



**Brain Injury
Alliance**
N E B R A S K A



2021 Annual Report

A year of expansion

Facilitating Good

A Letter from Our Executive Director & Board President

“Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can, To all the people you can, As long as you ever can.” ~ John Wesley

Dear friends and supporters,

It seems like we include this in our letter every year, but we are so incredibly grateful and humbled by the year we’ve just finished. Despite its challenges (aren’t we all sick of COVID?), we were able to do so much good in our community.

Our 2021 can be described in one word, expansive.

Thanks to the Brain Injury Trust Fund dollars, we increased our staff size from two full-time and two part-time positions to eight full-time employees in October of 2021. What a blessing it has been to have additional hands on deck as we work to meet the needs of the brain injury community through resource facilitation services!

With the additional staff, we have been able to facilitate major growth in our Resource Facilitation program. We’ve made contacts with additional resources in more counties in the Central and Western regions of our state.

In 2021, we focused on educating professionals working with individuals who are at higher risk to have a brain injury. By providing this education, professionals working with justice-involved youth, incarcerated individuals, and individuals being served in behavioral health programs were better equipped to meet the unique needs of those with brain injury in their system.

Granted, COVID was still hitting us hard in Nebraska, so our conference was once again virtual. But we had an extraordinary time with 14 presentations and 16 speakers from across the nation, and 190 attendees.

While we were able to meet in-person for Blazing Trails in August, we had a slightly lower turnout at that event. But our sponsors at that event more than made up for the difference in fundraising dollars!



A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Peggy Reisher".

Peggy Reisher, MSW
Executive Director



A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Mark Jones".

Dr. Mark Jones
Board President

Reflecting back, a lot of things at BIA-NE have stayed the same throughout the years.

- Our mission is still to create a better future for all Nebraskans through brain injury prevention, education, advocacy, and support.
- We have a dedicated team (granted, a bigger one!) who selflessly give their time and talents to our community.
- Our collective vision of building Nebraska’s capacity to provide services and supports for individuals with brain injury and their families.

As you’ll see in this look back at 2021, we strongly believe that the power of our organization comes from the passionate people who live and breathe our shared mission every day.

Thank you for your support and your love. We look forward to many more years of educating, advocating, and supporting the brain injury community in Nebraska!

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Gina Simanek, MA, LMHP

Resource Facilitator,

Lincoln Metropolitan Area

and Southeast Nebraska Region

Sheila Kennedy

Resource Facilitator,

Central Nebraska Region

MenDi McCuiston

Resource Facilitator,

Western Nebraska Region

Shir Smith

Resource Facilitator,

Western Nebraska Region

Impact Report

Two years ago, in our 2019 Annual Report, we shared a story about our decade of advocacy in action and the Brain Injury Trust Fund:

Omaha Senator Mike McDonnell, with help from Senator Kate Bolz, championed LB 642, which passed as LB 481 in May of 2019 on a 41-1 vote. The bill creates the Brain Injury Trust Fund, which consists of general fund appropriations of \$500,000 annually from the Nebraska Health Care Cash Fund, beginning in fiscal year 2020-21.

So why are we bringing this up again in our 2021 Annual Report? Because we have an UPDATE!

In April 2021, the Brain Injury Oversight Committee met and awarded the Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska the first year of funds from the Brain Injury Trust Fund. And we have been BUSY!

Expanded Resource Facilitation

Our staffing has more than doubled. Since last summer, the Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska has expanded from two full-time and two part time employees to a team of EIGHT full-time staff, five of whom are Resource Facilitators.

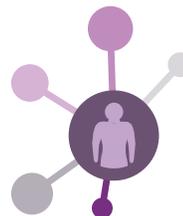
Check out the following stats to see the impact that made from July 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021!

Resource Facilitation Services and Referrals Provided between July - December 2021



96 individuals received Resource Facilitation services.

83 of these individuals were new clients.



More than
258
referrals were provided to 54 of the new clients



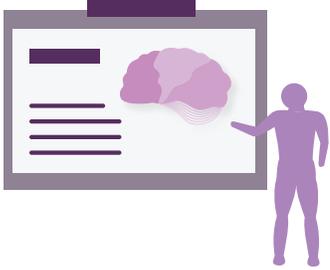
Group photo of the Resource Facilitation team. Pictured from left to right: Gina Simanek, Shir Smith, MenDi McCuiston, Sheila Kennedy, Chris Stewart.

