

Timothy Montoya Task Force

September 4, 2024, Meeting Recap

Overview

The Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Children from Running Away from Out-of-Home Placement is legislatively charged with analyzing the root causes of why children and youth run from out-of-home care to help develop a consistent, prompt and effective response for when children and youth do run. It is also charged with assessing how to address the safety and well-being of children and youth upon their return to care.

Review of Final Votes on Recommendations

The goal of this meeting was to reflect on the votes taken via survey by task force members and prepare for the final report due on October 1st. The report will include the recommendations, a narrative of the process, and additional discussions from the two-year task force.

Votes have been received by a broad majority of task force members before the deadline was reached, and the team will not be following up with members who didn't vote. Abstentions will be noted in the report. Any "no" votes or comments will be included verbatim in the report's addendum, without summarizing or altering them.

Trace Faust noted that the Colorado Department of Human Services submitted a letter indicating three abstentions from the voting and explaining their reasons for abstaining, which will be included in its original form as an addendum to the final report.

Trace reviewed the recommendations in relation to the directives.

- Recommendation 1A on the creation of a standard, statewide information and data collection system passed with 83.3% in favor. Similarly, Recommendation 1B on the development of standard training for the standard, statewide information and data collection system was approved by 83.3% of those who voted.
- On Directive Two, the vote breakdown showed 88.9% in favor of the task force's position with three abstentions noted. This was a position statement from the task force in relation to Directive Two, and not a full recommendation.
- For Recommendation Three, there were three sub-parts.
 - Recommendation 3A involves defining risk categories for children or youth who run from care, and 88.9% of participants voted in favor. There were three abstentions, but no "no" votes were recorded.

- Recommendation 3B focuses on utilizing and defining risk categories and developing standard response protocols for children or youth who run from care. 16 voters supported it, with three abstentions.
- Recommendation 3C ensures that diversity, equity, and inclusion are considered throughout the process. Again, 16 out of 16 voted in favor, with three abstentions.
- Directive 4: 16 out of 16 voting "yes"., with three abstentions. This was a position statement from the task force in relation to Directive 4, and not a full recommendation.
- Recommendation 5 had five subcomponents.
 - Directive 5A: Clarifying the meaning of "imminent" received full support with 16 votes in favor, and three abstentions..
 - Directive 5B: Clarifying facilities' duty to intervene, also unanimous with 16 votes, and three abstentions.
 - Directive 5C: Establishing a good faith provision for facilities regarding the use of restraints had 15 out of 16 in favor, with one "no" and three abstentions.
 - Directive 5D: Requiring parents and caregivers to be informed of policies was unanimously supported, with three abstentions.
 - Directive 5E: Developing a proposal for short-term stabilization units had 15 out of 16 "yes" votes, with one "no" and three abstentions.
- Recommendation 6 had five subcomponents:
 - Recommendation 6A: Assessing physical infrastructure needs received 15 out of 16 "yes" votes, with one "no" and three abstentions.
 - Recommendation 6B: Requiring consideration of a placement's physical infrastructure was unanimously supported, with three abstentions.
 - Directive 6C: Developing a standard pre-admission risk assessment tool and post-run recovery screening tool was unanimously supported, with three abstentions.
 - Directive 6D: Creating standard education for out-of-home caregivers also received unanimous support, with three abstentions.
 - Directive 6E: Educating children about the risks of running from care was unanimously supported, with three abstentions.
- Recommendation 7A: Developing a statewide response unit had 15 out of 16 in favor, with one "no" and three abstentions.

Trace then asked task force members to reflect on the work of the task force and share what they feel hopeful or excited about regarding the recommendations.

Lynette Overmeyer shared that she attended a meeting discussing a universal pilot referral form for placements, where the top reason for declining placement was youth elopement. She is hopeful that the task force's focus on developing risk tools and protocols will help placements feel more supported in accepting these youth.

Ashley Chase reflected on a conversation she had regarding legislative work, where someone unfamiliar with the task force assumed it would simply recommend restrictive measures like fences. Ashley was able to clarify that the task force's work was far more comprehensive, and she believes people will be impressed with the report.

Beth McNalley expressed agreement with Lynette and Ashley, noting that recent cases have highlighted the relevance and potential impact of the task force's work. She is hopeful and excited to see the recommendations come to fruition.

Lynette emphasized the significance of developing risk criteria and response plans for youth, highlighting that this work goes beyond mere restrictive measures. She sees the establishment of data collection and risk criteria as crucial for effective improvements over time.

Elizabeth Montoya shared her hopefulness about the work, particularly the development of risk criteria and standardized responses, which she feels are crucial based on feedback from those working directly in the field. She also expressed enthusiasm for the idea of short-term stabilization units and gratitude for the dedication of those working with youth daily.

Trace and task force members recognized Elizabeth's contributions and willingness to share personal experiences have been invaluable to the task force. Becky Miller Updike expressed appreciation for Elizabeth's participation and bravery in the task force and also acknowledges Kevin Lash's contributions as a parent as well.

Ashley complimented the facilitation of the task force, noting that the effectiveness of the group's operation has been exceptional compared to other groups she has been involved with.

Becky noted that many agencies already have some form of risk and safety assessments in place, so implementing the new recommendations should be manageable. However, she requests help in engaging county partners to support the implementation of these recommendations.

Sergeant Cotter expressed appreciation for the diversity and thoughtfulness of the group, noting that despite not solving every problem, the process was collaborative and respectful. He values the group's effort to understand and address the complexities of the issues.

Doris Tolliver reflected on the collaborative nature of the task force, praising the openness and willingness of members to consider different perspectives and iterate on recommendations.

Norma Aguilar-Dave remarked that the task force has been exceptional in terms of collaboration and respect. She recognized the comprehensive impact of the issue on children, families, employees, and communities.

Next Steps

The report is currently being revised and will be finalized by October 1st. It will include details on the voting outcomes and comments.

There were no public comments before closing the meeting.

Trace ended the meeting with gratitude for everyone's contributions and willingness to be a part of the process.

