



**The Timothy Montoya Task Force To Prevent Children From
Running Away From Out-Of-Home Placement | Meeting 16**

Intervention Subcommittee

Members: See Appendix A

<p>Intervention Subcommittee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Doris Tolliver welcomed the subcommittee. Jordan Steffen also welcomed the subcommittee and explained the research that has been done. Her and Bryan Kelley tried to find a system that the subcommittee has been discussing; they struggled to find this in isolation. They looked at the TX program and the VT program. She apologizes for not being able to find more and is open to suggestions on where else to look. She provided the links to the programs to refresh memories. She asked for any questions. There were none. Doris mentioned that a few people on the survey indicated that they were not sure so it would be helpful to have a memory refresh. Jordan asked for anything she could provide. There were no comments. ● Doris explained the agenda for the subcommittee. She will show the survey results. Then, she will allow them some time to refresh their memories of the content. Finally, there will be a discussion. There was a conversation about people completing the correct survey. ● Doris read the subcommittee’s directive. She also read the survey results. For the first question: “Do you support the task force developing recommendations about temporary placements for children who have run from out of home placement”, 86% responded yes and 14% responded unsure. She read the questions for the day; “what are the goals of temporary placement?” and “what policy elements should be considered in implementing temporary placements?”. She also displayed the comments made on the survey which included looking for kin placement and caring and secure environments where youth can decompress. Comments also mentioned training around high risk youth as well as extended stays and advocacy input. In looking at elements to be avoided, comments included avoiding law enforcement, emergency shelter environments, assuming family is the best placement, as well as being limited by funding or rule. Doris asked for any reflections or questions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Slides ● Kevin Lash said that he has heard that 70% of the time, the children in these facilities also have a criminal justice issue so not having law enforcement involvement might not be up to the task force but up to the probation officer or the magistrate. Doris thanked him. Janelle Goodrich said that, to follow up, there are certain things that go into a decision on where to hold a child. Especially when human trafficking or out of state children are involved, it is safest for children to be held in detention so they don’t run again rather than them being in trouble. It might not make sense to make protocols when it would be overruled by a judge. Kevin said that this would be taken out of the hands of whatever the subcommittee comes up with; the juvenile justice system will usually override which isn’t a problem. Beth McNalley said that they legally cannot hold youth who run out of state in detention. Out of home placement gets tricky when it gets shifted to the Colorado Department of
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Human Services. From a trafficking concern, they can advocate for a safe place to be but they cannot advocate for holding children in the facilities. Doris asked where youth who are not justice involved would be held. Lynette Overmeyer said that it is mandated to keep these bed counts low so even if they are juvenile justice involved, it might not mean they will go to the Department of Youth Services. Jenelle also said that there are multiple places for children to go like with Beth's juvenile assessment center or at the 18th; it's not really a holding place but a sitting place. Doris asked if this is like a safe place. Jenelle said that they opened a new one in Adams County which had beds. They fill up quickly and children can run from there; they lack locked doors. She said that every case that she comes across, there is a different nuance or complication regarding jurisdictional differences. Usually when a child is recovered, it can take hours to figure out who and where a child should go. Beth agreed and said that the caseworkers have to get creative. The kinship option would be most ideal but sometimes these placements are harmful. She explained some different protocols across different facilities. Dennis Desparrois chimed in and said that a runaway or homeless youth shelter cannot serve children that are involved in the child welfare system. Jenelle said that when the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) gets involved, the children have to go to different locations. Beth said that there are last resort options for temporary placement at the shelters by CDHS. Dennis said that if that happens and they found out, they would make the county remove that child. The facilities are federally funded so they are prohibited from taking children in the CDHS system. Doris asked why this is. Dennis said that the county has custody of runaway, unaccompanied and homeless youth. Doris thanked him. Jenelle said this is a different conversation since sometimes, the county won't do anything. If there is not a third party placement, they turn to kinship placements which can turn risky fast. Doris asked if these placements with kin are intended to be temporary. Jenelle said that it depends on the situation and she explained a personal story of being a kinship placement. Doris asked if this was a foster care situation versus a youth who ran from care situation. Jenelle said that a lot of times the placement is led with caution that it could be temporary or it could be long term since no one knows how long it is going to be. Doris thanked her and wanted to make sure the focus was youth who run from care and temporary placements rather than placements for all youth.