The Brain Injury Trust priorities include:

- Expanded resource facilitation
- Brain injury training for service providers
- Improved follow up with individuals on the brain injury registry
- Public awareness activities
- Support for brain injury research
- Evaluation of quality brain injury services

Brain Injury Training for Service Providers

35 brain injury training sessions offered



635 people attended these trainings (combined total)



89% of attendees who completed evaluations of the trainings indicated the information was useful

Brain Injury Registry Follow-Up

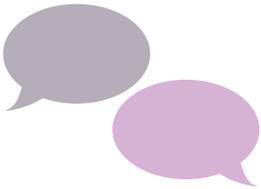


2 of the 83 new clients came from the Brain Injury Registry Letter

11%

of all clients in the database responded that they heard about Resource Facilitation through the registry letter.

Public Awareness Activities



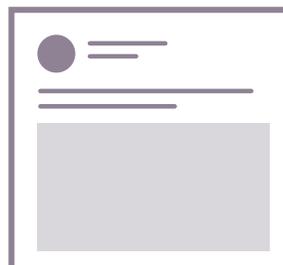
312 community outreach opportunities reported through the BIA-NE's tracking tool.

3x

outreach to agencies to build referrals nearly tripled with the expansion of Resource Facilitation staff



2,024 people received e-newsletters from the BIA-NE, on average.



2x

the amount of Facebook and LinkedIn posts doubled with the addition of BIA-NE's new marketing and special events coordinator

Support For Brain Injury Research

Two opportunities for people to participate in research were promoted through BIA-NE’s outreach efforts.

Ten organizations—many of which serve high-risk populations—currently screen their clients for brain injury. Screening data is sent to Dr. Chiou from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for analysis and research opportunities, providing more insight on the impact and prevalence of brain injury. From the 397 screenings conducted between July and December 2021, 33% of the individuals screened positive for brain injury.

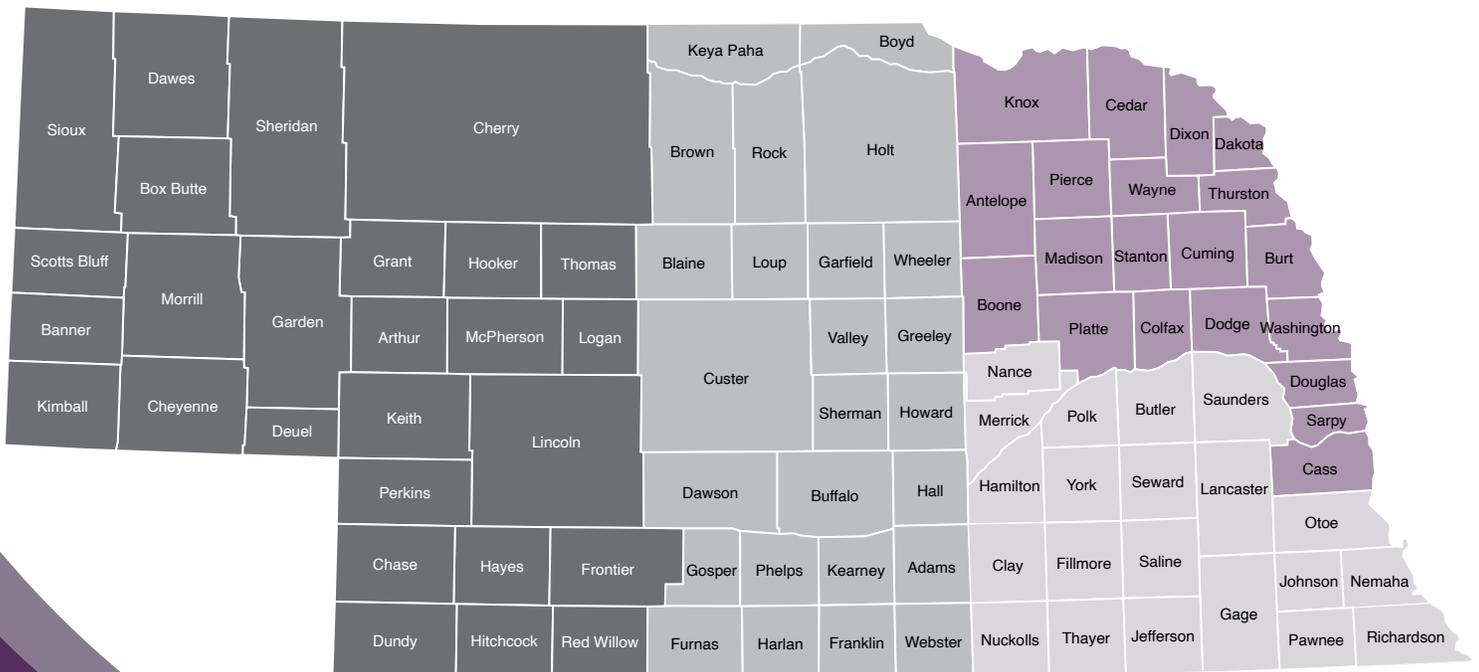
Evaluation Of Quality Brain Injury Services

Nearly all training attendees who completed an evaluation agreed that the presentations were useful to them, either professionally or personally, and that they have a greater understanding of brain injury as a result of the opportunity.

