



The Governor's Task Force on Children at Risk  
January 9, 2026  
Virtual

(A)Nadine McDonald, Juvenile Justice (Chairman)	(V)Jennifer Tachell– Educator (Vice-Chairman)
(V)Andie Blackwood- DHW, Family & Children Services	(A)Susan Bradford, MD – Pediatrician
(A)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 Bringham- Prosecuting Attorney
(A)Anthony Henry– Foster Youth	(V)Tahna Barton – CASA
(V)Jill Robertson – Homeless Youth Liaison	(V)Hon. Brent Ferguson- Crim. Magistrate Judge
(V)Trevor Sparrow– Parent	(V)Joshua Wickard- Public Defender
(A)Susan Nalley– Victim Services Coordinator	(V)Teresa Vance- Administrator of the Courts

Mindy Peper – Task Force Support

Indicates Absent (A) Virtual (V)

**Guests:** Lacey Williams, CFRT Chair

### Meeting Purpose

Review 2025 goals, plan 2026 activities, and address CFRT operational issues.

### Key Takeaways

- **CFRT is low-functioning:** The Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) is having issues with getting timely results and files from Vital Statistics. It appears that the aggregate historical data is inconsistent, making the annual report less reliable.
- **Ombudsman Partnership Proposed:** Sparrow offered to upgrade his communications specialist to a data analyst, using existing CFRT funds to bypass benefits costs and leverage the Ombudsman's statutory authority for data access.
- **2026 Guest Lineup Set:** Key guests for 2026 include the Office of Performance Evaluations (OPE), Citizen Review Panels (CRPs), the new IDJC director, and the Nampa State Hospital.
- **Conference Planning Underway:** The annual conference is tentatively booked for Oct 15 at The Riverside Hotel; the subcommittee will meet today to discuss themes and speakers.

## Topics

### Welcome and Minutes

Vice-Chair Jennifer Tachell called the meeting to order and welcomes everyone. Tachell reads the meeting norms.

Motion to approve the minutes from the October 2025 meeting with noted change to misspelled word:

- Made by: Vance
- Seconded by: Ferguson
- Outcome: Approved unanimously

### Budget

- A discussion arose regarding the reallocation of funds previously used for the CFRT research analyst position. This reallocation would be necessary to fund the proposed partnership with the Ombudsman's office.
- **Next Step:** Blackwood will draft a motion for the February meeting to formally vote on reallocating these funds for future use.

### Subcommittee Updates

- **Conference:**
  - **Attendees:** Jen Tachell, Sheila Freitas, Joshua Wickard, Kyle Bringham, Judge Ferguson, and Jill Robertson are confirmed to attend a San Diego conference. Teresa Vance is also attending, self-funded through a grant.
  - **Planning Meeting:** The conference subcommittee will meet after today's general meeting to discuss themes and speakers as well as coordinate tracks at the San Diego conference. Teresa Vance was invited to join this planning session.
  - **Venue:** The annual conference is tentatively booked for October 15th at The Riverside Hotel in Boise. A board meeting will be held the night before, October 14th, from 4 PM to 7 PM MST.
  - **Status:** Mindy Peper is collecting bids from potential venues (Riverside, Hampton Inn, and one more) to secure the contract for October 15th.
- **Legislative:** The legislative subcommittee is expected to begin meeting regularly in early February.
- **MDT (Multidisciplinary Team):**

- The MDT subcommittee has been meeting regularly and is developing a new online resource hub on the CARTF website.
- An initial draft has been reviewed, and members are encouraged to submit any relevant resources to Mindy Peper for inclusion.
- The hub will include dedicated sections for CACs and links to online training from Building Hope Today
- **Grants:**
  - Cycle 2 2025 grant payments have been processed and will be disbursed to grantees within a few days, meeting the January 15th deadline.
  - Cycle 1 2026 grant applications will open on February 1st, incorporating new updates and clarifications from the October CARTF meeting (e.g., regarding lobbying).

