

# Neb. Lawmakers Focus On Child Welfare

BY GRANT SCHULTE  
 Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — State lawmakers say Nebraska hasn't kept track of important case information about children who are in state custody due to abuse, neglect, and other personal problems.

Legislators blame the problem on an outmoded computer system as well as high turnover and overwhelming case-loads. The senators said the incomplete information has complicated their efforts to overhaul the state's child welfare system in the wake of a report that found substantial problems with a privatization effort that began in 2009.

Some argue the lack of documentation is part of a broader problem that includes inadequate oversight of foster care services, inflated costs and the loss of placement options for children.

"That issue has been somewhat lost in the discussion here, but it's critical," said Lincoln Sen. Kathy Campbell. "If policymakers are going to make good decisions, and keep track of kids and families, you need a really good data system. I think that is one area where we really need to push for upgrades and work with all branches to say what the most important data is, and do we have a system that can get it to us. I don't think we do."

A state Foster Care Review Board report released in December 2010 found that important information was missing from the files of many state wards. Case plans for children, details about their family placements, and documentation of court-ordered family and sibling visits were not included in the files.

The report blamed the problem on high staff turnover within the private lead agencies that serve Nebraska, a lack of experience among their case workers, unmanageable workloads and a constant shifting of case responsibilities. Todd Reckling, head of Nebraska's Child and Family Services at the time, responded that the state was working with lead agencies and had made progress, but lawmakers said problems have persisted.

"If you're not getting that information in a timely manner, it delays permanency for the children," said Campbell, chairwoman of the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee. "Really, that's the most important goal. We don't want them to languish in the system."

A Department of Health and Human Services spokesman said agency officials believe the computer tracking system is adequate. But he acknowledged that rising caseloads for child welfare and other services have placed more demand on it.

Phone messages left Friday with the

two remaining lead agencies, KVC Health Services and Boys Town, were not returned.

On Thursday, the Health and Human Services Committee will hold a public hearing on a bill that would return many case management duties to state employees. The two lead agencies have opposed the bill, calling it a step backward, and Gov. Dave Heineman has hinted his opposition.

The privatization move began when the state signed contracts with five lead agencies to offer and coordinate child services statewide. Three providers in northern, western and central Nebraska have since dropped out, citing financial problems, which forced the state and the remaining lead agencies to take over their cases.

Heineman has said the move toward privatizing services to children who suffer from abuse or neglect, as well as behavioral and mental health problems, hasn't gone as well as he hoped. But the governor has repeatedly opposed a return to the old system that relied more on state employees.

Although the new program was intended to make the child welfare system more effective and less expensive, there have been persistent complaints about unmanageable workloads, high turnover

among case workers, poor training and communication, a lack of oversight, inflated costs.

In response to the problems, the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee in December 2011 suggested creating a new agency, the Department of Children's Services, to coordinate programs for Nebraska children in state care. A report by the committee also called for a 25-member commission of local and state officials, lawmakers and child welfare stakeholders that would develop a plan to address other problems.

In his State of the State speech to lawmakers this month, Heineman said he plans to shift some child-management duties to other agencies so the Department of Health and Human Services can focus more on abused and neglected children.

Omaha Sen. Gwen Howard, a former social worker, said the privatization effort has resulted in more appointed guardians and service providers losing track of children in the system. She blamed the high turnover within the two lead agencies, and the shuffling of children among case workers and foster families.

"It's always been a problem, but it's never been the problem it is now," said Howard.

## Airman At Ellsworth Found Dead

RAPID CITY (AP) — Air Force officials say they're investigating the case of an Ellsworth Air Force Base airman who was found dead.

The person hasn't been identified. The airman's body was discovered Saturday. The person was a member of the base's 28th Bomb Wing. The wing operates B-1B Lancer bombers.

Base spokesman Maj. Matthew Reese says the airman's identity is being withheld until family members can be told of the death.

## 4 Of Nation's Poorest Counties In SD

RAPID CITY (AP) — Four of the nation's 10 poorest counties are in South Dakota, with poverty rates greater than 40 percent.

Using income figures for 2010, just over half of the residents of Ziebach County live below the poverty line.

Its poverty rate is down from 62 percent in 2009, but it's still the highest of any county in the country.

U.S. Census statistics say Todd County and Shannon County are the second- and third-poorest counties in the nation. Corson County ranks ninth. All three are in western South Dakota.

## OBITUARIES

### Esther A. Weisser

Funeral services for Esther A. Weisser of Mitchell will be held at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 24 at Frieden's Reformed Church in Tripp with Rev. Greg Way officiating. Interment will follow in Frieden's Cemetery, Tripp.

