



The Governor's Task Force on Children at Risk
March 6, 2026
Boise, ID/ Hybrid

Nadine McDonald, Juvenile Justice (Chairman)	Jennifer Tachell– Educator (Vice- Chairman)
(A)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 Bringham- Prosecuting Attorney
Anthony Henry– Foster Youth	Tahna Barton – CASA
Jill Robertson – Homeless Youth Liaison	Hon. Brent Ferguson- Crim. Magistrate Judge
(V)Trevor Sparrow– Parent	(A)Joshua Wickard- Public Defender
Susan Nalley– Victim Services Coordinator	Teresa Vance- Administrator of the Courts
Mindy Peper – Task Force Support	Indicates Absent (A) Virtual (V)

Guests: *Jen Rupe, AG Office and ICAC; CRP Dist 1- KJ Brandt, Dist 2- Michelle King and Jason Titus; Dist 5 Logan Hudson, Jori Potiker, Lori Stewart; Dist 7 Amy Minzghor and Holly Whitworth, Cameron Gilliland, Interim Administrator, Division of State Care Facilities, IDHW*

Meeting Purpose

Review committee updates, legislative risks, and hear guest presentations.

Key Takeaways

- Human Trafficking Under-Reported: Official data (12 state prosecutions in 5 years) vastly understates the problem. Familial trafficking, often involving mothers as traffickers and children under 12 as victims, is a key concern.
- CRP Data Reveals Systemic Issues: Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) report high rates of parental substance use (85% in Region 1), incarceration (61%), and children with complex needs facing 10+ month service waitlists.
- State Facilities Face Staffing Crisis: State Hospital West (SHW) and BIRCH operate at half capacity (6/16 and ~10/20 beds, respectively) due to a critical nursing shortage, leaving complex-needs children without in-state care.

Topics

Welcome and Minutes

- Jen Tachell read the meeting norms.
- Discussion was held regarding the February minutes.
- Motion to approve the minutes from the February 2026 meeting with noted change to redact name in case discussion:
 - **Motion to Approve:** Vance
 - **Seconded by:** Robertson
 - **Outcome:** Approved unanimously

Budget Update

- Budget update was deferred as Andy was not present.
- The budget for the current period was set last month.

Conference Planning – Salmon, ID

- Venue Discussion: Participants discussed potential venues for the upcoming conference in Salmon:
 - City Hall (used by courts in the past).
 - Stagecoach Hotel
 - Sacagawea Center
 - Stagecoach Hotel was considered beneficial due to on-site lodging, despite potentially dated decor. A conference room for 102 people was noted. Mindy will confirm capacity and availability.
- Catering: Oddfellows Baker was suggested for catering due to their specialty bread and wood-fired offerings.
- Local Guests/Stakeholders: Suggestions for guests from the Salmon area included:
 - The prosecutor's office (works with MDT).
 - Mahoney House.
 - Hospital insight.

- Non-profits, community groups, youth centers (especially for rural area perspective).
- Department of Health and Welfare representatives (likely on the MDT).
- Upper Valley Child Advocacy Center (CAC), which serves the area.
- Foster parents.

Current Conference Update:

- The WHOVA conference app package is being secured, with a discount available until March 20th.
- Contact made with three potential speakers identified from the San Diego conference:
 - Andi Hamilton: Meeting scheduled for March 11th.
 - Jennifer Hillgoth: Charges \$2,500 plus travel.
 - Lori Polland: Keynote range \$3,500-\$5,500, includes book signing. \$2,500 for a non-keynote breakout session.
- Laura van Dernoot Lipsky booking agent requested the budget; the committee's budget is around \$35,000 including \$8,000-\$10,000 for scholarships. Response is pending.
- San Diego conference will be virtual next year, offering potential for increased attendance.

Housekeeping Updates

- Reimbursements: Sheila has one outstanding reimbursement; others are complete. A new reimbursement form with higher breakfast rates was sent out.
- Warehouse Inventory: Mindy provided an update on promotional item inventory:
 - High Stock: Tote bags (300), jotter pad notebooks (1,000), day books (144), Foster Cub (730), pencils (810), chip clips (almost 1,000, old logo), pens (700, no logo), blue/green activity books, "Care Enough to Call" materials (years of supply).
 - Low Stock: Chapsticks (not enough), tumblers (32 left), red books (25 left, compared to ~60 given away previously).
 - Mindy reorganized the warehouse to improve organization after issues arose with Luma's inventory changes. Inventory numbers were sent to the shopkeeper and Karla.
- Resource Requests: Resource requests via the website are not frequent, with spikes after conferences.

