



CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN of COLORADO

Timothy Montoya Task Force | Meeting Three Meeting Minutes

January 4, 2023 | 8am-11am

[Meeting Recording](#)

Facilitators: Keystone Policy Center

Time	Agenda Topic and Notes
8:00 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Announcing selection of Co-Chair<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Denver Public Safety Youth Programs program manager Beth McNalley is announced as the vice chair of the task force. McNalley oversees the city's Runaway, Outreach, Notification, and Intervention (RONI) program and Youth Denver Anti-Trafficking (DATA) Multidisciplinary Team.● Task Force Member outreach<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Chair Stephanie Villafuerte expresses that she will be scheduling 1-1 check-ins with each task force member.
8:05 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Legislative Charge<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Jennifer Superka introduces herself as new to the CPO team and shares how she plans to bring everyone's viewpoints together to understand the system and address the charges the task force has been charged with.○ Jennifer Superka notes that, though there are explicit things asked of the task force, this is an iterative and evolving process. Asks the task force to ask "what else do we need to know?" along the way.○ Superka shares with the task force the legislative charge separated out from the bill.● Task Force Syllabus<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The task force will be using a digital Dropbox to access the documents shared prior and in each meeting.○ The syllabus that has been drafted by the CPO team was shared with the task force:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Superka noted this would evolve as things progress, but wanted to provide an intuitive order that logically follows the discussions necessary along the way.

- No questions from the task force.

8:20 am

Agency operations and processes:

Bringing forward the task force's diverse perspectives and areas of expertise, members heard about the current procedures that agencies follow when a youth runs away from an out-of-home placement. Task force members representing the county human service agencies, treatment facilities and law enforcement each shared the processes their agencies follow by answering the key questions below.

- What happens when a child runs away?
 - Member Lynette Overmeyer from Mesa County:
 - Lynette notes she believes this is standard across the state per [volume seven rules](#).
 - The placement notifies Law enforcement immediately.
 - The Child Protection Hotline, that entity gets a hold of the county if it's the hotline county connection center (HCCC) which is a state hotline (every county has their own).
 - The HCCC hotline ensures the missing child is reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) website.
 - Case workers, parents, and Guardian Ad Litem are notified the same day.
 - Next day, the court is notified.
 - Brandon Miller- Southern Peaks residential facility:
 - Procedures at his residential facility are standard.
 - First contact is their referral team and their family.
 - Contact the police.
 - Tries to stay in visual contact until they lose sight in addition to verbal de-escalation. Notes the noise near his facility and the inability to go on private property can create challenges getting to the child.
 - If sight is lost, they notify the police department and PD takes over from that point. Facility waits to hear from PD. Due to the rural nature of the facility, the youth are typically caught quickly.
- What happens while a child is missing from care?
 - Lynette Overmeyer:

- Law Enforcement should be looking for the child, but noted that some jurisdictions are so busy they might just run into the kids while doing other work while other jurisdictions are good at following the details of where the child might be and do a more in-depth approach to finding the child.
- What happens upon their return?
 - Lynette:
 - The placement tries to understand what happened.
 - Therapists meet with child immediately (if in QRTP type setting) to understand more information and see how they can support the child not running again.
 - Brandon:
 - Once they're back they process them and try to figure out what happened and what they need moving forward.
- Additional questions from task force members:
 - Stephanie Villafuerte:
 - What is the timeframe when a child is missing when the report is made? Villafuerte noted she has heard that it can vary.
 - Lynette: If from residential, they have to notify right away as a line-of-sight facility. If running from a foster home or group home, because they're allowed to leave placements, sometimes it's not realized that they're missing for hours later.
 - Familiar with volume 7 and debriefing with the youth when they return, is that information stored in the Trails database? If there were subsequent placements for a youth or a new caseworker, would we have a record of the child's history in that regard?
 - Lynette: There's a record in the contact notes, but the caseworker would have to go in and read that. The challenge is that if the caseworker turnover is high, that information can get lost.
 - Anna Cole:
 - Adds that the high-risk victimization tool (HRV) has to be completed upon every run return if the child is in the department's custody. There is a record of that discussion within that

victimization tool within Trails. Lynette agrees and thanks Anna for this addition.