Visitation will be held on Monday from 3:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. at the Goglin Funeral Home in Tripp, with the family present to greet visitors from 5:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. Following visitation, there will be a prayer service at 7:00 p.m.

Online condolences may be sent at [www.goglinfh.com](http://www.goglinfh.com).

Esther Amalia (Dobler) Weisser was born on August 9, 1926, on the family farm in Hutchinson County near Tripp to Edward and Emilia (Bietz) Dobler. She attended country grade school and one year of high school in Tripp. She was baptized in Dennewitz Lutheran Church by Rev. Goeken and confirmed after due instruction by Rev. J. Schmitt in Dennewitz Church. She married Leo Weisser on January 19, 1947 in



Esther A. Weisser

Dennewitz Church by Rev. J. Schmitt. They farmed four miles east and three miles north of Tripp until 1975. After Leo was disabled, they moved into Tripp. Esther worked various jobs including nurse's aide, receptionist at a chiropractor's office, a clerk at Friederich's Grocery and Dairy Mart, cut meat at Spomer's Locker, and later worked at Raven's in Parkston for 13 years, from which she retired. She moved to Mitchell, where she worked at the Corn Palace Motel for 9 years as a desk clerk. Esther also volunteered at L.B.

Williams Elementary School. Esther passed away on Saturday, January 21, 2012 at Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls at the age of 85 years.

Esther is survived by four children: Lynnetta (Al) Dinehart of Rapid City, Robert (Kathy) Weisser of Sioux Falls, Kay (David) Farrar of Gayville and Jane (Ron) Dahme of Mitchell; six grandchildren, and three great grandchildren; two sisters, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Esther was preceded in death by her husband, Leo, her parents, and a sister, Violet.

Yankton Press & Dakotan  
 January 23, 2012

### Goglin Funeral Home

Tyndall - Scotland - Tripp



[www.goglinfh.com](http://www.goglinfh.com)

### JeanMarie Cowman

JeanMarie Cowman, age 74, of Yankton, South Dakota, died Thursday, January 19, 2012 at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital in Yankton.

Memorial services will be 10:30 a.m. on Monday, January 23, 2012, at the Wintz & Ray Funeral Home in Yankton with Reverend Dani Jo Ninke officiating. Visitation will be one hour prior to the memorial service at the funeral home.

Honorary pallbearers are Melvin Patton, Jeff Jensen, Roy Doering, Richard Gartner, Corey Bruce, and Nolan Neubauer-Keyes.

Jean was born August 30, 1937, in Mandan, North Dakota, to Vincent and Josephine (Menne) Butler. She grew up in Yankton, South Dakota, and graduated from Yankton High School. After high school, Jean attended Nursing School in Mitchell, South Dakota. She married Wayne Cowman on July 27, 1966, in Las Vegas, Nevada.



Cowman

children and being a loving and caring mother. After her children were grown, Jean worked as a Home Health Aid in Yankton. She was a very giving person, always willing to give her time for others, whether it was taking them to the grocery store or just visiting.

Jean enjoyed reading and spending time with her dog, Bandit. Her greatest joy was being a grandmother to her grandchildren, whom she cherished.

She is survived by her six children: JoAnn Yeakel of Newport Beach, California; Susan Hill of Dana Point, California; Harold Cowman of Tucson, Ari-

zona; Cindy (Richard) Gartner of Mission Hill, South Dakota; Phillip Cowman of Tucson, Arizona; and Candy (Corey) Bruce of Sioux Falls, South Dakota; 10 grandchildren: Stephanie and Brigitte; Brian and Makenna; Tiffany, Alexis, Allyson, and Kaitlyn; and Christian and Aarik; brother, Duane Butler of Clifton Park, New York; and two sisters: Geraldine Trost of Oregon City, Oregon and Florence Mayer of Custer, South Dakota.

She was preceded in death by her parents and husband, Wayne on February 12, 2007.

To send an online sympathy message please visit [wintzrayfuneralhome.com](http://wintzrayfuneralhome.com).

Yankton Press & Dakotan  
 January 23, 2012



Online condolences at:  
[www.wintzrayfuneralhome.com](http://www.wintzrayfuneralhome.com)

### Barbara Buggs

Barbara Jean Buggs, age 35, of Yankton, SD passed away unexpectedly at her home on Tuesday, January 17, 2012.

Funeral services will be 2:00 p.m. Tuesday, January 24, 2012 at the Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Chapel, Yankton, SD with Rev. Jeff Mantz officiating. Burial of her cremated remains will be in Roswell, NM at a later date.

Visitations will be one hour prior to the service at the funeral home.

