

WYOMING STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

Meeting Minutes

January 15-16, 2026: Cheyenne, WY

Agenda:

Thursday, January 15, 2026

- Call to Order
- Approval of Minutes
- New Business
- Ongoing Business
- Committee Reports
- Tour of Laramie County Juvenile Services Center

Friday, January 16, 2026

- DFS Update/Report
- Community Participation
- Announcements
- County Highlights
- Adjournment

Present:

Adrienne Freng
Brittany Cangialosi
Damon DeBernardi
Erica Wood
Felice Acosta
Hattie Calvert
Jennifer Palser
Kassidy Thomas
Logan Christie
Nathaniel Williams
Nicole Hauser
Ruth Ogden
Sierra Hernandez
Stacy Nelson

Ex-Officio Present:

Christina McCabe
H. James Causey
Shawn Sitzman
Jacob Edwards
Maggy Laing
Allen Thompson
Joe Belcher

Via Proxy:

Alexandra Bammel
Brittany Thorpe

Others Present:

Brandon Schimelpfenig (DFS)
Wendy Leach (WYSAC-NPS)
Laurel Wimbish (WYSAC)
Kiersti Willms (DFS)
Amanda Aldridge (DFS)
Korin Schmidt (DFS)
Kristie Gordy (DFS)
Casi Crites (Laramie County CJSJPB)
Taft Love (Wyoming State Legislature)
Joel Hickerson (Cheyenne Police Dept.)
Ronn Jeffrey

Absent:

Dale Weber
Dylan Pierce
Erika Sanchez
Melinda Cox
Sophia Gomelsky

Call to Order

I. Call to Order: Thursday, January 15, 2026 at 1:00p.

- a) Roll Call/Introductions
- b) Declaration of Quorum; a quorum was established with 16 members present.

II. Approval of Minutes:

November 20-21, 2025 meeting held in Casper, WY; Nicole Hauser motioned to approve the draft minutes; Stacy Nelson seconded the motion; all in favor; motion carried.

III. New Business:

a) 2026 SACJJ Elections

The SACJJ voted to retain Logan Christie and Erica Wood as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. Following a blind ballot, Damon DeBernardi, Hattie Calvert and Ruth Ogden were elected as the three at-large members of the Executive committee.

The election was held for Grants committee members and Logan Christie, Adrienne Freng, Damon DeBernardi, Melinda Cox, Nicole Hauser, and Stacy Nelson were nominated for the committee. Erica Wood motioned to approve the ballot list; Damon DeBernardi seconded the motion; all in favor; the ballot list was approved, and the listed members were elected to the Grants committee.

b) Open Topic Discussion from Members

Ruth Ogden discussed a recent local incident where youth use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to create and distribute vulgar “deepfakes” of a teacher. The state has anti-grooming laws, but it was noted there are no clear mechanisms to address peer-to-peer AI exploitation, making this a critical area for future policy exploitation.

Members expressed frustration that status offenders (e.g., truants) are violating probation orders, resulting in contempt of court charges, and being elevated to delinquency status. This results in lengthy detention stays for minor behaviors, which some members felt bypasses OJJDP’s core protections and best practices.

c) Public Comment Period

No topics brought forward from the public.

d) Governing Statute Review

No updates regarding the SACJJ’s governing statute; 14-10-101.

e) Public Defender’s Office: Ex-Officio Discussion

Damon brought forth the topic and that it would behoove the SACJJ to add an ex-officio member from the Public Defender’s Office, noting that it would be similar to the inclusion of the Guardian ad Litem (GAL) program. The main reasoning being that, other than prosecutors and local Department of Family Services, public defenders are the juvenile justice professionals who appear in juvenile court the most. During the discussion, it was asked if there are any limits on creating ex-officio spots. It was clarified that the SACJJ can create as many ex-officio positions as they want, if they can cover the members’ travel expenses utilizing their grant funding. Overall, the SACJJ strongly supported the proposal, stating that having representation from both the GAL program and Public Defender’s Office is essential.

f) Presentation Metrics/Requests

During the meeting, Logan Christie introduced the topic of presentation metrics to improve how the SACJJ gathers and catalogs data from presenters during the Community Participation section of the agenda, which directly aligns with their strategic plan for better information sharing. Instead of having presenters provide generic updates, Logan proposed formalizing a standardized set of questions and metrics to send to community participants beforehand. This proactive approach would allow the SACJJ to consistently track data across the state and foster more pointed, productive conversations during the meetings.