- Lynette Overmeyer said that her experience in trying to find placements for a youth who had run away is extremely difficult. Maybe there should be specialized receiving hubs that they used to have before they were gotten rid of for good reason. Now, children are staying in hotels or department lobbies which also aren't working. When looking for kin, the child would have probably already been placed there if that was available even with wrap-around services so the subcommittee needs to be realistic about who is willing and able to take care of children. Doris thanked her.
- Norma Agilar-Dave said that she has a partnership with Shiloh where they provide the bed space and Savio provides the assessment. She reiterated her comments about what the goals of temporary beds are. It is 4 beds and the max length of stay is 21 days. They have a low away without leave rate. They



spend 21 days trying to assess and figure out the needs of the child, why they haven't figured it out yet, what has changed, and anything else. Then they develop a plan and work from there. Most times, they can get the child back home with intensive services. This started when Douglas County needed assistance with children. This is a small program; it took a year to start since they wanted to be intentional about the problems needing to be solved and the goals. She said that when the function is just a temporary placement rather than being intentional about what this looks like, we do nothing different than what we do currently when a child is sitting at CDHS and a child has nowhere to go. Doris thanked her and transitioned to the conversation around the goals of temporary placement.

- Norma said that if the issue is trying to address children who run from placement, it'll be important to know more about why children run from placements. There can be endless reasons. It would be important to identify the problem like Douglas County did with their delinquent children that had nowhere to go. She also mentioned that the state funds half of their program so it's important not to get bogged down by thinking about money. Recently, they got notice that they have this money in perpetuity. It can start small and then get bigger and bigger. Denis Desparrois mentioned that this is a part of the High Acuity Bill that is likely to pass.
- Beth McNalley said it is crucial that this is more than a safe place to place youth. Intentionality like an assessment is important. It needs to be beyond putting children in cots in an office space since that sends messages to children. They should also be intentional about children that go in and out of the system so it's important to explain to the children why they are there and the support they can expect. Children running and coming right back is not doing anything so partnering to provide resources is very important. Doris thanked her and said that the conversation about this started with the topic of where a child can go after a run recovery to assess for harm as well as a future plan. The topic came out of a standardized response protocol conversation.
- Norma said that it will be important to understand partnerships to best serve children using the beds that are available. This will be to make a menu for children and caseworkers. Part of her program's success is the essence of partnership.
- Jenelle Goodrich said that what she was going to say was already said.
- Doris thanked everyone and said that she heard goals of a safe place for children to go to assess children for harm, understanding root causes of the run, as well as appropriate services and longer term placement. She asked for other goals.
- Dennis asked why these can't be accomplished with the original provider. Doris asked for responses from the subcommittee. Norma said that she is not sure that they can't but different providers have different strengths and sometimes it is not the right fit. It might not be able to happen. Dennis said that his concern is that if a child runs from a placement and is at a temporary placement, then their bed at the old placement will be filled by someone else so then the child will be stuck at the temporary placement. He also said that



he is worried about running being contagious if a lot of runners are in the same facility. Kevin Lash agreed with the second point.

