



The Governor's Task Force on Children at Risk
April 3, 2026
Virtual

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

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

Indicates Absent (A) Virtual (V)

Meeting Purpose

Review updates, discuss legislative changes, and address CFRT's operational challenges

Key Takeaways

- The Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) is stalled, unable to complete 2023–2024 reports due to a data bottleneck at the Department of Health and Welfare (DHW). A new analyst starts April 13, but the core issue remains access to vital statistics records. Lacey Williams proposed creating subcommittees for suicide and natural death cases to improve efficiency and leverage topic-specific experts.
- New laws are in effect. HB 776 mandates Priority 1 responses for infants under one with specific parent risk factors, and SB 1257 requires a judicial best-interest finding for visitation after a Level 1/2 abuse substantiation.
- The 5-year plan for the \$408k Court Improvement Grant includes data tracking (ICWA compliance, QEW appointments), statewide parent classes, and exploring an ICWA specialty court.

Welcome and Minutes

- Nadine McDonald opened the meeting, noting some cancellations but confirming enough participants for a quorum.

- Nadine McDonald mentioned an agenda shuffle to accommodate Andi Blackwood and Teresa Vance's early departures, prioritizing legislative and budget updates. Motion to approve March 2026 minutes.
 - Motion to Approve: Vance
 - Seconded by: Henry
 - Outcome: Approved unanimously

Budget Update

- Grant Phase 23 total funding: \$139,760
- Spent so far: ~\$80,000 (since October 1)
- Remaining balance: ~\$60,000 to be used by September 30
- Expenditures:
 - San Diego conference: \$11,848
 - CARTF meetings: \$4,100
 - Admin support: \$15,603 (includes some meeting expenses)
 - Conferences (past/upcoming): \$13,738
 - CFRT (meetings & publication materials): \$6,156
 - Grants: \$27,964
- Grant Phase 24 funding: Estimated at \$140,070 (slightly higher)
- New hire: CFRT analyst starts April 13
- Next Steps / Notes:
 - Budget will be closely monitored
 - Remaining funds may be used for an October conference venue deposit

Court Improvement Grant (CIG) Update (Teresa Vance)

- Funding: Federal Children's Bureau; \$408,505 budget (+\$50K YoY)
- Covers: Teresa Vance & Jana Feitler salaries, travel, conferences, training

Core Requirements:

- 3 projects: legal representation, DHW child welfare outcomes, hearing quality
- Collaboration with DHW & tribes
- DHW cross-training (new)
- Statewide task force (CPC)

Recent Work (past 4 years):

- Conferences, trainings, surveys, data initiatives

- Updated rules/forms, parent resources, court processes
- Added lived-experience members to CPC
- Various reports, programs, and system improvements

Next 5 Years – Focus Areas:

- Data, legal quality, hearings, timeliness/permanency
- Engagement, child well-being, tribal collaboration
- Trafficking prevention, foster parent standards
- Safety & continuity planning

Proposed Projects:

- Data: Track hearings, ICWA, public defenders, county-level insights
- Hearings: Translate forms, mentor/senior judges
- Participation: Parent classes, My Family Wizard app, youth mentors, reminders
- Continuity: Disaster/power outage court plans
- Tribal/ICWA: Specialty court, tribal QEW roster
- Prevention: Foster parent mentors
- Training: Judges/attorneys/social workers on key topics (closure, trafficking, trauma, etc.)

Feedback/Ideas:

- Coordinate with State Public Defender (Joshua Wickard)
- Targeted foster parent mentorship (Anthony Henry)
- Present at education conferences (Jennifer Tachell)
- Use My Family Wizard for scheduling workaround (B. Ferguson)
- “Super clerks” to support court processes/data/coordination (Teresa Vance)**

Legislative Update (Nadine McDonald & Andy Henry)

- Session: Idaho legislative session concluded; some late DHW-related bills

HB 776 (Infant Safety):

- Requires Priority 1 (immediate) response for children under 1 with certain risk factors
- Intake must verify within 12 hours; expanded safety assessment + law enforcement reporting
- Impact: Increased workload; concerns about discouraging parents
- Status: Effective immediately

HB 724 (Foster Youth Bill of Rights):

- Establishes rights for foster youth; must be given at placement, changes, and annually; posted in homes
- DHW combining statute with IFYAB-developed rights
- Status: Effective immediately

SB 1257 (Visits/Incarceration):

- Judges must ensure visits are in child's best interest with abuse substantiations
- Adds incarceration as TPR factor (similar to prior law)
- New court rule, form, and hearing required; ready by July 1
- Challenges: Timing of findings, balancing child stability

SB 1266 (Extended Foster Care):

- Removes mandatory 2-month review hearings for older youth (reduces court burden)

SB 1292 (Foster Parent Training):

- Reinstates pre-service training (up to 10 hrs) before licensure (effective July 1)
- Covers trauma, behavior, birth parents, court process, safety
- Relatives may be exempt; aims to improve participation

SB 1344 (DHW Authorization):

- Would require statutory authorization for DHW programs
- Outcome: Died in committee

CFRT Operational Challenges (Lacey Williams)

- New venue: Ada County Coroner's office—reduced costs, strong facilities
- New analyst: Morgan starts April 13; critical need after limited capacity

Projects & Support:

- BSU DASH project: 240+ hours on data/program structure; results coming soon; invited Lacey to discuss with CARTF at the September 2026 meeting

Reporting Delays & Scrutiny:

- Reporter requesting 2023–2024 reports
- 2023 not started; 2024 incomplete (analyst gap)
- Limited 2024 reviews (suicides, motor vehicles); 2025 motor vehicles mostly done
- Impact: Delays reduce prevention relevance

Barriers:

- HIPAA limits (e.g., cannot analyze some trends like vitamin K deficiency)
- Data bottleneck: Only DHW can access vital records → slows progress
- Funding issues: Grants hard to secure; BSU takes 36–44%

Operations Improvements:

- Policy updates in progress (including limiting retired members, except pediatricians)
- Proposal for suicide & natural death subcommittees to improve efficiency/timeliness
- Analyst to focus on data compilation (19 hrs/week), not meetings
- Strong support for subcommittees

Team Impact:

- Low morale due to lack of data access
- Willing to meet more often if data becomes available

May & June Meeting Planning

May Meeting (In-Person, Boise):

- Confirmed: OPE, Ashley Dowell (IDJC)
- Potential: Citizen Review Panel

June Meeting (Salmon):

- Venue: Rachel coordinating with Stagecoach Hotel
- Confirmed: Ashley Stallings, Jill Robertson

Subcommittee Updates

MDT Subcommittee:

- Sheila Freitas meeting with Western Regional CAC (Wednesday) on Idaho resources/training

Grants Subcommittee:

- Meeting planned for May to review new applications
- Mindy to send scheduling details

Conference Subcommittee:

- Agenda progressing; confirmed speakers: Lori Poland, Jen Hilgoth, Andy Hamilton

- Open to local speaker ideas (secondary trauma/resilience backup)
- Discussed using remaining FY22 funds for conference venue deposit

Adjournment

Action Items

Mindy & Rachael:

- **Send email to group for May & June meeting headcount, including hotel needs (1 vs. 2 nights)**
- **Schedule and send date for May Grants Subcommittee meeting (review new applications)**
- **Bring conference “save the date” postcards to May meeting**
- **Explore using remaining FY22 funds for conference venue deposit if needed**

Nadine:

- **Coordinate with Nadine to contact Lemhi County for youth resource recommendations for June (Salmon)**