### **Strategic Planning and 2026 Guest Lineup**

- The committee reviewed its 2025 goals and strategies, noting significant progress across areas such as MDT development, legislative engagement, and training. Specifics include:
  - Goal 1: MDT survey and report complete; shared at IPAA conference as exhibitor; annual training conference; MDT subcommittee meeting with county MDTs virtually and during June regional meeting in Northern Idaho; MDT subcommittee creating resource sharing hub; MDT grants
  - Goal 2: Met regularly during legislative season; tracked bills pertaining to CP and updated task force; received regular updates from IDHW staff regarding rules and policy changes and updates
  - Goal 3: creation of mini rule book (Idaho CP Act, Statutes, and Rules); meet with regional Citizen Review Panels;
- **2026 Guest/Discussion Ideas:**
  - **Office of Performance Evaluations (OPE):** To discuss their recent report on the oversight of children's residential care facilities. This could be a virtual presentation in February or March.
  - **Citizen Review Panels (CRPs):** To provide updates on pertinent regional issues. Jennifer Tachell suggested inviting them virtually for February, or potentially splitting presentations between February and May if availability is an issue.

- **IDJC (Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections):** To hear from the new director, Ashley Dowell. Andie Blackwood will facilitate an introduction.
- **Kinship Care Initiatives:**
  - Charlie Hahn, who runs a grandparent group in Nampa, was suggested to speak on formal and informal kinship care. Andie Blackwood will try to find her contact information.
  - Discussion on foster care recruitment, potentially as a conference topic or strategic goal.
- **Nampa State Hospital:** To understand their processes, offerings, and admission procedures for children, as these have shifted. Andie Blackwood will provide a contact.
- **McKinney-Vento Act:** Jill Robertson offered to present on this act regarding homeless children.
- **Court Document Translation Project:** Joshua Wickard suggested translating the "advisement of rights" form and other common court documents into Spanish and other frequently encountered languages (e.g., Somali) to improve court accessibility for non-native English speakers. Teresa Vance confirmed she could implement this project through the Court Improvement Program grant.
- **Salmon Meeting (June):** Planning for the June meeting in Salmon will be added to the February agenda, pending Nadine and Judge Clark's input.
- **Strategic Plan Refresh:** Jennifer Tachell encouraged members to begin brainstorming ideas for changes, additions, or removals for the strategic plan refresh in 2027.

### **CFRT Operational Crisis and Proposed Ombudsman Partnership**

- **Lacey Williams' Report:**
  - **Problem:** The CFRT is currently struggling, with no research analyst since November and delays in receiving 2025 casework from Vital Statistics. The January and proposed February meetings have been canceled.
  - **Data Integrity:** Inconsistent historical data (varying formats, missing key details like birth/death dates) prevents aggregation. A planned data evaluation by BSU has been paused due to this. Lacey expressed concerns about the reliability of past annual reports based on this data.

- **Process Issues:** Lacey noted Idaho is the only state with an unpaid, full-time CFRT lead, leading to an unsustainable volunteer model. She has been working almost full-time on CFRT duties, though her compensation from St. Luke's only pays her for 8 hours a month.
- **Policy Manual:** Lacey has drafted a comprehensive 30-page policy and procedure manual but needs team member input and clarification on accountability structures.
- **Proposed Solution (Ombudsman Partnership):**
  - **Trevor Sparrow's Offer:** Trevor offered to have his communications specialist take on the research analyst duties. This involves upgrading the communication specialist (Montez) to a data analyst state position.
  - **Funding:** This would be funded by redirecting existing CFRT funds to the Ombudsman's office, as Montez's benefits are already covered as a state employee, offering cost savings. Interns could assist with data aggregation.
  - **Benefits:**
    - **Data Access:** The Ombudsman's statutory authority provides "unfettered access" to state agency documents, potentially resolving the Vital Statistics barrier.
    - **Data Aggregation:** The Ombudsman's robust, secure database (Yellowfin) can ensure consistent data capture and robust reporting.
  - **Long-Term Strategy:** Andie Blackwood noted that the CFRT's challenges highlight the need for a more stable, legislatively funded structure, similar to the Maternal Mortality Review Board, rather than relying on Children's Justice Act funds and volunteer efforts. She suggested exploring discussions with legislators and the Governor's office about the executive order mandating the CFRT.

## Adjournment

- Meeting concludes.

## Next Steps

- Blackwood will follow up with Vital Statistics regarding the outstanding data request.

- Lacey Williams will schedule a meeting for the week of January 19th with Blackwood, Sparrow, McDonald, and Ferris to discuss the details of the proposed Ombudsman partnership.
- Peper will ensure the February agenda includes a vote on reallocating CFRT funds. Blackwood will send language for motion.
- Peper will schedule Spring guests.