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Colorado Task Force Releases Groundbreaking Recommendations to Prevent Youth from Running Away from Out-of-Home Care

DENVER, October 1, 2024 - Members of a task force created by the Colorado General Assembly believe Colorado can be a national leader when it comes to how it prevents and finds youth who run away from placement in foster care and residential treatment facilities.

In its final report, **The Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Children from Running Away from Out-Of-Home Placement** outlines a comprehensive set of recommendations to address the systemic issues that contribute to youth running away from foster care and residential treatment facilities.

The task force was created after the death of 12-year-old Timothy Montoya in June of 2020. He was hit by a car after running away from a therapeutic treatment facility he had been placed in.

“The state of Colorado failed Timmy and his family. His death highlighted a critical gap in our state’s system of care for vulnerable youth,” says task force vice-chair Beth McNalley, who oversees the Runaway Outreach Notification and Intervention Project for the Denver Mayor’s Office. “We need to do better. We need to stop failing our youth. And our recommendations will help accomplish that.”

The task force’s recommendations focus on three key areas: prevention, intervention, and aftercare. They include:

- **Prevention:** Implementing measures to reduce the likelihood of youth running away, such as improved facility security, enhanced training for caregivers, and the development of a standardized risk assessment tool.
- **Intervention:** Establishing protocols for timely and effective responses to missing youth, including the use of specialized teams to locate youth.
- **Aftercare:** Ensuring that youth who have run away receive appropriate medical and mental health evaluations upon their return, as well as support to help them reintegrate into where they are placed.

“These recommendations are essential for creating a more supportive and protective environment for vulnerable youth in Colorado,” says Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman and task force chair Stephanie Villafuerte. “They address the root causes of runaway behavior and provide comprehensive support services that will help prevent future tragedies and ensure that all children have the opportunity to thrive.”

Read the final report, an executive summary and see an infographic explaining the problem at the [Timothy Montoya Task Force webpage](#).

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About the Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman

The Office of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO) is an independent government agency that ensures the state’s child protection systems consistently, fairly and equitably deliver services to every child, youth and family. Established in 2010, the CPO offers free, confidential and neutral services to ensure the highest attainable standards of care and works with people, government agencies and other stakeholders to resolve issues and disputes. The CPO engages communities across the state and collaborates with stakeholders and lawmakers to improve child protection services, policies and laws. More information at <https://coloradocpo.org>.