As this summer rolls around and the Brain Injury Oversight Committee starts looking at applications for next year’s funding, the Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska is hopeful that our program will continue to be a priority for the Committee and help Nebraska’s Brain Injury community.

Resource Facilitation Coverage Map

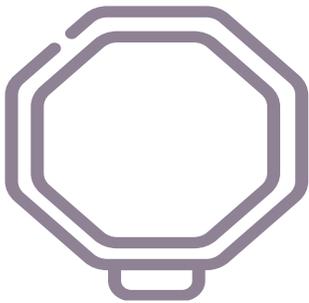
- Western Nebraska** - Shir Smith, 402-683-0754, shir@biane.org • MenDi McCuiston, 402-683-0712, mendi@biane.org
- Central Nebraska** - Sheila Kennedy, 402-683-0717, sheila@biane.org
- Omaha Metropolitan Area and Northeast Nebraska** - Chris Stewart, 402-890-7126, chris@biane.org
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Mission Highlights

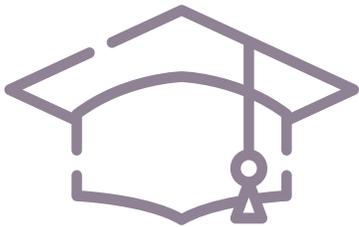
Our Mission

The Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska works to create a better future for all Nebraskans through brain injury prevention, education, advocacy, and support.



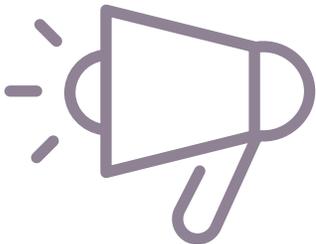
Prevention

- Over 392,616 views of “Forever Shaken,” a powerful 30-minute documentary for childcare advocates, schools, hospitals, etc., showing the lifelong challenges of Abusive Head Trauma.
- 6 billboards with nearly 12 million impressions encouraged seatbelt usage: “Seat Belts: Fastenating!”



Education

- 200 conference participants gathered virtually to learn about brain injury, innovative treatments, and support options.
- 45 trainings, 1150+ trainees. Virtual training focused on brain injury and domestic violence, juvenile justice, aging, corrections, veterans, and behavioral health



Advocacy

- 16 Legislative bills in 2021 were followed by BIA-NE, of which BIA-NE wrote twelve letters of support or opposition, as it benefited individuals with brain injury.



Support

- 19 support groups facilitated by volunteers meet regularly across Nebraska. 3 of which are virtual meetings.



Challenging Circumstances ►► *Turn Into a Life Purpose*

*“We are not given a good life or a bad life.
We are given life.
And it’s up to you to make it good or bad.”*

~Ward Foley

Is there anything scarier to a parent than a child getting hurt?

Looking at my 16-year-old daughter lying on a stretcher with a neck brace on was scary, but I had no idea how much our lives would begin to change from that moment on. Kristen was a fun-loving teenager who was carefree, big-hearted, and loved to tell jokes. Sure, we had our moments of butting heads and her pushing the boundaries, but nothing outside of everyday teenage rebellion.

An out-of-state car ran the red light and t-boned her car. Her head slammed against the driver’s door window, and she lost consciousness. Her passenger stated that it took several minutes to arouse her so they could open the driver’s door to get out of the vehicle.

The ER diagnosed Kristen with a mild concussion and sent us home with directions to return if she experienced excessive drowsiness, confusion, or vomiting. There was no mention of watching for vision issues, ringing in the ears, sleep disturbances, or any indication that she could face an extended recovery period or that it may take time for other symptoms to appear. These directives would have been beneficial information for a worried mom to get.

Fast forward several weeks, and my daughter started complaining about the lights in her classroom at school and a constant ringing in her ears. Grades began to slip, homework was marked incomplete, and many missing assignments. Kristen changed who she was hanging out with and started smoking pot. She began skipping school. At one point, she even told the principal to leave her alone, in much rougher language, and walked out the front door of her school.

