



Timothy Montoya Task Force | Meeting 14

February 14, 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.

Discussion of Research on Hardware to Prevent Runs

Bryan Kelley provided a summary of the research provided to the task force prior to the meeting, including resources related to hardware policies for out-of-home facilities. Bryan highlighted examples from California, Kansas, Washington, and Wyoming, discussing various aspects such as secured perimeters, delayed egress devices, limitations on treatment length, rights of youth, staff ratios, periodic court reviews, and accreditation requirements. These examples serve as a basis for discussion on potential approaches to hardware implementation and the task force was encouraged to consider both positive and negative aspects of each example.

Regarding intervention, two types of policies were examined, focusing on states with varying response categories based on youth characteristics. The first segment highlighted policies in states like Arizona, DC, and North Carolina, which identify at-risk youth based on specific characteristics such as suicidal tendencies, serious mental illness, or pregnancy. These characteristics trigger specific policy responses, such as communication with law enforcement or daily progress report reviews.

Jenelle Goodrich raised a point during the intervention discussion, expressing her preference for building upon the resources rather than adopting any single state's model wholesale. She suggested pulling elements from each option to create a tailored approach for Colorado, as there are aspects she likes and dislikes in each. Bryan affirmed this approach and assured that the discussions would inform the drafting process.

Dennis Desparrois raised a point regarding the Juvenile Justice Prevention Act. He highlighted that the act prohibits the use of locked perimeter fences in facilities serving both committed youth and child welfare youth. Dennis emphasized the need for the prevention group to consider this aspect, especially in facilities where both populations are served, which may contract with DYS.

Kelly Abbott offered to answer any questions mentioning that the Division of Criminal Justice monitors compliance with the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act.

The second category of the intervention resource included specified response protocols. Bryan contrasted Colorado's brief regulations with other states' more elaborate protocols, citing examples from Michigan, Tennessee, and Washington. These states detail immediate, 24-hour, and ongoing response steps, including responsibilities for different entities or employees. Bryan highlights elements such as specialized investigative staff and collaboration with case workers, urging consideration if Colorado decides to adopt a similar statewide response protocol.

Brandon Miller raised a question about Colorado regulations concerning secure perimeters. Stephanie Villafuerte noted the absence of regulations in this context and highlighted the financial and practical challenges faced by individual contractors who operate these facilities, noting that facilities may be reluctant to invest in costly security measures without assurances of long-term contracts.

The task force then divided into two subcommittees for separate discussions (minutes and recaps of those subcommittee meetings are provided elsewhere). After that discussion, both subcommittees reconvened.

Summary of Intervention Subcommittee Discussion

Doris Tolliver provided a summary of discussion from the intervention subcommittee. The subcommittee discussed implementing a framework for distinguishing between high, moderate, and low-risk youth, drawing inspiration from a framework used in the Denver area. They identified characteristics such as a history of suicide, susceptibility to exploitation or trafficking, and medical conditions that would necessitate a quick response. They also discussed the need for a standardized risk assessment tool and immediate response protocols. Tennessee's approach was mentioned as a potential reference point, although there were concerns about certain aspects of their system. Overall, the group made progress and plans to delve deeper into these topics in future meetings.

Summary of Prevention Subcommittee Discussion

Trace Faust summarized the prevention subcommittee's conversation. The discussion focused on hardware solutions for preventing youth from running away. At the room level, the group discussed affordable options like motion detection lasers. At the building level, they explored delayed doors and cameras, considering privacy concerns in areas like bathrooms and bedrooms. Perimeter fencing was highlighted as a potential solution, despite challenges. The group also considered ankle monitoring and broader exploration of safety technology. Recommendations for community safety standards, such as crosswalks, were also discussed. Overall, the group aimed to identify tangible hardware solutions while exploring broader technological options and community safety standards.

Stephanie expressed gratitude for everyone's strong contributions and out-of-the-box thinking. She highlighted her excitement for the ideas generated and mentioned that Bryan will be working on preliminary recommendation language with the help of designated members. She emphasized that progress is being made and thanked everyone for their participation.