



The Governor's Task Force on Children at Risk
May 1, 2026
Boise, ID/ Hybrid

Nadine McDonald, Juvenile Justice (Chairman)	Jennifer Tachell– Educator (Vice- Chairman)
Andie Blackwood- DHW, Family & Children Services	Susan Bradford, MD – Pediatrician
Lena Biondolillo- Children with Disabilities	OPEN- Child Advocate Attorney
Sheila Sturgeon Freitas, PhD– Mental Health	Hon. Steve Clark- Civil Magistrate Judge
Curtis Carper- Law Enforcement	Kyle Bringhurst- Prosecuting Attorney
Anthony Henry– Foster Youth	(V)Tahna Barton – CASA
(A)Jill Robertson – Homeless Youth Liaison	(A)Hon. Brent Ferguson- Crim. Magistrate Judge
(A)Trevor Sparrow– Parent	Joshua Wickard- Public Defender
Susan Nalley– Victim Services Coordinator	Teresa Vance- Administrator of the Courts

Mindy Peper – Task Force Support
Rachael Lilya- Task Force Support

Indicates Absent (A) Virtual (V)

Guests: *Lauren Bailey, Principal Evaluator; Tasha Schreiter, Evaluator; and Ryan Langrill, Director, Ashley Dowell, Director*

Meeting Purpose

Grant funding decisions; presentations on residential care oversight and juvenile corrections; strategic planning discussion

Key Takeaways

- **Strategic Revitalization:** The task force will reduce meetings to quarterly, adopt a formal leadership succession plan, and proactively send policy recommendations to the Governor.
- **Residential Care Oversight:** An OPE report revealed critical gaps in residential care oversight, including inadequate enforcement, unannounced surveys, and a process that allows staff who abuse children to move between facilities undetected.
- **High-Acuity Youth:** The Department of Juvenile Corrections (DJC) is seeing a significant drop in its population (147 youth, near an all-time low of 137) but a sharp increase in the acuity of needs, with 55% having a mental health diagnosis and 61% a substance use issue.
- **Grant Funding Rejected:** All four grant applications were rejected for failing to meet submission deadlines or CARTF's funding priorities.

Topics

Welcome and Minutes

- **Josh's Announcement:** Josh announced his decision to step off the task force after 10+ years due to increased personal and professional demands. He nominated Josh Mills (attorney he has worked with in child protection) as a potential replacement for the Public

Defender spot. Josh Mills is considering the role and may attend future meetings to observe. Jessalyn Hopkins (juvenile public defender in Pocatello) was suggested as an alternative.

- **Open Positions:** The task force currently has openings for a Child Advocate Attorney and now the Public Defender representative. These will be posted on the website.
- **April 23rd Minutes Approval:**
 - **Motion:** Kyle Bringhurst moved to accept the minutes.
 - **Second:** Andie Blackwood seconded the motion.
 - **Outcome:** Motion passed unanimously. The minutes were approved.

Budget Updates

- **Status:** Blackwood reported that the budget has been "pretty static" in the last month, with no significant spending.
- **Concerns:** Discussion acknowledged the ~\$60,000 surplus that needs to be spent by September. Blackwood expressed confidence that grant spending and planned June meeting activities would address this.

Subcommittee Updates

- **Grants:**
 - **Scoring:** The grant committee completed scoring for the current cycle.
 - **Next Cycle:** Opens August 1st.
 - **Impact of Increased Funding:** The increase from \$5,000 to \$10,000 has changed the applicant pool.
- **Rejected Grants & Motions:**
 - **Aiden Anthony, LLC:** Submitted after the deadline.
 - **Motion:** Andie Blackwood moved to decline the grant for failing to meet the submission deadline.
 - **Second:** Jen Tachell seconded the motion.
 - **Outcome:** Motion passed unanimously.
 - **Battle Space:** Did not meet funding priorities.
 - **Motion:** Andie Blackwood moved to decline the grant for failing to meet funding priorities.
 - **Second:** Jen Tachell seconded the motion.
 - **Outcome:** Motion passed unanimously.
 - **Innocent:** Scored 31.71 (borderline adequate), but committee recommended not funding due to generic/unclear proposal, conflicting information on training/curriculum, unclear target population, dependence on future funding, and lack of curriculum specifics.
 - **Motion:** Andie Blackwood moved to support the committee's recommendation not to fund the grant.
 - **Second:** Jen Tachell seconded the motion.
 - **Outcome:** Motion passed unanimously.
 - **Oneida Crisis Center:** Did not meet funding priorities.
 - **Motion:** Lena Biondolillo moved to support the committee's recommendation not to fund the grant.
 - **Second:** Trevor Sparrow seconded the motion.
 - **Outcome:** Motion passed unanimously.