- Beth McNally
 - Question about the training for the HRV tool for caseworkers regarding implementation, accountability for that happening with each run, and what happens if there are concerns for the HRV tool what the process is from there.
 - Lynette outlines issues with the HRV tool.
 - Partly a Trails issue. Trails mod was supposed to roll out in 2017 and only half has done that. To find the tool you have to go into the mod to do a client search and look separately. You cannot access this tool where ongoing and intake workers are working. The two-step process is a challenge.
 - There are no directions for what to do with the tool if they are high risk other than talking to the youth. Caseworkers are good at that, the challenge is that new caseworkers don't get training immediately on the tool. Does not see ongoing training when she looks at the training system.
 - Anna Cole notes this challenge with the HRV tool seems county specific in her experience.
 - Michelle Bradley (Douglas County) provides training twice a year on how to complete the HRV tool.
 - The tool is more information gathering from parents, schools, etc. Once that tool is completed they send it to her, she sends it on and they are reviewed in a monthly meeting. The discussion includes services involved, what might be needed, it might be screened out or

- it might go into a further months-long review.
- If they have custody of the child, they are required to complete the tool but they might not always submit it because it wasn't determined to be high risk.
- Accountability of completion is a supervisor's responsibility and notes there is follow-up in her department.
- Beth McNally notes that HRV might be completed on a piece of paper. When it's completed electronically, the tool forces you to answer if the risk is a yes or no and are concerned they answer no even if they don't know for sure.
- Task Force member Kevin Lash:
 - As a parent of a child that runs, he wasn't aware of this process that's been laid out.
- Elizabeth Montoya: Her son was in a hospital for 26 hours and there was no information even though DPD had the runaway report. Wondering if that's a fluke.
 - Sgt. Cotter: Has seen this stuff happen. The challenge is that the cops aren't connecting the victim with the name that then gets checked in a database. The systems are not communicating with one another, county to county but also agency to agency.

Additional conversation points:

- Sgt. Cotter talks about the challenge of actually charging someone with harboring a minor.
- The law enforcement system isn't as centralized as human services. Human services has statewide Trails, law enforcement barely has anything like that system. Agency policies and the things they choose to enforce are all dictated by local officials (mayors, council, elected sheriffs, etc). This makes it tough in these meetings, what happens in Denver isn't true statewide as it relates to statewide policies.
 - This is a big topic and the decisions are made at local levels. Is it a frustration? In some ways, but also understands why it's evolved this way. Doesn't believe we should overhaul the entire system, that would have its own challenges. Knows it's not perfect but doesn't know if he'd suggest changing it.

- Question from task force member: are officers reluctant to get involved?
 - Officers are very generalized and are expected to know about everything and that's not realistic. Very few departments have the resources that Denver or Aurora has. The challenge is that the people investigating or working on runaway cases are also doing murders, burglaries, etc. and they don't necessarily have the right tools. Training is needed.
- Dave Lee would like to see additional conversation around Volume 7.

9:25 am

Break

9:30 am

[An updated examination of the predictors of running away from foster care in the United States and trends over ten years \(2010-2019\)](#)

- Dr. Tara Richards and Caralin Brascum, researchers from the University of Nebraska Omaha's School of Criminology and Criminal Justice present the results of a national study on youth who went missing from out-of-home placement from 2010 to 2019. The study found that children of color, girls, older youth, children with substance abuse or behavioral issues and those with prior runaway behaviors were all at a higher risk for going missing.
- Task force members noted that the information presented is similar to the trends they are familiar with and thanked the presenters for a strong presentation.

Questions from the task force:

- Kevin Lash wants to understand if there's research around the danger to the community with a runaway. Researchers present did not have data to share.
- Dave Lee notes all members have their own anecdotal information but this presentation will help fine-tune the direction of the task force.
- Jana Zinser wants to know if the task force can dig into the disproportionate numbers impacting black and brown youth and teen girls.
- Becky Miller Updike would like to know if there is more recent data since the mental health crisis that came about from COVID.
 - The presenter notes that the national data is limited and the timeline of relevant data is challenging and unfortunate.
- Jenelle Goodrich notes she appreciates the data but says nothing will change unless there is more aggressive legislation and possibly shifting recent legislation that's already passed. The problem is that the authority figures can't do what they need to do because a few

small stories have changed legislation for the masses. She would like to see a list of protocols of what can and cannot be done (law enforcement, residential, foster care, etc) because running away is not a crime.

- Believes the only way forward is for the whole system to be shifted. A task force will do only one piece, it needs to be a whole system change.

10:30 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Wrap-up● Next Steps
10:45 am	<p>Public Comment</p> <p>Andrew Gabor: Would like to know if there is an effort for a better safety net. What's the safety planning to ensure that the next running event can be prevented in the first place on an individual level?</p> <p>Steve Fisher: Lives across the street from the Tennyson Center since 1995 and has seen hundreds of runs and rescues. From his perspective having read the statutes, he believes there is nothing preventing a fence or a locking of a fence to keep kids safe. Parents and guardians need to be told by facilities the realities of the child's abilities to run away without major intervention or interventions that lead to rash decisions from the youth.</p> <p>Cindy Throop: Believes there are opportunities for short, medium, and long term work. In terms of black children and children of color disproportionately running away, these are also the kids that are disproportionately placed in out-of-home placements. We're a few decades into not having great safety nets for kids. These things could be addressed by better-equipping families of origin.</p>
11:00 am	Closing