The executive committee brainstormed several key metrics to request, including:

- The community's Single Point of Entry (SPOE) process.
- The availability, definitions, and usage of local diversion programs and risk assessments.
- Availability and barriers regarding Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) beds and crisis beds.
- The number of local Department of Family Services (DFS) cases.
- School protocols and numbers regarding expulsions and suspensions.

Jacob Edwards emphasized that identifying the specific services currently active in each community should be the most important baseline metric. Once the SACJJ understands what programs are being utilized, they can compare those services against outcome data, such as how many kids are going to court or being detained. Furthermore, the SACJJ plans to use these metrics to create a comparative feedback loop for the counties. By compiling this data, the SACJJ can share a "report card" back with the presenters, allowing isolated communities to see how their statistics, challenges, and practices compare to other jurisdictions with similar demographics. It was agreed that the Data Committee will take the lead on drafting this formalized list of metrics. WYSAC (the Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center) also volunteered to join the Data Committee to help refine the questions, ensuring they also capture community weaknesses, barriers, and successful practices.

IV. On-Going Business – Updates From:

a) Governor’s Meeting and Recommendation

Logan reported that the Executive committee will be meeting with the Governor tomorrow (1/16) and prepared for a 30-minute time slot. Logan noted that they will be outlining key talking points including mental health services for juveniles, juvenile detention bed access, amending Rule 3.1, and the emerging threat of AI.

b) Governor’s Office – Curtis Biggs

Curtis was not available for an update.

c) Council Membership – Brandon Schimelpfenig

Brandon noted that four (4) new applicants were approved by the Governor; Brittany Thorpe, Felice Acosta and Sierra Hernandez as well as youth member Ally Spiess. The SACJJ currently meets all federal OJJDP membership compliance metrics. Brandon noted expiring terms for specific members listing Adrienne Freng, Alexandra Bammel, Dale Weber, Dylan Pierce, Erika Sanchez, and Cassidy Thomas all expiring in 2026. Brittany Cangialosi stated she has reapplied and learned she has been reappointed. There was a brief discussion to continue to seek members to maintain the government vs. non-government member ratios.

d) CJSB Update – Brandon Schimelpfenig

Brandon noted that the Community Juvenile Services Board (CJSB) Request for Applications (RFA) was sent out to the CJSBs on January 5, 2026, with responses due back to him on or before March 16, 2026. He noted funds historically have been used to for personnel to run local diversion and mentoring programs in the applicant areas. He noted he also sent the RFA out to CJSB non-participating counties as well. These are areas where there is not currently a CJSB set up and he noted that he received communication responses back from a few counties indicating minor interest. CJSB Secretary of State Rule revision meetings have been taking place as well approximately every two weeks with juvenile justice stakeholders.

e) Budget Report/Grant Update – Brandon Schimelpfenig

Brandon stated that Title II 2022 has been fully expended. Title II 2023 has \$27,414.00 remaining. Title II 2024 also has the full \$30,000.00 remaining. The 2025 solicitation is expected to be released soon by OJJDP.

f) Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ) – Brandon Schimelpfenig

Brandon provided an ICJ update for the SACJJ noting that there has been an upward trend in out-of-state runaways apprehended in Wyoming who are victims of sex trafficking, including a recent victim from the Midwest who was returned home safely and has been provided aftercare services through local human services as well as the National Center for Missing and Endangered Children (NCMEC). Brooke with WYSAC also noted that she thinks there might be some underreporting of trafficked juveniles as some juveniles fall through the cracks and don't get reported so the final number of juveniles trafficked could be higher. Brandon also explained the process in details to the SACJJ when cases are ICJ-involved.

g) WYSAC – Laurel Wimbish/Brooke Benson

Laurel noted that WYSAC is executing four OJJDP grants and conducting delinquency prevention focus groups in Casper and will be repeating that work in Fremont County with the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone tribes and Fremont county government. Laurel Wimbish noted that Casper will be hosting a Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) mapping event in February, led by the Natrona Collective Health Trust, to map how youth interact with community services, courts, and corrections in the Natrona County area.