Kristen’s school had no choice but to get the courts involved because of how much she had skipped school. My marriage started to suffer. Even Kristen’s counselor couldn’t get anywhere with Kristen.

As a result, the courts sent Kristen to a group home where different professionals saw her. Eventually, they put the pieces together. With the help of her team, Kristen developed coping skills to learn how to deal with the short-term memory loss and mood swings left behind by the brain injury.

After completing the program at the group home, Kristen returned home and enrolled in CNA classes to find employment at a nursing home. Before long, she began spending time with her old friends, smoking marijuana again, and pushing the boundaries at home. After one particularly stressful argument, she stormed out of the house, demanding her freedom as an “adult” at age 18.

Then I received a call about another car accident, but it involved a fatality this time.

I rushed to the hospital only to be told I would need to stay in the waiting room for what seemed like hours. When the hospital staff took me to the trauma room, I almost didn't recognize my daughter. They had her in a neck brace, and her clothes were ruined. But the look of wild fear in her eyes left me paralyzed. To get out of the car that had rolled over, she had to climb over her friend's lifeless body. She had seen more horror than anyone would want their child to see. Once she was released, with the standard concussion warning signs to watch for, we returned home, where I held her for the next ten hours while she tried to sleep, but she'd wake up screaming and clinging to me. Kristen struggled with headaches, depression, and memory loss. This time, though, she had the tools to help her cope. She faced each day with a positive outlook until she felt she could no longer manage the pain and began to self-medicate with marijuana consistently.

At that point, we lost Kristen. Over the next two years, she received three possession charges, spent time in jail, and was the complete opposite of the girl she was four years earlier, before her first car accident.

After the third possession charge, the judge told her that she would be going to prison if he saw Kristen again. This was her wake-up call. She began to work on herself. This meant cooperating with her counselor and asking me to help her find a job.



It's been eight years now. Kristen is still struggling with sobriety, but she has cut off all contact with those who are bad influences and do not support her new sober lifestyle. We work together to keep her calendar in order so she can remember appointments. She has a beautiful one-year-old daughter who keeps her pushing forward to be the best version of herself that she can be.

While Kristen's story turned out well, how much of this could have been avoided if the original head injury had more follow-up? What if the hospital staff had more training with brain injuries and what to look for? What if there had been additional resources provided or other fail-safes in place?

Amid her daughter's struggles, MenDi found the Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska. The resources she found through BIA-NE helped her daughter gain control of her life back.

And in 2021, MenDi accepted a position as a Resource Facilitator for BIA-NE. As a caregiver herself, she understands the struggles of a parent or caregiver feeling helpless, hopeless, and abandoned by the “system.” MenDi has a bachelor's degree in behavioral science and has worked as a life coach, a family support worker, and other positions within the nonprofit realm, helping individuals set goals, recover from grief, and find their purpose

MenDi says, “I am here because I want others to know that if there's a change like that, we need to get you some resources. We need to know who we can talk to.”

Finances

Financial Position

Current Assets

Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$314,499.00
Accounts Receivable	\$76,021.00
Prepaid Expenses	\$7,894.00
Grants & Pledges Receivable	\$35,846.00
Total Current Assets	\$434,260.00

Other Assets

Restricted Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$229,547.00
Beneficial Interest in Assets Invested by Others	\$100,691.00
Total Other Assets	\$330,238.00
Total Assets	\$764,498.00

Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$18,466.00
Accrued Vacation	
Other Accrued Expenses	\$7,274.00
Total Current Liabilities	\$25,740.00

Net Assets

Unrestricted Net Assets	\$489,676.00
Restricted Net Assets	\$249,082.00
Total Net Assets	\$738,758.00
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$764,498.00

Financial Activities

Revenues & Support

Contributions	\$175,711.00
Grants	\$207,016.00
Fundraising Events	\$37,137.00
Conference & Training Fees	\$1,954.00
Increase in the Beneficial Interest in Assets Invested by Others	\$691.00
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$2,074.00
Total Revenue & Support	\$487,583.00

Net Assets Released from Restrictions

\$228,253.00

Expenses

Program	\$385,819.00
Management	\$41,731.00
Fundraising	\$21,557.00
Total Expenses	\$449,107.00
Increase in Unrestricted Assets	\$266,729.00

Restricted Net Assets

Grants and contributions	\$450,000.00
Conference	\$17,300.00
Fundraising events	\$750.00
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	\$228,253.00

2021 Year Summary

Increase in Restricted Assets	\$239,797.00
Total Increase in Net Assets	\$506,526.00
Net Assets at Beginning of 2021	\$232,232.00
Net Assets At End of 2021	\$738,758.00