5. Subcommittee Updates

- Grants:
 - The Elmore County report was received and positive.
 - Mid-use term reports are due March 15th for St, Luke's, Building Hope Today, and Elevate Your Community. Reminders have been sent. One report (for Bingham Co Coroner) has been received.
- MDT (Multidisciplinary Team):
 - Subcommittee meeting scheduled for next week.
 - Awaiting contact from the Western Regional CAC to Sonja regarding local training resources. If no contact, Mindy will reach out directly. The goal is to identify training that CARTF can help provide.
- Legislative Threats to Child Protection:
 - SB 1344 (Legislative Authority): Requires statutory authorization for all DHW programs, posing an existential threat to CARTF (operating via executive order) and potentially jeopardizing federal funding tied to non-statutory federal requirements. Status: Referred to committee.
 - Neglect Definition Bill: Would have narrowed neglect to only cases of imminent risk of death or serious harm; it was voted down in committee. The rationale was to reduce investigations, despite DHW already screening out most reports.
 - Medical Neglect Bill (HB 757): Revises medical neglect definition to allow parents to use "alternative medical treatment" for life-threatening conditions without DHW intervention. Status: Referred to committee.
 - Open Hearings Bill: Passed the House, now in the Senate. Would open child protection hearings to the public, requiring a judge to find "good cause" to exclude them, which would be a significant administrative burden.
 - Other Bills: Foster children's safety rights, safety checks for children under one, foster parent training, Child Custody Interference (HB 524) requiring law enforcement response to exchange issues
- Fatality Review Team:
 - Met yesterday (March 5th) and reviewed 15 of 25 suicides from 2025. Ten more remain, with six awaiting information. Guests from suicide prevention and two school districts (Boise and West Ada) attended.
 - Working on policies and procedures.
 - The "Research Analyst Principal" position was approved and posted. Concerns were raised that the job description (\$30/hr, 19 hrs/week) is over-qualified for the

actual work (data collection, phone calls), hindering recruitment and potentially leading to turnover. The team previously outsourced report creation. The position description may misalign with the actual need for a data-entry/compiler type role. The department controls the posting.

Human Trafficking in Idaho (Guest: Jen Rupe, Deputy AG)

- Jen Rupe, Deputy Attorney General in the Criminal Law Division (Special Prosecutions Unit), presented on human trafficking in Idaho. Her position, created two years ago by House Bill 494 (2024), focuses solely on trafficking.
- Roles: Biannually draft a report to the legislature on human trafficking in Idaho (first report issued January 1, 2026) and develop/maintain training curriculum for various groups.
- Report Highlights: The initial 102-page report provides context on human trafficking, prevalence in Idaho, and challenges faced by partners.
- Key Findings:
 - Extremely under-reported and under-detected in Idaho. Raw numbers don't reflect the scope.
 - High intersection with drug trafficking.
 - Need for centralized public education campaigns and outreach to healthcare providers (85% of trafficking victims encounter healthcare during trafficking).
- Statistics (Last 5 Years):
 - State: 12 prosecutions, 0 convictions (cases often plead to other charges).
 - Federal: 5 prosecutions, 4 convictions (related to human trafficking situations, not always charged under distinct statutes).
 - No official data for true victim numbers, investigations with trafficking nexus, or prosecution referrals where charges weren't solid.
- Typologies in Idaho: Polaris (former human trafficking hotline operator) identified 25 types; many reflected in Idaho conversations (e.g., agriculture, domestic work, construction, , traveling sales crews).
 - Illicit Massage Businesses: Common in Idaho, rural and urban, blur line between commercial activity and exploitation.
 - Labor Trafficking: Cases involving minors exist. Visa violations noted in meatpacking, onion, potato, and forestry industries.
 - Familial Trafficking: Anecdotally high prevalence in Idaho; difficult to detect. Primary trafficker often the mother, victims typically 12 and under or developmentally disabled adults. Often involves providing access to children for

drugs/money, child abuse material (CSAM) production, or forced labor. Victims often don't perceive it as wrong and may not exhibit typical red flags.

