NEBRASKA

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DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Jim Pillen, Governor

November 15, 2026

Ms. Jennifer Carter
Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare
1225 L Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

Subject: YRTC Grievances Report

Dear Ms. Carter:

Neb. Rev. Stat. § 83-105 requires the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers (YRTCs) to submit a quarterly report regarding the number of youth grievances filed, a categorization of the issues to which the grievance relates, the process for addressing such grievances, and any actions or changes made because of such grievances.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Bish

Alyssa Bish, Ph.D.
Director, Division of Children and Family Services

Attachment

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Division of Children and Family Services: Office of Juvenile Services

YRTC Grievances Report

November 2026

Neb. Rev. Stat. § 83-105

Grievance Process

Youth placed at any Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC) can file a grievance by completing the Youth Grievance Form located in each living unit and placing it in the secure drop box, accessible only to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Compliance Team. Youth are encouraged to write a grievance on any issue that they feel they cannot resolve on their own.

Each grievance is reviewed by the Compliance Team and assigned to the appropriate party to address. The Compliance Team handles grievances about a youth's rights, as defined in the DHHS Office of Juvenile Services (OJS) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Youth Rights. If the grievance involves verbal, physical, or sexual abuse of a youth, the situation is handled by the Compliance Team and reported promptly to the Nebraska DHHS Hotline and the Nebraska State Patrol for proper investigation. Youth have several ways to report abuse, including the grievance process, a verbal report to staff, or a phone call to the Nebraska DHHS Hotline, which the youth can access without staff assistance.

Grievances are categorized upon completion as either substantiated, unfounded, or resolved. A substantiated grievance is defined as having sufficient information to determine that the basis of the youth's grievance is accurate. A determination of unfounded is defined as either the basis of the youth's grievance being false or a lack of sufficient evidence to determine whether the incident occurred.

Grievances categorized as resolved include concerns that are not defined in the DHHS OJS SOP on Youth Rights. These types of grievances could be, for example, a youth disputing their progress in programming, a disagreement with another youth, or a youth requesting not to be served a particular food item due to personal preference.

Grievances that are determined to be substantiated or resolved are addressed through mediation, consultation with the youth's treatment team, or process improvement within the facility, as recommended by the DHHS Compliance Team.

Actions or Changes as a Result of Grievances

Grievances can be considered resolved if the grievances are followed up by the proper administrative review. Any response that a youth disagreed with was forwarded directly to the Facility Administrator for review and action. In addition to a resolved grievance, the Compliance Team can also recommend policy or practice changes across the facilities.

Number and Categorization of Grievances

The grievances below are for the Youth Rehabilitation Treatment Centers (YRTC) from July 1, 2026, through September 30, 2026. The grievances received this quarter mainly consisted of Disciplinary Procedure, Professional Care, Staff Actions, and Youth Actions.

YRTC - HASTINGS

Summary of Grievances

In Hastings, the youth filed between twenty-one (21) and twenty-five (25) grievances this quarter.

Month/Year	# Founded	# Unfounded	# Resolved	Total Grievances
July 2026	0	0	14	14
August 2026	0	0	*	1-5
September 2026	0	0	6	6

** All values between 1-5 are masked to protect privacy. See Appendix A.*

Grievance Types

Category	July	August	September	Total Grievances
Accounting/Business Office	0	0	0	0
Barber/Grooming	0	0	0	0
Bullying/Retaliation	0	0	0	0
Canteen	0	0	0	0
Case Management	0	0	0	0
Confinement Procedure	0	0	0	0
Counsel/Court Access	0	0	0	0
Daily Routine	*	0	0	1-5
Disciplinary Procedure	0	*	*	2-10
Food	0	0	0	0
Grievance Procedure	0	0	0	0
Housing Assignment	*	0	0	1-5
Issued Clothing	0	0	0	0
Library	0	0	0	0
Mail	0	0	0	0

