



Timothy Montoya Task Force | Meeting 14

February 14, 2024, Meeting Recap

Prevention Subcommittee

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.

Survey Discussion

The Prevention Subcommittee began their discussion after parting the larger task force. The subcommittee began with a discussion to follow-up on the pre-meeting survey, then time was given to members to capture their thoughts and ideas in more detail in the notecatcher.

Trace Faust identified common themes in the notecatcher. They proposed breaking down the discussion into four categories based on Jenna Coleman's notecatcher: youth room, building level, perimeter level, and community level. Trace suggested discussing each category to see what aspects the subcommittee is interested in and what they're not, focusing initially on hardware-related elements before moving on to other aspects.

General Themes:

- A need for different approaches.
- The distinction between children in the child welfare system and those in juvenile justice facilities.
- The need for comprehensive regulations and therapeutic services to ensure the well-being of children.
- Questions regarding the legal aspects of implementing security measures like fences.
- A tiered approach to security, with different levels of measures depending on the facility's risk level.
- The caution that going overboard with security measures isn't the solution.
- A sense that securing facilities is a necessary aspect of the modern world, not unique to youth in care.
- A desire to ensure safety in treatment centers for children.

- The need to strike a balance between completely stopping runaways by making places completely secure or focusing on interventions and relationships with youth to address crisis situations.

Further Study

- A desire to explore the variety of facilities and whether options for different types of facilities already exist or can be further developed.
- Curiosity about semi-secure facilities mentioned by Washington State.
- An interest in gathering data on the current utilization of delayed locks in Colorado.

Delayed Egress

- Concerns that delayed egress doors may not effectively prevent determined individuals from exiting.
- It was noted that these doors have a delay mechanism that triggers an alarm when pushed, preventing immediate opening for a set period, typically around 30 seconds.
- Question emerged about the automatic release of the doors during a fire, emphasizing the importance of ensuring compliance with fire safety codes.
- Overall, there is agreement on the concept of delayed egress doors as a preventive measure, with the understanding that further research and considerations about specific implementation details may be necessary.

Alarms

- Alarms could exist to notify staff discreetly when a child attempts to leave their room.
 - The use of door alarms in foster homes as a safety measure was considered, similar approach for residential facilities.
- The installation of infrared laser alarms in rooms, which alert staff when the boundary is breached, was also discussed.
 - This was understood to be effective and not overly expensive.

Fencing

- Members expressed concern about facilities looking like jails rather than being suitable for children in the child welfare system.
 - The need for a balance between security and individual rights was emphasized.
- The subcommittee wanted to create a distinction between making facilities secure and making them feel like prisons.

Perimeter Security

- It was voiced that securing the perimeter is essential for keeping dangers out as well as preventing children from leaving, and that perimeter security can be achieved without giving the impression of a jail.

Signage, Lighting

- The use of signage and lighting in the community to alert people about runaway situations, potentially preventing accidents involving the runaway youth, was discussed.

- This was seen as potentially beneficial for keeping both the community and the youth safer.
- Another discussed option was utilizing vast land to prevent runaways effectively (as seen in Tennessee).

More Staff Training on intervention and building connections with youth, rather than relying solely on secure facilities

- Brandon Miller discussed the challenges of chasing runaway kids, citing the difficulty of navigating dangerous terrain and respecting private property boundaries. He mentions that the majority of runaway incidents involve high-risk individuals struggling with trauma and treatment. While they try to avoid physical intervention, there are instances where it becomes necessary to prevent dangerous situations. Brandon emphasized the importance of mitigating risks associated with runaway behavior, as even one instance can have severe consequences.

Cameras

- The use of both internal and external cameras, except in bathrooms and bedrooms, was discussed.

Ankle Monitors

- potential deterrent for runaway behavior
- highlighted the importance of having a system in place to enforce consequences for violations

Summary

- There was unanimous interest in exploring fencing as a potential solution, with some members suggesting the use of motion detection lasers for perimeter monitoring and ankle monitoring for high-risk individuals. However, concerns were raised about the effectiveness of ankle monitoring due to the possibility of the devices being removed. Despite this, there was overall support for further exploration of these options, recognizing the need for thorough assessment and trauma-informed approaches in implementation.

The tension between generating ideas and determining how to act on them was raised, highlighting the subcommittee's responsibility to make informed recommendations regarding the adoption of such measures. Trace encouraged further discussion on this aspect without requiring immediate responses.