Barbara Jean Buggs was born June 15, 1976 in Roswell, New Mexico to Lester Butch and Verna Jean (Crislip) Buggs. She was involved in the Special Olympics. Barbara loved music and loved to



Buggs

and going horseback riding. Barbara liked to watch football, the Dallas Cowboys were her team and she wanted to be a cheerleader for the Cowboys. She was a joy to all that knew her; we all love her so much. She will be dearly missed.

Those who will cherish her memory are her brothers: John

if anyone would ask her to sing to them, she would light up and it made her day. Her favorite singer was Reba McEntire and her favorite song was "Amazing Grace". She loved animals especially horses

Hunsucker of Roswell, NM, David Allen Hunsucker of Hollywood, CA, and Phillip Michael Buttler of Arlington, TX; her sisters: Theresa (Terri) Hunsucker of Yankton, SD, Mary Jane Hunsucker of Yankton, SD, Becky Crislip of Roswell, NM, April Arches of Roswell, NM, and Paula Shipp of Portales, NM, and several aunts and uncles.

She was preceded in death by her parents, grandparents, and her Uncle Frank O'Shea.

Yankton Press & Dakotan  
 January 23, 2012



Online condolences at:  
[www.opsahl-kostelfuneralhome.com](http://www.opsahl-kostelfuneralhome.com)

### Donald Behl

SCOTLAND — Funeral services for Donald Behl, 82, of Scotland will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, January 28 at the Fellowship Baptist Church in Scotland with Pastor Daniel Flyger officiating. Interment will follow in Rosehill Cemetery, Scotland.

Visitation will be held on Friday from 3:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m., with family present to greet visitors from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m., at the Goglin Funeral Home in Scotland.

Donald passed away on Fri-

day, January 20, 2012 at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital in Yankton.

Online condolences may be sent at [www.goglinfh.com](http://www.goglinfh.com).

### Goglin Funeral Home

Tyndall - Scotland - Tripp



[www.goglinfh.com](http://www.goglinfh.com)

### Joe Bertrand

SCOTLAND — Funeral services for Joe Bertrand, 55, of Scotland will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, January 24 at the Scotland School Gymnasium with Rev. Jonathan Vehar officiating. Interment will follow in the Ebenezer Cemetery, rural Scotland.

Visitation will be held on Monday from 2:00 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. at the Goglin Funeral Home in Scotland. There will be a prayer service Monday evening at 7:00 p.m. at Zion Lutheran Church in Scotland. Joe passed away on Friday,

January 20, 2012 at Landmann-Jungman Memorial Hospital in Scotland.

Online condolences may be sent at [www.goglinfh.com](http://www.goglinfh.com).

### Goglin Funeral Home

Tyndall - Scotland - Tripp



[www.goglinfh.com](http://www.goglinfh.com)

**Tonights Special 5-9PM**

**All You Can Eat**

**Chicken & Ribs**

Includes soup & salad bar **\$9.95**

**Yesterday's Cafe**

2216 Broadway, Yankton

*Quality and craftsmanship that endures for generations.*

Visit us on-line at:  
[www.lukenmemorials.com](http://www.lukenmemorials.com)

Home Office & Carving Center  
 1609 Broadway • Yankton, South Dakota  
[lukengranite@iw.net](mailto:lukengranite@iw.net) • 605.665.3052

Member  
 Monument Builders of North America  
 THE MARK OF EXCELLENCE

## Not all superheroes live forever



Your father didn't wear a cape or leap tall buildings in a single bound. But he was still a super hero to you. Whether he was protecting you from harm or simply taking you out for ice cream, your father was always there for you. A meaningful funeral is your chance to remember your father in the manner that he deserves. It's also your chance to mourn, say goodbye, and share your memories with friends, family, and loved ones. Because even though your dad won't live forever, a meaningful funeral is a way to help ensure that his memory lives on.



Yankton, 605-665-3644

[wintzrayfuneralhome.com](http://wintzrayfuneralhome.com)

Garden of Memories Cemetery

**HONORING THEIR MEMORY**

*Our Thoughts And Prayers Are With Them*

Our care and concern does not end with the funeral service. This week we remember with family and friends the anniversary of the deaths of:

**Evelyn Bulian**  
*who passed away on*  
 January 23, 2011

**Anthony Taylor**  
*who passed away on*  
 January 26, 2011

**Nelva Kooistra**  
*who passed away on*  
 January 26, 2011

**Joan Gross**  
*who passed away on*  
 January 28, 2011

**Frances Van Osdal**  
*who passed away on*  
 January 29, 2011

**James Kohles**  
*who passed away on*  
 January 29, 2007

This remembrance is brought to you free of charge. If you have a loved one you would like remembered, contact us at Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home & Crematory. Guiding and serving families with compassion and trust.

