

# 2025 Annual Report

Website: <https://www.wyjuvenilejustice.com>

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December 30, 2025

Dear Governor Gordon, Members of the Wyoming State Legislature, and Wyoming Residents:  
On behalf of the State Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice, I present to you our 2025 Annual Report.

As Chair of Wyoming’s State Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice, I have the privilege of working closely with community providers, system partners, families, and—most importantly—young people whose lives are directly shaped by the decisions we make at the state level. Each year, I am reminded that juvenile justice funding is not an abstract budget line; it is the difference between a child receiving help early or entering a cycle that becomes harder and more expensive to break. I have seen firsthand how timely intervention, mental health services, mentoring, and diversion programs can redirect a young person’s path and restore hope to families who feel they are running out of options.

Wyoming’s juvenile justice system works best when it reflects our values: accountability paired with compassion, and public safety strengthened through prevention rather than punishment alone. Continued and stable funding allows local programs to build trust, retain skilled staff, and serve youth in their own communities—particularly in rural areas where alternatives are limited. When resources are uncertain, the impact is immediate and personal for the youth we serve. Sustained investment, on the other hand, gives them a real chance to learn from mistakes, remain connected to school and family, and grow into responsible adults who contribute positively to our state.

I offer this reflection not only as a council chair, but as a Wyoming resident who cares deeply about the future of our communities. I appreciate your continued leadership and respectfully urge ongoing support for juvenile justice funding and services so that Wyoming can remain committed to solutions that are effective, humane, and fiscally responsible.

Respectfully,



Logan Christie, Chair

Wyoming State Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice

**Additional Executive Committee Members**



Erica Wood, Vice Chair	Ruth Ogden	Damon Debernardi	Hattie Calvert
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**Mission**

The mission of the State Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice is to provide vision, training, and support for a model juvenile justice system in Wyoming.

**Goal**

To improve the coordination and effectiveness of statewide and local delinquency prevention, juvenile justice, and youth services programs.

**Vision**

A Wyoming where children and families will receive education, care, and support to become responsible, successful citizens.

**Objectives**

Develop prioritized recommendations concerning juvenile justice, delinquency prevention, and juvenile services to be reviewed annually.

## Council Members

SACJJ Coordinator: Brandon Schimelpfenig/Jacob Edwards

State Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice Members		
Name	District/City	Expiration
Adrienne Freng	2-Laramie	8/31/2026
Alexandra Bammel	2-Laramie (Youth)	8/31/2026
Brittany Cangialosi	2-Larmie (Youth)	8/31/2025
Brittany Thorpe	1- Cheyenne	8/31/2028
Dale Weber	5-Worland	3/1/2026
Damon DeBernardi	9-Pinedale	8/31/2027
Dylan Pierce	8-Glenrock (Youth)	8/31/2026
Erica Wood	6-Gillette (Vice Chair)	8/31/2027
Erika Sanchez	7-Casper	8/31/2026
Felice Acosta	6-Gillette	8/31/2028
Hattie Calvert	9-Riverton	8/31/2027
Jennifer Palser	4-Sheridan	8/31/2027
Kassidy Thomas	2-Laramie (Youth)	8/31/2026
Logan Christie	5-Cody (Chair)	8/31/2027
Melinda Cox	9-Lander	8/31/2027
Nathaniel Williams	1-Cheyenne (Youth)	8/31/2027
Nicole Hauser	2-Laramie	8/31/2027
Ruth Ogden	2-Laramie (Youth)	8/31/2025
Sierra Hernandez	9- Riverton	8/31/2028
Sophia Gomelsky	2-Laramie (Youth)	8/31/2027
Stacy Nelson	7-Casper	8/31/2027

Ex-Officio Members	
Name	Represents
Christina McCabe	WY Attorney General's Office
Maggy Laing	WY Attorney General's Office
Nathan Tedjeske	WY Dept. of Education
Salli Volz	WY Dept. of Health
Jacob Edwards	WY Dept. of Family Services
Curtis Briggs	Governor's Office
Shawn Sitzman	Attorney General's Office: Division of Victim Services
Joe Belcher	WY Guardian Ad Litem's (GAL) Office
Maureen Clifton	WY Interstate Compact for Juveniles - Commissioner
Allen Thompson	WY Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police (WASCOP)
Hon. James "Mike" Causey	WY Judicial Branch - Interstate Compact for Juveniles
Representative McKay Erickson	WY State Legislature - Interstate Compact for Juveniles

