.

Case plan creation rates varied substantially across CACs. After 60 days, BraveBe (Southeastern Service Area) reported case plans in 51% of cases, compared with 17% at Project Harmony (Eastern Service Area). The remaining CACs reported rates ranging from 58% to 88%.



Family Compliance with Case Plans

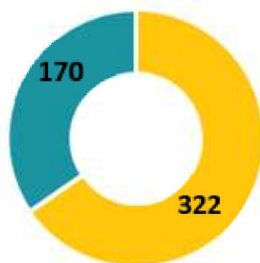
Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-4407 requires CFS to provide CACs with the status of family compliance and case plans. **35% of cases closed this SFY were missing family compliance scores.**

Local multidisciplinary teams have also noted that this data is subjective and does not provide a comprehensive understanding of how parents have progressed through their non-court case.

The rate of missing compliance scores varied across the state and by office. Compliance scores were included for 100% of cases for BraveBe, CAPstone, and Family Advocacy Network; however, compliance scores were missing for nearly 100% of cases for Bridge of Hope, Faith Health, and Project Harmony.

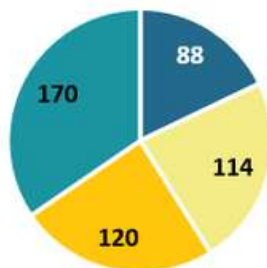
CACs being provided with inconsistent compliance scores has been a continual barrier to accurate data reporting for multiple years.

Statewide Family Compliance on Cases Closed



- Closed Cases Missing Family Compliance Information
- Closed Cases with Complete Family Compliance Information

Number of Family Compliance Scores on Closed Cases Statewide



- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Closed Cases Missing Family Compliance Information



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