Category	July	August	September	Total Grievances
Medical Services	0	0	0	0
Mental Health	0	0	0	0
Mutual Fighting/Assault	0	0	0	0
Personal Hygiene	0	0	0	0
Phone	0	0	0	0
Physical Abuse Staff to Youth	0	0	0	0
Physical Abuse Youth to Youth	0	0	0	0
Physical Facility	0	0	0	0
Possession/Contraband	0	0	0	0
Professional Care	0	0	*	1-5
Programming	0	0	0	0
Property Damage	0	0	0	0
Recreation	0	0	0	0
Religious Beliefs	0	0	0	0
School/Education	0	0	0	0
Showers	0	0	0	0
Staff Actions	6	*	*	8-16
Staff to Youth Sexual Abuse	0	0	0	0
Staff to Youth Sexual Harassment	0	0	0	0
Staff to Youth Sexual Touching	0	0	0	0
Staff to Youth Voyeurism	0	0	0	0
Verbal Abuse Staff to Youth	*	*	0	2-10
Verbal Abuse Youth to Youth	*	0	0	1-5
Visiting	0	0	0	0
Youth Actions	*	*	*	3-15
Youth Searches	0	0	0	0
Youth to Youth Sexual Abuse	0	0	0	0
Youth to Youth Sexual Harassment	0	0	0	0
Youth to Youth Sexual Touching	0	0	0	0

** All values between 1-5 are masked to protect privacy. See Appendix A.*

YRTC – KEARNEY

Summary of Grievances

In Kearney, the youth filed ninety-nine (99) grievances this quarter.

Month/Year	# Founded	# Unfounded	# Resolved	Total Grievances
July 2026	0	*	33	34-38
August 2026	*	*	22	24-32
September 2026	*	7	26	34-38

** All values between 1-5 are masked to protect privacy. See Appendix A.*

Grievance Types

Category	July	August	September	Total Grievances
Accounting/Business Office	0	0	0	0
Barber/Grooming	0	0	0	0
Bullying/Retaliation	0	0	*	1-5
Canteen	0	*	0	1-5
Case Management	0	0	0	0
Confinement Procedure	0	0	0	0
Counsel/Court Access	0	0	0	0
Daily Routine	*	0	0	1-5
Disciplinary Procedure	*	0	*	2-10
Food	0	0	0	0
Grievance Procedure	0	0	0	0
Housing Assignment	0	0	0	0
Issued Clothing	0	0	*	1-5
Library	*	0	0	1-5
Mail	0	0	0	0
Medical Services	*	0	*	2-10
Mental Health	0	0	0	0
Mutual Fighting/Assault	0	0	*	1-5

Category	July	August	September	Total Grievances
Personal Hygiene	0	*	*	2-10
Phone	0	0	0	0
Physical Abuse Staff to Youth	0	0	*	1-5
Physical Abuse Youth to Youth	0	0	0	0
Physical Facility	*	*	*	3-15
Possession/Contraband	0	0	0	0
Professional Care	6	11	*	18-22
Programming	*	*	*	3-15
Property Damage	0	*	0	1-5
Recreation	*	0	0	1-5
Religious Beliefs	0	0	0	0
School/Education	0	0	0	0
Showers	0	0	0	0
Staff Actions	8	*	9	18-22
Staff to Youth Sexual Abuse	0	0	0	0
Staff to Youth Sexual Harassment	0	0	0	0
Staff to Youth Sexual Touching	0	0	0	0
Staff to Youth Voyeurism	0	0	*	1-5
Verbal Abuse Staff to Youth	0	0	*	1-5
Verbal Abuse Youth to Youth	0	0	*	1-5
Visiting	0	0	0	0
Youth Actions	11	*	*	13-21
Youth Searches	0	0	0	0
Youth to Youth Sexual Abuse	0	0	0	0
Youth to Youth Sexual Harassment	*	*	*	3-15
Youth to Youth Sexual Touching	0	*	0	1-5

** All values between 1-5 are masked to protect privacy. See Appendix A.*

YRTC – LINCOLN

Summary of Grievances

In Lincoln, the youth filed twenty-three (23) grievances this quarter.