## 2025 SACJJ Activities

### January 2025

- Meeting location – Cheyenne, WY
- During the meeting, the Council elected to maintain Logan Christie as Chair and Erica Wood as Vice Chair for 2025, with all Executive and Grants Committee members remaining in their current roles. The Council discussed the development of a new strategic plan to be submitted to the governor by the end of 2025, including a proposed timeline for review, discussion, and drafting, and considered utilizing an external third-party resource through WYSAC to assist in its creation. Updates were shared on legislative matters, collaboration with other councils, and DOE Title 1 Part D funding aimed at supporting educational services for youth in state or local institutions. Members shared takeaways from the recent OJJDP Conference, and received updates from WYSAC on funding, outreach, and projects related to juvenile justice, including labor and sex trafficking initiatives.
- The Council received reports on DFS services, highlighting gaps in resources for older youth, foster care, and intensive care coordination, as well as statistics on juvenile delinquency and CHINS cases. Community participation updates included efforts by Laramie County CJSB, DFS, School Resource Officers, and school district representatives, emphasizing challenges

such as parent engagement, access to mental health resources, and reentry of youth into schools after suspensions. Key highlights included the positive impact of SROs, the importance of prosocial activities in reducing recidivism, and opportunities for networking among support service employees. The Council also approved changes to upcoming meeting dates and confirmed ongoing committee activities, budgets, and legislative monitoring.

## April 2025

- Meeting location – Riverton, WY
- During the meeting, the Council reviewed the strategic plan, with committees tasked to update their goals by September for review and finalize by November. WYSAC offered support to committees in the strategic plan development. Legislative topics and collaborations with other councils were discussed, including a presentation from the Wyoming Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities, highlighting support for SPED students in facilities. The Council also addressed Stacy Becker’s pending resignation and discussed strategies to absorb her duties. Members reviewed impacts of the new Property Tax Bill and potential federal funding cuts on juvenile justice and social service programs, noting significant challenges for Fremont and Albany counties and emphasizing local collaboration and advocacy to maintain services. The June meeting schedule was confirmed, and there were no public comments.
- Ongoing business updates covered council membership, with expiring terms noted and discussion of adding Allen Thompson as an ex-officio member and improving Third Judicial District representation. Curtis Biggs from the Governor’s Office provided updates on behavioral and mental health priorities and funding impacts. DFS updates highlighted the new case management system (WYOSAFE), juvenile justice data collection, protective custody processes, and the need for local detention options. Fremont County participants described service gaps, high juvenile crime, limited detention facilities, and school challenges affecting at-risk youth. Discussions emphasized the importance of detention alternatives, community-based diversion, truancy enforcement, positive peer engagement, and addressing systemic barriers such as housing, childcare, and family court access. Committee reports included updates on executives, grants, data, best practices, outreach, and ad-hoc committees, noting strategic pivots due to changing funding and member transitions.

## June 2025


- Meeting location – Gillette, WY
- The SACJJ meeting focused on reviewing and updating the strategic plan, with discussions about collaborating with WYSAC and other coordinators to draft a new plan. Members

discussed recent trends, including increased public records requests for juvenile justice data and if Sweetwater County had reclassified the use of juvenile detention beds for ICE detainees. Financial oversight was addressed, with proposals for expenditure review and prioritizing mental health services in the next strategic plan. The Council also discussed providing a presentation to the Wyoming Department of Health on juvenile justice trends and funding distribution and explored strategies for Wyoming to return to compliance with OJJDP core protections, highlighting challenges in the current JDRA system and a lack of non-detention options statewide.

- Updates were provided on ongoing business and committee activities, including SACJJ membership, grants, data collection, and legislative efforts. The Department of Family Services (DFS) reported significant improvements in juvenile detention trends, foster parent training, and child welfare initiatives through the Interagency Children’s Collaborative (ICC), leading to reduced detention days and improved youth outcomes. Community participation emphasized collaboration between local agencies, schools, and law enforcement in juvenile services, highlighting successes such as the S.T.A.R. program in Campbell County, decreasing school expulsions, and addressing substance abuse and mental health issues among juveniles. Campbell County has instituted a Failure to Appear (FTA/FTP/FTC) program to decrease youth placed in avoidable detention.