- h) NPS Presentation – Wendy Leach/Steve Jett
Wendy noted that her and Steve have conducted multiple site visits to improve JJDPa compliance, site and sound separation and jail removal policies. She also noted that they will continue their work on improving the Wyoming Juvenile Detention Risk Assessment (JDRA) to make it more effective in determining whether a juvenile should be securely detained, released or placed in a detention alternative. She noted that they are also working with Stacy Nelson and Erica Wood on compiling a statewide inventory of juvenile programs and services and creating an interactive map for counties.

Wendy also wanted to highlight that despite the state having roughly 100 juvenile detention beds contained within the four (4) juvenile detention centers (JDC), local facilities frequently restrict access to out-of-county youth. Allen Thompson clarified that facilities refuse out-of-county youth not necessarily due to cost, but because those youth can disrupt facility safety and strain local manpower.

- i) Ex-Officio Members
Christina McCabe highlighted the need for non-JDC communities to be able to utilize JDC beds and Brooke Benson echoed the sentiments but also wanted to highlight trends that she is seeing within the JDCs that there has been a rise in juveniles needing acute mental health treatment but since they are so violent, no mental health treatment facility or hospital will agree to take them. Telehealth was suggested as an available option for mental health access in these facilities.

V. Committee Reports

- a) Executive Committee – Logan Christie
Logan reported that the Executive Committee met during the interim to review strategic plan updates.

The Executive Committee provided a recap of their morning meeting with Governor Gordon on January 16, 2026. The Governor's office reported that the meeting was highly successful, praising the SACJJ for providing ultra-localized examples of juvenile issues while effectively tracking global issues, such as the emerging threat of AI exploitation among minors.

- b) Grants Committee – Logan Christie
Logan noted that the committee did not meet.
- c) Data Committee – Adrienne Freng
Adrienne stated she would stay on as Chair of the committee. Jacob Edwards noted he is working on the report cards for communities with placement data, detention data, etc.
- d) Best Practices Committee – Stacy Nelson

Stacy noted she would stay on as Chair of the committee.

- e) Outreach/Youth Committee – Erica Wood, Brittany Cangialosi
Erica and Brittany voiced their desire to stay on as Co-Chairs of the committee. Ruth Ogden voiced her desire to be removed from the committee. Erica noted the committee met three times in the interim.
- f) Legislative Committee – Nicole Hauser
Nicole noted she would continue to serve as Chair of the committee. Felice Acosta voiced her desire to join the committee.
- g) Ad-Hoc Committee – Brittany Cangialosi
Brittany noted she would stay on as Chair of the committee.

Friday, January 16, 2026

VI. DFS Update

Korin Schmidt, Director of Department of Family Services, and Kristie Gordy, Senior Administrator for the Social Services Division for the Department of Family Services, were present to provide a comprehensive overview of administrative update for DFS.

Korin noted that federal overhaul eliminated Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) education funding and introduced strict work requirements (80 hours a month or structured volunteer work) for able bodied adults under the age of 64 without dependents, homeless individuals, veterans, and youth aging out of foster care. Additionally, the state’s administrative cost-share for SNAP is increasing from 50% to 75% starting October 2026, leading to a \$5.8 million state general fund request from the Wyoming Legislature. Wyoming’s payment error rate remains successfully under 4%, keeping the state safe from heavy federal financial penalties that impact many other states with higher error rates.

The state submitted a waiver requesting the removal of carbonated sugary beverages and energy drinks from SNAP eligibility, with a potential future phase to remove candy from that list as well. In tandem, the Wyoming Legislature is proposing to eliminate “accessory foods” (such as flour, sugar, oil, salt, and condiments) from SNAP eligibility. DFS warned that this restriction is tied to vendor eligibility and could force rural convenience stores and tribal reservation vendors to opt out of accepting SNAP entirely.