Month/Year	# Founded	# Unfounded	# Resolved	Total Grievances
July 2026	0	0	*	1-5
August 2026	0	0	7	7
September 2026	0	*	11	12-16

** All values between 1-5 are masked to protect privacy. See Appendix A.*

Grievance Types

Category	July	August	September	Total Grievances
Accounting/Business Office	0	0	0	0
Barber/Grooming	0	0	0	0
Bullying/Retaliation	0	0	0	0
Canteen	0	0	0	0
Case Management	0	0	0	0
Confinement Procedure	0	0	0	0
Counsel/Court Access	0	0	0	0
Daily Routine	0	0	*	1-5
Disciplinary Procedure	0	*	8	9-13
Food	0	0	0	0
Grievance Procedure	0	0	0	0
Housing Assignment	0	0	0	0
Issued Clothing	0	0	0	0
Library	0	0	0	0
Mail	0	0	0	0
Medical Services	0	0	0	0
Mental Health	0	0	0	0
Mutual Fighting/Assault	0	0	0	0

Category	July	August	September	Total Grievances
Personal Hygiene	0	0	0	0
Phone	0	0	0	0
Physical Abuse Staff to Youth	0	0	0	0
Physical Abuse Youth to Youth	0	0	0	0
Physical Facility	0	0	0	0
Possession/Contraband	0	0	0	0
Professional Care	0	0	0	0
Programming	0	0	0	0
Property Damage	0	0	0	0
Recreation	0	0	0	0
Religious Beliefs	0	0	0	0
School/Education	0	0	0	0
Showers	0	0	0	0
Staff Actions	*	*	0	2-10
Staff to Youth Sexual Abuse	0	0	0	0
Staff to Youth Sexual Harassment	0	0	0	0
Staff to Youth Sexual Touching	0	0	0	0
Staff to Youth Voyeurism	0	0	0	0
Verbal Abuse Staff to Youth	0	0	0	0
Verbal Abuse Youth to Youth	0	0	0	0
Visiting	0	0	0	0
Youth Actions	0	0	*	1-5
Youth Searches	0	0	0	0
Youth to Youth Sexual Abuse	0	0	0	0
Youth to Youth Sexual Harassment	0	0	0	0
Youth to Youth Sexual Touching	0	0	0	0

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APPENDIX A

Report De-identification Standard

DHHS is a fully covered entity under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Covered entities are prohibited from the release of protected health information. As a fully covered entity, all DHHS data that is individually identifiable is protected health information, subject to HIPAA protection. Information that has been de-identified is not protected health information and can be lawfully released. HIPAA allows for two methods of de-identification, safe harbor, or expert statistical analysis. De-identification under safe harbor requires the removal of 18 identifiers. When data cannot be de-identified under safe harbor, the data must be reviewed by a statistical expert to determine that it has been sufficiently de-identified.

Currently, DHHS has two roles that serve as statistical experts: the DHHS Data Officer and the DHHS Data Office Section Head. When assessing a report to determine if the information has been sufficiently de-identified, DHHS uses a probability calculation that considers the following factors:

- Data source and the associated nuances.
- Demographic characteristics, which include age, gender, race, ethnicity, and language spoken.
- Geographic location for both the service received and residence of the person receiving services.
- Time period of the report. (If the time period of the report is shorter than a year, such as quarterly, this increases the probability of identification.)

In addition to an overarching HIPAA requirement, DHHS is subject to numerous statutory requirements that protect the identity and personal information of the youth served by DHHS. For example, Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 28-725 and 28-726 require records related to child abuse and neglect reports and investigations to be confidential. Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-2,108 governs the confidentiality of juvenile court and probation records. This statute specifically identifies records provided to the juvenile court by agencies and institutions as confidential record information. The same de-identification standards apply to meet the confidentiality requirement of the above-referenced statutes and the HIPAA de-identification statutes.

For these reports, the information being released (1) relates to the last quarter, (2) relates to a population that is between the ages of 14-18 years, (3) relates to a population served in three specific facilities in Nebraska and (4) relates to incidences experienced by the population that may have occurred between one and five times during the period. The probability of identifying the individuals involved in the incidents being reported is high when using other publicly available information in combination with the information released. As such, the release of the actual number would allow for the re-identification of the individuals when the instance is between one and five. However, knowing that there were more than zero is still meaningful when interpreting this information. Masking those counts between one and five offers privacy protection for those children who were involved, while still releasing a level of meaning about those specific occurrences in the report population.