- Lynette said that, along Dennis's concerns, the temporary placements can be low census. She also thinks that if the facility can take the child back, and the child is not refusing then the child should go back. However, when a child runs, a facility won't always take them back. So the assessment should be about what will be the right placement. Some children might get stuck until more resources are available but that is better than a county department of human services lobby or a Division of Youth Services facility. Doris thanked her. She asked about policies and protocols that are not limited to a temporary placement and returning children to the placement if that makes sense with expectations around what the facility needs to do when the child returns like an assessment for root cause. A temporary placement option does not mean that all youth who run away go to a temporary placement first before going back to a facility or home. It is not an either/or choice.
- Elizabeth Montoya said that, to Dennis's point about running being contagious, once children find out that they would be going to a temporary spot for a few days, they might run to take a break before they get placed somewhere else, like an adventure.
- Kevin said that in his personal experience, his son was eliminated from a placement in Arizona and placed in a temporary facility that was not secure. He had to go pick him up, but he had already ran away by the time he got there so security is a large concern.
- Norma said that she agrees that the temporary placement should be small and that running is contagious. She doesn't see children using it for a break. Every second with a child or family has a reason behind it. It will not be if a child runs they will end up there. It should be that if they run and there is a reason why and the child needs a particular service or care, then they are matched with temporary placement. The children understand that there is a reason behind everything and there are constant assessments happening. This all helps inform the discharge plan. It's not a place to chill. It's an opportunity for children and the only way this happens is if the child engages and is willing to go through the process. More than not, children are willing to do this.
- Doris wants to go back to the conversation about identifying the youth for which a temporary placement would be appropriate. She asked about some of the criteria on this consideration. Lynette said it would be a holistic approach. For example, is the child working through trauma and exhibiting increased behaviors as a result or if they are making progress. These children should go back to their previous placement as difficult as that is. If it is chronic, then it might make sense to do a temporary placement and do a thorough assessment to make sure needs are met. It's a continuum and a holistic approach. Supervisors and staff often know who is making progress and who is not. Sometimes it is just a bad fit. Doris thanked her.
- Beth said that on a basic level, children run from placement and then they lose their bed so these children would benefit from temporary placement. Sometimes a child leaving placement is a result of something bad happening and investigating this would require the child to leave. Sometimes it is a



breakdown with the service provider. Overcoming issues and having the child's voice heard is helpful. If it is a safety issue, that would require a temporary placement. Doris thanked her. She also considered if the placement from which they ran lacked a specialization. Beth said that a majority of programs will say they are trained on something but they lack the training to do treatment for a specific group well. Dennis said that there is a lack of facilities in CO for human trafficking specialized care; they were not financially viable since there was no payment source. Doris asked if the temporary placement should have expertise with trafficked youth. Beth and Dennis said absolutely. Norma said she agrees and a facility could have accessibility to someone who does have the expertise. Beth said totally; this is not just facility providers but 101 training across the board to recognize indicators. She also agrees to the merit of connecting with people with specialized training and making people aware of programs that are available.

- Norma asked for a reminder of the question. Doris said that she asked about the criteria for a temporary placement.
- Jenelle said that her focus is high risk children, especially trafficking. The Family First Act was great in theory but needs more enactment support; it's hard not to hate it. Placements that were specialized closed due to this. She wonders how to get facilities to do these things. It could be an outreach project. It might be harder to put this out in the world. Doris mentioned having this as an option on a continuum and having it serve a narrow specific need. There could also be protocol around what happens when a youth runs to assess holistically and comprehensively meet their needs.
- Beth said that the struggle with foster homes is that when they hear that a youth runs regularly or is at high risk, then they won't accept them, so they need a temporary placement. Doris said this sounds like the case with placement to facilities too and that they do not always accept youth with high risks. This is part of a continuum and not a long term placement; that problem would still need to be solved since the temporary placement is not a solution for that.
- Janelle said that Beth said what she was trying to say. Many places won't take children if they run and this is the gap to fill. How do we look at establishing therapeutic foster homes for this population and specialized in temporary placement and stabilize a child? There could only be one youth in a home at a time. This doesn't exist and maybe it could in Colorado. Doris thanked her.
- Dennis said to Jenelle's point, these things exist for different populations. CDHS pays the provider even if a child is not using the bed and in return, CDHS tells the provider who they admit. Since they are being resourced to serve the population, it is pretty successful. The solution could be built by a CDHS contract to serve this population. Doris said that this would require a youth coming into care if they are not already. Dennis said not necessarily. The beds are not just for children in the CDHS system, but are for anyone. Doris asked if CDHS is still the payer for this. Dennis said yes. Doris thanked him.
- Lynette said that older youth that abscond from placement have been in residential treatment for a long time and not successful in foster care. They



used to do better in group homes but those have been taken away while a handful operate in the state. There was not an attachment piece to staff a group home. Some youth used to do well in independent living programs before they turned 18; they had supervision, resources and expectations. We are not allowed to place them in these until they turn 18. Dennis said one program operates like an independent living program and they do not have a big issue with runaways. Doris thanked them and added these as additional considerations on a continuum of options for youth who run away.