The Wyoming Legislature approved a \$1 million request for Independent Living (IL) services, expanding crucial funding to youth at the Wyoming Boys and Wyoming Girls Schools who do not typically qualify for federal dollars. They also approved \$1.5 million for Adult Protective Services (APS), securing guardianship and emergency services for vulnerable 19–21-year-olds transitioning out of DFS care.

Conversely, the Wyoming Legislature denied a Summer EBT program that would have provided \$120 per child to 32,000 food-insecure children. Also, DFS' Information Technology (IT) request to maintain legacy systems, including the Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) was denied, risking case management and vendor payment tracking.

VII. Community Participation

a) Laramie County DFS

Kiersti Willms, and Amanda Aldridge, juvenile probation supervisors with Laramie County DFS, were present via Zoom to discuss trends in the local DFS office regarding juvenile justice. They reported the office received 172 petitions in 2025 (122 delinquent cases, 44 CHINS cases). Out of these, 67 cases involved youth placed in juvenile detention or shelter care, and 20 cases involved runaways. They noted the county is experiencing a critical lack of in-state Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTF), frequently sending extreme cases out-of-state to states like Arkansas, Mississippi, and Georgia. Providers often claim youth have reached "maximum benefit" without progress, leaving local caseworkers to find alternative placements with little advance notice. Laramie County has also seen a rising trend in autistic youth running away, prompting a recommendation to utilize a program called "Angel Sense" which uses tracking monitors to keep these youth safely out of the court system.

b) Laramie County CJSJPB

Casi Crites, administrator for the Laramie County Community Juvenile Services Joint Powers Board (LCCJSJPB), was present to discuss trends the local juvenile services joint powers board is seeing across their member agencies. She noted Laramie County operates an 8-bed crisis center currently run by the Laramie County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) however the LCSO has expressed its desire to stop running the facility due to conflicting enforcement priorities. DFS and local stakeholders are scheduling meetings with county commissioners to find alternative community operators.

c) Laramie County School Resource Officer (SRO)

Joel Hickerson, lieutenant with the Cheyenne Police Department and supervisor to the Cheyenne School Resource Officers, reported a 3% drop in school enrollment; down 400 students to 12, 826, potentially due to lack of reporting requirements under the new Home School Freedom Act. Conversely, daily attendance rose to nearly 94%. The local school district adopted a strict zero-tolerance policy for personal technology, causing a massive spike in reported disciplinary incidents; technology violations rose from 152 in 2024 to 1057 in 2025, an increase of 595%. There has also been a dramatic decrease in high-risk behaviors in schools: fighting dropped 34%, weapons violations dropped 52%, and drug use violations dropped almost 40%. The Laramie County JDC count more than doubled from 89 youth in 2020 to 195 youth in FY 2024. Recently, the JDC has averaged up to 25 youth at a time due to a localized spike in violent crimes, including homicides, drive-by shootings, and terroristic threats targeting

schools. Demographically, the detained youth (65% White, 21% Hispanic, 11% Black) roughly align with the county's overall makeup.

d) Ronn Jeffrey

Former Municipal Court Judge Ronn Jeffrey presented on the history of diversion programs, specifically "Youth Alternatives," which began in 1971. He emphasized that juveniles cannot be treated as "mini adults," noting that adult concepts of freedom and long-term punishment often do not resonate with teenage brain development. Judge Jeffrey shared his "3 M's" approach for handling municipal offenses: Mistake (requires education instead of punishment), Mischievous (requires accountability but recognizing a lack of malice), and Malicious (requires direct punishment). He distributed an "ordinance questionnaire" to the members, asking them to provide feedback on municipal ordinances regarding juvenile diversion, police discretion, and the detention of status offenders with responses being noted as individual responses and not necessarily responses from the SACJJ as a whole.

VIII. County Highlights

The SACJJ briefly highlighted key areas from the meeting.

- Lack of psychiatric placements in Laramie County.
- School attendance is at 94%.

IX. Announcements

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 16-17, 2026, in Powell, WY.

X. Adjournment

Damon DeBernardi motioned to adjourn the meeting; Nicole Hauser seconded the motion; all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.