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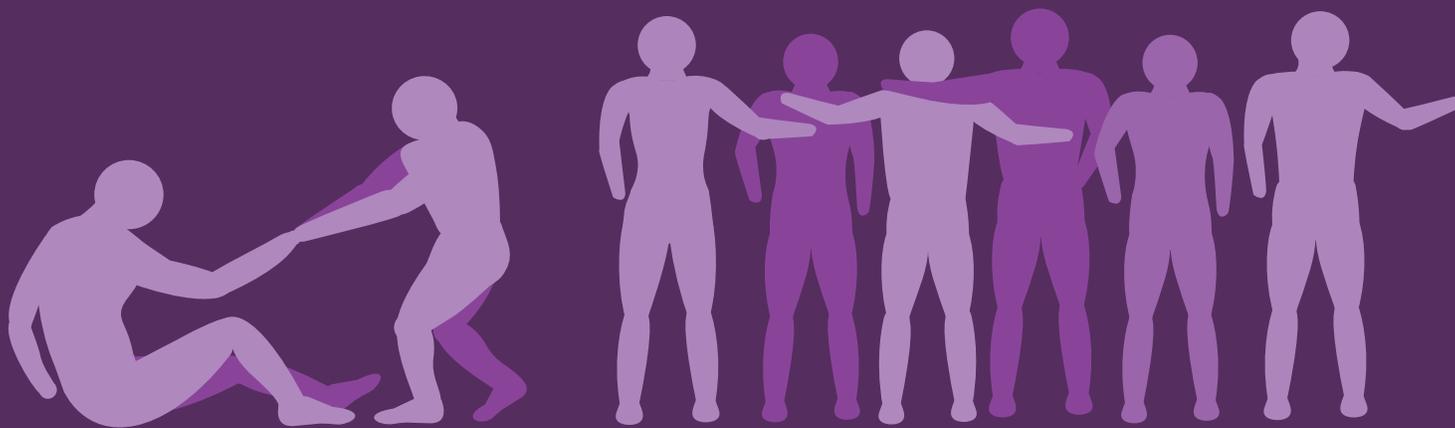
Thank you for your generous support!

Your continued support helps us build support networks for individuals and families across the state of Nebraska who've been affected by brain injury.

Your support also helps provide resources such as brain injury information and educational resources, training sessions for individuals and professionals, and case management.

We are grateful for your support and help in building a better future for brain injury in Nebraska.

Need a place to find support and community after a brain injury?



Join a Brain Injury Support Group.

The invisible nature of brain injury symptoms can be isolating. It can be hard to find someone who “gets it.” But, it doesn’t have to be that way. You don’t have to navigate life after brain injury alone.

Joining a support group lets you:

- Share experiences.
- Build friendships.
- Find support with other individuals living with the effects of a brain injury.

How to Find a Group

There are volunteer-led support groups that meet across the state. For a complete listing of support groups, visit our website.

<https://biane.org/about/support-groups.html>

A Few Benefits of Support Groups

- Encouragement.
- Greater understanding of yourself.
- Building confidence.
- Safe place to be honest and vulnerable.
- Education and learning.



**Brain Injury
Alliance**
NEBRASKA

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Lincoln, NE 68542
info@biane.org • 402-423-2463



Blazing Trails for Brain Injury

5K Run, 1 Mile Walk/Roll Fundraising Event

June 4, 2022 • 8:30 AM
Chalco Hills Recreation Area
8901 S 154th St • Omaha, NE 68138

Registration: \$40 Online • \$50 Day of
\$25 Virtual Challenge with T-Shirt

Whether you're a running enthusiast or are working on your fitness resolutions, the Blazing Trails Run/Walk/Roll is a great way to get active in the great outdoors and raise money for brain injury awareness and resources. No matter your age or fitness level, everyone is welcome to participate!

For the competitive folks, the 5K run will be timed and can be used for marathon or race qualifiers. (For the rest of us, there's plenty of water and snacks!)

P.S. If T-shirts are your jam, be sure to register before May 18 and guarantee your shirt!



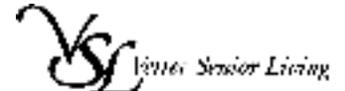
Run timed by:



Register today at:
<https://bit.ly/3rrfvEO>

Questions? Contact Brittney at brittney@biane.org or call 402-683-0724

Thank you, 2022 Sponsors!



Brain Injury
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To create a better future for all Nebraskans through brain injury prevention, education, advocacy, and support.

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