- Jenelle said that children are not allowed on lists for the independent living until they are 18 or sometimes a few months before they turn 18. She wonders about a recommendation about putting them on the list sooner than later to close the gaps. Doris asked if this would be a different consideration around consistent waitlists for independent living programs. Jenelle said that her thoughts are consistent but also longer. Doris thanked her and asked for any other comments. There were none.
- Doris showed the notes that she took about the goals for temporary placement conversation. Dennis asked about a secure facility for youth who are not committed. Lynette said it could be staff secure. Doris asked if that is better. Dennis said yes. Norma said that the reality is that children can still run; she is not sure if locking them up is best either. In her experience, the best defense against a child running is talking to them and putting in interventions that address needs. It is not 100%; children run and they will. Beth said that it would be important to note that this is a small sized population and she agrees with Dennis that it should not be a locked facility. Doris asked if the small census comment captures that. Beth said yes and that staff can be attentive to details for each youth. Jenelle said that she agrees especially considering the children would already be going through sometime and there is no evidence about the youth harming people. It could ruin rapport if the facility is locked down. Doris asked if the language about staff secure and low staff to youth ratios is a good capture. The subcommittee agreed.
- Doris read her notes on the criteria for youth that would be in temporary placement. She asked for any other considerations. There were none.
- Doris read her notes for additional considerations. She asked if anything was missing from any of the sections or additional considerations.
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- Anna Cole said that they should consider the length of time the temporary placement should be since they can turn into longer than intended due to a lack of placement options. Doris thanked her and asked if the note she wrote captures her thoughts. Anna said she struggles with the word “cap”. Sometimes these words create issues but the general idea is not to create situations in which a youth may languish. Lynette said that she agrees but there should be a flexibility aspect as well as oversight to prevent languishing. Thinking of the independent living program, she recommends having this available to children under 18.
- Dennis said that there is a repeat note for something that already exists. The county department submits an appeal if the length of stay is going to go over 21 days; the department would make a consideration on if the appeal should



be granted. The appeals are submitted to CDHS who has an appeals panel. Doris asked if this note should be taken off or there should be a reference to current progress. Dennis said that the goal should always be to have a child out of the temporary placement in 21 days or less but if there is a good reason why they cannot be placed elsewhere during that time, there is an appeals process for that. Doris asked if the rewritten note captures his thoughts. Dennis said yes. CDHS has the oversight and since the provider would be licensed, CDHS would have the purview. Doris said this is connected to the note about the network of providers established by CDHS; the network could include temporary placements and then set down placements. Dennis said that CDHS could establish and fund programs. If they are not funded correctly, they won't survive. Doris agreed and this speaks to the earlier point about programs that have ceased to exist.

- Doris asked for additional considerations. There were none.
- Doris asked for additional policy mechanisms around temporary placements. Dennis said including a small census. Lynette said including regional facilities. Dennis agreed and said 21 days or less and funded by CDHS. He also mentioned building out the programs can be done in rule. Lynette agreed and mentioned contracts with service providers who have training in trafficked youth rather than having those people on staff.
- Beth said the continuation of care to make sure there is no disruption of services. Norma asked what that means since there will probably be some disruption in services since a main goal of the temporary placement is to assess a child. Beth said that, for example, a youth receiving substance use treatment could experience harm if they are placed on a waiting list for that treatment after losing their spot due to a run. It can be harmful to not provide services while a child is asked for them. Norma said she understands.
- Lynette said that it can be hard to provide care for a teen on the western slope. She suggests a minimal disruption to care since sometimes it is beyond anyone's control. Doris thanked them.
- Doris asked for any last comments. There were none. Doris thanked the subcommittee and directed them back to the main meeting.

Appendix A:

Norma Agilar-Dave
Anna Cole
Brian Cotter
Dennis Desparrois
Jenelle Goodrich
Beth McNalley
Elizabeth Montoya
Jana Zinzer
Doris Tolliver