- **Legislative Committee:**
 - **Session Wrap-up:** The legislative session concluded. Several child protection-related proposals emerged late in the session (e.g., from Representative Koehler, tied to "Empowered Parents") but did not pass committee. These are anticipated to return next year.
 - **Status:** The committee is on hiatus until the next session.
- **MDT Subcommittee:**
 - **Training Opportunities:** Kyle Bringham and Sonja Howerton met with the Western Regional CAC head to discuss training. They are exploring bringing in a speaker for next year or collaborating with the Idaho Prosecuting Attorneys Association.
 - **Resource Development:** Mindy's previous work on a resource list is still pending finalization and dissemination.
- **Conference Subcommittee (October 2026):**
 - **Keynote Speaker:** Lori Poland, who will also do a book signing and possibly a session on secondary/vicarious trauma.
 - **Other Speakers:** Andi Hamilton (end note and session), Jen Hillgoth (child death investigations, other subjects).
 - **Progress:** Paperwork is being processed, and AV bids are being handled.
 - **Save the Date:** Cards are available and will be emailed to past attendees.
 - **Registration:** Opens in July via Whova. Rachael is working on the Whova page.
 - **Theme/Title:** No title decided yet.
 - **Speaker Suggestions:** Angela Weeks/Alicia Bowles (neurobiology track) were suggested for future conferences.
- **CFRT:**
 - **New Analyst:** A new analyst is onboard and working and will attend the June meeting. This is expected to help with report generation.
 - **ProPublica Inquiry:** Audrey Dutton (ProPublica) inquired about the task force's reports related to her upcoming series on infant/child deaths and intrauterine fetal deaths in faith healing communities of Southwest Idaho. The task force does not review stillbirths. The series is expected in May/June.
 - **Faith Healing Discussion:** The task force discussed Idaho's statute exempting faith-based medical neglect, historical issues with the Followers of Christ in Canyon County, and concerns about potential underreporting of deaths in these communities.
 - **Public Comment Protocol:** Public inquiries should be directed to the Chair (Mindy or Rachael).

Residential Care Oversight (OPE Report)

- **Speakers:** Lauren Bailey, Tasha Schreiter, and Ryan Lindgren from the Office of Performance Evaluation (OPE).
- **Background:** Report presented in June 2025, prompted by concerns about child safety in residential care facilities (particularly one in northern Idaho that has since closed). House Bill 723 (effective July 1st) addresses many recommendations. A follow-up evaluation will be released in June 2026.
- **Definition of Residential Care:** Facilities providing 24-hour care, sometimes including schooling, for vulnerable children (nearly three times more likely to have mental

health/behavioral/disability diagnoses). Placements can be private or through foster care.

OPE Residential Care Report

- Limited oversight and weak enforcement in residential care facilities
- HB 723 will require unannounced surveys and youth interviews starting July 1
- Residential care placements increased from 8% to 17% of foster youth
- Concerns raised about unsubstantiated abuse cases and staff moving between facilities undetected
- Next steps include agency discussions, possible DOPL licensure, and inviting Dr. John Condie to discuss youth acuity

DJC Update

- DJC census down to 147 youth; juvenile crime decreased 11%
- High acuity remains a major issue (mental health, substance abuse, co-occurring disorders)
- Concern that “high acuity, low criminality” youth are ending up in corrections due to lack of alternatives
- DJC working on more targeted programming and requested data on crossover youth involved in foster care and juvenile justice

Strategy Shift

- Discussion on increasing Governor’s Office engagement
 - Goal of having Governor’s Office attend/open October conference
 - Formal invitations and communications recommended
- Strategic planning updates
 - Members asked to review bylaws and operating procedures before June meeting
 - Feedback requested on possible updates
- Leadership transition updates
 - Jen Tachell expected to become chair July 1 (pending availability)
 - Proposed succession structure includes chair, vice chair, and past chair advisory roles
- Meeting schedule proposal
 - Reduce from 7–9 meetings annually to 4 full task force meetings plus conference
 - Dates to be finalized in June

New Business

Adjournment

Action Items

- Legislative Committee to create bill summary template for Governor's Office; Teresa to format printable spreadsheet summary
- Teresa to present legislative process overview at future task force meeting
- Invite Licensing & Certification and Child Welfare Bureau to discuss OPE residential care recommendations
- Invite Dr. Condie to September meeting on youth brain development and acuity
- DJC to provide crossover youth data (foster care + juvenile justice)
- Members to review bylaws/operating procedures and provide feedback by June