## September 2025

- Meeting location – Worland, WY
- The SACJJ meeting addressed several key updates and actions. Two vacancies on the Executive Committee were filled with the nominations of Damon DeBernardi and Hattie Calvert. Discussions regarding the next strategic plan focused on internal development rather than hiring an external consultant, with the review meeting scheduled for October 10, 2025, in Riverton. Updates on the Non-Participating State grant highlighted Wyoming’s shift from compliance monitoring to technical assistance, including juvenile detention risk assessment improvements and creating a statewide interactive resource map. Members also discussed developing a uniform Single Point of Entry (SPOE) screening tool across counties to improve case management, while various committee updates covered grants, data collection, best practices, outreach, legislative priorities, and statewide training initiatives. Ex-Officio appointments were proposed for WASCOP and the GAL office to strengthen juvenile justice representation.
- Ongoing updates from state agencies and local entities emphasized challenges and improvements in juvenile services. The Department of Family Services reported increased mental health needs, enhancements to foster parent training using VR and NTDC curricula, and progress in therapeutic residential treatment placements. County updates highlighted local efforts to provide pro-social activities, educational support, and community-based



interventions for youth. Budget and grant discussions included Title II funds, funding allocations for Community Juvenile Services Boards, and the impact of juvenile population data on future distributions. The SACJJ also confirmed upcoming meetings, noted logistical changes, and emphasized continued collaboration across committees to finalize strategic plan priorities, address service gaps, and ensure statewide juvenile justice improvements.

## November 2025

- Meeting location - Casper
- The SACJJ meeting covered updates across strategic planning, training, funding, and statewide juvenile justice initiatives. Most committees submitted strategic plan updates, with final review scheduled for December 2025, and a request was made to redesign the plan for improved usability. Training highlights included conferences on child exploitation investigations, alternatives to school suspension, and a free course on transformative probation. Members discussed inconsistencies in Single Point of Entry criteria across counties, potential data collection to address them, and tabled a proposed nonprofit partnership due to misalignment with funding goals. The Council approved its 2026 meeting dates and locations, received budget and grant updates showing full availability of recent Title II funds, and heard that juvenile detention bed usage statewide remains low. Emphasis was placed on shifting from compliance monitoring to technical assistance through tools like the Juvenile Detention Risk Assessment and service mapping.
- Ongoing business focused on coordination with the Governor's office, highlighting mental and behavioral health, substance treatment, crisis beds, and data-driven decision-making as top priorities. DFS updates confirmed full approval of its proposed budget, modestly rising staff turnover, and the implementation of reclassified Lead Worker positions to improve retention and case support. Community participation centered on Natrona County, where presenters described strong cross-agency collaboration, current probation and placement trends, and innovative programs supporting diversion, family engagement, and youth accountability. Stakeholders also raised concerns about juvenile violence among younger youth, court timelines that limit diversion opportunities, social media's role in school conflicts, and statutory limits affecting substance-related interventions. Overall, collaboration was identified as a key strength, alongside shared challenges requiring policy refinement and expanded services.

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## 2025 SACJJ Recommendations

Based on community feedback, statewide visits, and participation, the State Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice has developed the following recommendations:

- **Amended Rule 3.1 of the Wyoming Rules of Criminal Procedure.** Wyoming's 14-day citation filing requirement presents significant challenges in juvenile cases, particularly those requiring review by Single Point of Entry (SPOE) teams. The expedited timeline pressures agencies to file citations quickly, limiting the opportunity for comprehensive assessment and meaningful collaboration among stakeholders. County Attorney's and/SPOE teams, who are responsible for evaluating a youth's needs and risk factors, often lack sufficient time within the 14-day window to collect critical information and coordinate appropriate responses. This time constraint can result in incomplete evaluations that fail to fully consider factors essential to a juvenile's safety, wellbeing, and circumstances. Additionally, the shortened timeframe restricts families, community partners, and service providers from fully understanding the case or engaging effectively, and it creates barriers to identifying and exploring the least restrictive environments for youth. Albeit, it is important to review cases expeditiously, it is consequently, with this short timeline valuable perspectives and information may be missed, undermining the system's ability to deliver appropriate, individualized interventions for at-risk juveniles. Amending Rule 3.1 to exempt juvenile cases would better serve communities and support more informed, pre-adjudicatory decision-making.
- **Mental Health – Lack of resources and professionals in necessary fields.** Feedback from communities across Wyoming indicates a significant rise in mental health concerns and substance use, emphasizing the urgent need to expand the capacity of existing services. These challenges are primarily driven by staffing shortages and limited resources, which constrain providers' ability to respond effectively to increasing demand. As more individuals seek support, the current system is increasingly strained, highlighting the critical need for additional investment in personnel and resources to enhance service delivery and improve outcomes for those facing mental health and substance use challenges.

