



Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Children from Running Away from Out-of-Home Placement Task Force Charter

Introduction

In the spring of 2021, the Office of Colorado’s Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO) was contacted by a community member who learned about Timothy Montoya’s death after he ran from an unlocked residential childcare facility and was struck by a car. The community member was concerned that the circumstances leading to his death would not be examined. The CPO reviewed Timothy’s case and ultimately learned that Colorado lacks sufficient infrastructure to deter youth from running away from out-of-home placements and to ensure their well-being when they return.

In the fall of 2021, the Office of Colorado’s Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO) started working with members of the Colorado’s General Assembly, Colorado’s residential treatment provider community and other stakeholders to draft legislation aimed at addressing youth who run away from their out-of-home placement. This work culminated in the creation of House Bill 22-1375, “Concerning Measures To Improve Outcomes For Those Placed in Out-of-Home Placement Facilities.” This bill established the Timothy Montoya Task Force to Prevent Children from Running Away from Out-of-home Placement (Task Force).

This Charter outlines the mission, scope and objectives of the Task Force along with its guidelines, media protocols and task force roles.

Mission

This critical task force is established to analyze the root causes of why children and youth run away from out-of-home placement, develop a consistent, prompt and effective response for when children or youth run away from out-of-home placements and to recovering missing children and to address the safety and well-being of a child or youth upon their return to out-of-home placement.

Charge

Pursuant to HB 22-1375, the Task Force is required to analyze:

- The sufficiency of statewide data that measures the quantitative and qualitative experiences of children who have run away from out-of-home placements;
- The root causes of why children run away from out-of-home placements;
- The differences between runaway behavior and age-appropriate behaviors;
- The behaviors that should lead a person or facility to file a missing person report about a child;
- The relationship between children who have run away from out-of-home placement and the likelihood that the child will become a victim of crime;



- The comprehensiveness and effectiveness of existing state laws and regulations, and placement facility protocols, to respond to a child who runs from an out-of-home placement — including a review of practices related to reporting, locating, evaluating, and treating children who have run away;
- The best practices statewide and nationally for preventing and addressing runaway behavior;
- How entities responsible for the care of children who run away from out-of-home placement can coordinate a thorough and consistent response to runaway behaviors; and
- Resources to improve or facilitate communication and coordinated efforts among out-of-home placement facilities, county departments of human or social services, and law enforcement agencies.

Definitions (see other sections for more detailed descriptions):

- **Members:** The Task Force is composed of 24 individuals from our community. These members include young people who were previously involved with the child welfare system, families whose children have run from out-of-home placements, members of law enforcement and professionals who are responsible for the care of youth in out-of-home placements, including residential child-care providers, child welfare professionals, non-profit organizations, foster parents and others.
- **Facilitation Team:** Each meeting will be supported and facilitated by the Keystone Policy Center (Keystone). Keystone was established in 1975 and is an independent non-profit organization. They have helped public, private and civic-sector leaders solve complex problems and advance good public policy for more than 40 years in Colorado and nationally. Keystone does not advocate for any policy position but rather works to ensure that stakeholders share decision making and work together to find mutually agreeable solutions to complex problems.
- **Co-Chairs:** Co-chairs of the Task Force will serve in an advisory role to Keystone, between meetings to assist with assessing progress and setting agendas for Task Force discussions. They will be available to members to provide feedback and guidance.
- **Work Groups:** Forums composed of members and implementing partners that are focused on coordinating and aligning efforts in executing official and endorsed projects of the task force.

Task Force Outcomes

Per HB 22-1375, the Task Force must submit a first year status report and a final report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services and the Senate Health & Human Services. The first-year status report must be submitted by October 1, 2023, and the final report must be submitted by October 1, 2024. The CPO will also broadly disseminate the report to the public and members of the media.



Both reports will contain a summary of the Task Forces analysis of each directive listed above. The reports will recognize any points of consensus reached by the Task Force, as well as any differing opinions or perspectives. It is important to note that consensus is not required for any discussion to be presented in the report.

Pursuant to its enabling statute, the Task Force may issue recommendations, but it is not required to do so. The Task Force may discuss whether a recommendation is necessary to address any of the directives above.

Keystone is responsible for facilitation and project management, as it relates to the activities of the Task Force. Keystone is responsible for co-designing the process with the CPO office and co-chairs and ensuring the Task Force runs smoothly, including promoting full participation of all Task Force members and -- when possible -- helping the parties resolve their differences and work toward resolving concerns. Working with task force members, Keystone will ensure adequate and coordinated stakeholder engagement that will be essential to the task force meeting its goals. Keystone staff will also be available to consult confidentially with participants during and between meetings.

Ground Rules

- **GOOD FAITH:** Act in good faith in all aspects of group deliberations with the intent to promote joint problem solving, collaboration and collective, common-ground solutions; honor prior agreements including but not limited to the contents of this Charter.
- **OWNERSHIP:** Take ownership in the outcomes and the success of the Task Force.
- **OPENNESS:** Be honest and open in sharing your perspectives; be open to other points of view and to the outcome of discussions.
- **FOCUS:** Maintain focus on the mission and goals of the Task Force as well meeting objectives; honor agendas.
- **LISTENING:** Listen to each speaker rather than preparing your response; no interruptions; refrain from multitasking during meetings.
- **PARTICIPATION:** Participate actively, ensuring that your experience and voice is included in the discussion. Make space for others to speak. Be mindful and respectful of the presence of multiple backgrounds and areas of expertise and avoid the use of acronyms and technical language from your field.
- **RESPECT:** Disagree judiciously and without being disagreeable; do not engage in personal attacks; in all contexts, refrain from behavior that denigrates other participants or is disruptive to the work of the group.
- **PREPAREDNESS AND COMMITMENT:** Prepare for and attend each session; get up to speed if you missed a meeting.
- **FACILITATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION:** Let the facilitators facilitate; allow them to enforce the ground rules and engage them with any concerns.



Media Protocols

Media protocols are provided to ensure that Task Force members utilize consistent messages and processes when communicating about the Task Force and that individual members' interests are protected through the accurate characterization of their association with the Task Force.

- Only use messaging that has been agreed upon by the Task Force and approved by Keystone when characterizing the Task Force on behalf of its members, and when characterizing the roles and commitments of members.
- Be clear to delineate your own opinion or interest from the agreed-upon messaging of the Task Force.
- Do not characterize or attribute the opinions or positions of other members.
- Press releases of/on behalf of the Task Force will be reviewed by the CPO prior to their release. CPO will coordinate the development, review and submission of media releases with the Task Force under a timely process.
- Individual members should not make announcements on behalf of the Task Force. Members planning their own media releases and/or other formal communications that reference or characterize the Task Force – including but not limited to web copy and presentations – should submit the draft materials to Keystone for review at least one week prior to the intended public release date. Keystone will review the materials for consistency with agreed-upon messaging and, where necessary, coordinate with task force members for further review.

If you receive a media inquiry, you are encouraged to coordinate with Keystone prior to providing answers to interview questions. You may also feel free to refer the inquiry directly to Keystone.