- Legislative History: Human trafficking included in Idaho Code in 2006. Ongoing efforts for victim resources, mandatory reporting, and screening tools.
- Under-reporting: Official data typically reflects only 14-18% of total victims; actual prevalence in Idaho is likely higher. Idaho is on a trafficking "rig" for both drugs and humans.
- Investigation/Prosecution Challenges: Labor and time-intensive, complex victim dynamics, cross-jurisdictional issues. Cases often charged as other offenses (e.g., child endangerment, drugs).
- Current Efforts:
 - Treasure Valley Anti-Trafficking Task Force (federal funding).
 - DHW rewriting safety assessor training and developing advanced training on human trafficking (Jen Cichel consulting).
 - Juvenile screening tool capturing incidents among minors.
 - AG's office developing public education materials.
 - Law enforcement curriculum updates (basic officers course at POST).
- Vulnerabilities in Minors: Recruitment/grooming through apps (Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok). Juveniles often don't self-identify as victims. Vulnerabilities include brain development, foster care involvement, runaway status, emotional neglect.
- Q&A:
 - OnlyFans: No direct law enforcement stories in Idaho, but potential for CSAM and minor exploitation exists. Cash App is a frequently used digital payment platform for trafficking.
 - Social Media PSAs: Anthony suggested requiring social media apps to include PSAs about trafficking, similar to old radio/TV requirements. Jen agreed to raise the conversation with the AG. Jared Green's social media safety legislative push was mentioned.
 - Age Verification: Discussion about the opportunity (but low likelihood) of state mandates for age verification or specific standards for social media providers due to potential cost increases and legal arguments. Social media companies' attempts to limit access for minors are often circumvented.
 - Networking: Jen is interested in meeting with groups like the PFN President's Circle or Family Movement.
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Citizen Review Panel (CRP) Updates

- Three districts presented: District 1, District 2, and District 7.
- Concern was raised that CRP reports are not systematically reviewed or commented on by stakeholders outside DHW and lack a public website location for access, despite being mandated.
- District 1 (KJ Brant, Chair):
 - Fully staffed panel (7 members, 1 alternate). Strong collaborative relationship with Panhandle Health District 1 and Idaho DHW.
 - Key Statistics (2025 Annual Report, 135 kids in care):
 - Average age: 6.3 years.
 - TPR rate: 14.6%.
 - QRTP involvement: 17%.
 - Juvenile justice involvement: 9.8%.
 - Parental substance use (diagnosed or admitted): 85% (28% fentanyl use).
 - Parental incarceration (at some point): 61% (historically high).
 - Re-entries to child welfare: 18%.
 - Children with challenging behaviors: 54% (rising trend), 32% on psychotropic medication.
 - Infants with prenatal drug/alcohol exposure: 39%.
 - Children with developmental delays, low birth weight, withdrawal: 44%.
 - Trends/Concerns: High parental substance use/incarceration, placement instability/shortages, inconsistent parental engagement in services, increased challenging behaviors in children, prenatal substance exposure, mental health/developmental delays, reentry into system, psychotropic medication use. Needs for specialized interventions (therapy, evaluation, residential placement) are not adequately addressed, with 10+ month waitlists. Increased risk of juvenile justice involvement and reentry.
- District 2 (Michelle King, Chairperson):
 - Panel is reinventing itself due to high turnover and perception that reports "fall on deaf ears." Currently has three members.
 - Statistics (Oct 2024-Sept 2025): 761 maltreatment reports, 22 resulted in cases. Many resolved or deferred.

- Resource Desert: Region 2 has a significant lack of services, especially for teens. Idaho Code allows minimal parental contact (once a year text) which leads to chronic neglect.

Cameron Gilliland, Interim Administrator, Division of State Care Facilities, IDHW

- Group asked if Cameron's facilities take kids with autism diagnoses. Cameron explained that State Hospital West will take them, but with a lot of difficulty and trepidation. He said there is no state-run facility specifically for children with autism in Idaho.
 - Some of these children with autism have ended up getting placed at the Southwest Idaho Treatment Center, which is designed for adults with developmental disabilities. Cameron said they have board-certified juvenile analysts there who are the best in the state at working with this population.
 - Cameron acknowledged there is a big gap in services for children with autism, especially as they reach adolescence and become too big for their parents to handle. He said these children often end up cycling through different facilities without getting the right treatment.
- Group asked about the process for an incarcerated youth in juvenile detention to access Cameron's facilities. Cameron said they can sometimes take them directly, but the primary pathway is usually through the other hospitals like Cottonwood first.
- The discussion highlighted the challenges in finding appropriate placements and treatment for children with complex needs, especially those with autism or severe behavioral issues that exceed the capabilities of typical foster homes or group homes.

New Business

- Task force shares various upcoming trainings with one another.

Adjournment

Action Items

Mindy:

- **Confirm and book Salmon venue and set up direct bill w/ Karla**
- **Identify Salmon MDT/Mahoney House/hospital/CAC contacts; then invite to June site visit**
- **Email Sheila the ICAP 'Take It Down' video link**
- **Email Karla re: WHOVA app package payment due Mar 20**
- **Add Idaho Criminal Justice Subcommittee on Child Abuse Prevention to next year's guest list**

- **Email Raising the Bar (Idaho State Bar) conference info to group**
- **Share QR code and flyer for Bingham County infant/child death investigation virtual session**