- **Crisis Services and Stabilization.** Access to crisis stabilization services and or even access to a crisis location/bed remains a significant challenge for youth, particularly in Wyoming’s rural communities. While crisis beds may exist statewide, geographic distance often creates substantial barriers to timely care. In some cases, juveniles in crisis must travel several hours—up to 3.5 hours—to access appropriate services. This issue reflects not a shortage of beds in some communities, and with the combination of workforce staff shortages, limited accessibility due to the state’s vast rural landscape is a challenge.
- **Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) Availability and Local Access.** Juvenile Detention Centers (JDC) Availability and local control of the (JDCs) can restrict access for communities that do not have a JDC within their jurisdiction and denies youth who may have reached the community safety threshold of being placed in detention without this alternative. This structure limits placement options for youth and creates inconsistencies in access to both non-secure beds and JDC facilities across the state. As a result, some communities face challenges securing appropriate placements, underscoring the need to evaluate how local control impacts equitable access to juvenile justice resources statewide.
- **Workforce shortages.** Wyoming is currently facing significant workforce shortages compounded by socioeconomic issues, particularly the lack of affordable housing. These challenges not only hinder workforce retention but also create barriers for individuals seeking employment and stability in the region. To address these interconnected issues, it is essential to continue supporting the grants office in its efforts to identify and secure new and additional funding sources. By leveraging grants and other financial opportunities, stakeholders can implement innovative solutions aimed at improving housing availability, attracting a skilled workforce, and ultimately fostering economic growth and community resilience across the state.
- **Unified Data Collection.** Data collection systems are implemented statewide, it is critical to both migrate legacy data from previous platforms and establish a consistent process for collecting new data across all jurisdictions. Access to current, reliable data will allow policymakers and practitioners to better identify youth needs, assess program effectiveness, and tailor interventions accordingly. A data-driven framework supports informed, evidence-based decision-making, ultimately improving outcomes for youth and strengthening the juvenile justice system.

- **Continued funding for Community Juvenile Services Boards** remains essential. Although current funding levels have been stable, there is a growing need to explore opportunities for increased financial support. As more communities engage in these important programs, demand for services and associated participation costs continue to rise. Additional funding would allow existing boards to strengthen and expand their services while also supporting new communities in developing effective justice initiatives. Sustained and enhanced investment is critical to preserving collaborative efforts, benefiting communities, and advancing a more equitable juvenile justice system.
- **Juvenile Detention Risk Assessment (JDRA).** It is necessary to continue advancing a unified juvenile justice approach that emphasizes coordinated confidentiality practices and consistent data sharing. This includes a comprehensive review of the current JDRA to ensure it aligns with a shared objective and functions as a standardized, unbiased data collection tool across the system.
- **Wyoming continues to operate as a non-participating state with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).** The Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center (WYSAC) and the State Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice (SACJJ) collaborate to distribute juvenile-related funding to communities across the state. Ongoing support for the Grants Office and partner entities such as WYSAC is essential to identify and pursue additional funding opportunities that benefit Wyoming communities. This effort should include continued collaboration with technical assistance providers to effectively access and manage non-participating state grant resources
- **Maintain a sustained focus on juvenile issues.** Juvenile justice should continue to be a standing topic for both the Joint Judiciary Committee, with reform efforts remaining a statewide priority. Investing in effective juvenile justice systems protects the well-being of youth and promotes safer communities by addressing the underlying causes of delinquent behavior. In addition, establishing a uniform suspension and expulsion framework for Wyoming school districts is essential to ensure consistent and equitable disciplinary practices statewide. Standardization would help safeguard students' rights, reduce disparities in disciplinary outcomes, and provide clear, consistent guidance for educators.
- **Trends in Juvenile Justice and AI.** Teens face growing risks from increased AI use across mental health, safety, and development, as chatbots often present themselves as empathetic support while lacking the judgment and



capacity of humans. Some teens have turned to AI for emotional help, where they may encounter harmful advice, validation of negative thought patterns, or form unhealthy emotional attachments that replace real relationships and increase vulnerability to manipulation. Safety and privacy concerns are also significant, including data breaches, exposure to sexual or abusive content, and the potential for AI to encourage harmful behaviors. Developmentally, over-reliance on AI can limit opportunities to build real-world social skills, reduce sleep and physical activity, and reinforce existing biases or misinformation through algorithmic feedback loops. Because teens' brains are still developing and they are drawn to AI's constant, nonjudgmental availability, experts warn these risks can worsen anxiety and depression, prompting calls for stronger regulation, improved digital literacy, and active parental involvement.