

WYOMING STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

Meeting Minutes

June 18-19, 2026: Rawlins, WY

Agenda:

Thursday, June 18, 2026

- Call to Order
- Approval of Minutes
- New Business
- Ongoing Business
- Committee Reports

Friday, June 19, 2026

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

Present:

Aaron Whitten
Adrienne Freng
Brittany Cangialosi
Brittany Thorpe
D'Andrea Chichester
Erica Wood
Erika Sanchez
Felice Acosta
Nathaniel Williams
Nicole Hauser
Sierra Hernandez

Ex-Officio Present:

Theresa Cain
Maggy Laing
Curtis Biggs
Shawn Sitzman
Jacob Edwards
Kelly Addington
Allen Thompson
Joe Belcher

Via Proxy:

Hattie Calvert
Logan Christie
Ruth Ogden
Stacy Nelson

Others Present:

Brandon Schimelpfenig (DFS)
Wendy Leach (WYSAC-NPS)
Steve Jett (WYSAC-NPS)
Laurel Wimbish (WYSAC)
Brooke Benson (WYSAC)
Amber Nation (DVR)
Megan Sheets (DFS)
Kristie Gordy (DFS)
Sarah Harkins (Carbon
County Attorney's Office)
Ann Clement (WY 211)
Mary Wood (Carbon County
Diversion)

Absent:

Alexandra Bammel
Ally Spiess
Dale Weber
Damon DeBernardi
Dylan Pierce
Jennifer Palser
Kassidy Thomas
Melinda Cox
Sophia Gomelsky
Tyler Sullivan

Call to Order

I. Call to Order: Thursday, June 18, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.

- a) Roll Call/Introductions
- b) Declaration of Quorum; a quorum was established with 15 members present.

II. Approval of Minutes:

April 16-17, 2026 meeting held in Powell, WY. Approval of the minutes was tabled until the next meeting in September 2026.

III. New Business:

- a) Open Topic Discussion from Members
No topics brought forth by members.

b) Public Comment Period

No topics brought forward from the public.

c) Discussion Regarding Legislative Changes

The SACJJ discussed a proposed legislative amendment to the 14-day rule, which currently requires law enforcement citations to be presented to courts within a brief 14-day window. The proposed amendment would **extend this timeframe to 45 days**, giving counties adequate time to gather information and preventing unnecessary ticket dismissals.

The SACJJ Executive committee shared that they recently met with the Department of Family Services (DFS) to explore opportunities for a proposed transition of SACJJ coordinator from Brandon Schimelpfenig with DFS to the SACJJ. This would include having the SACJJ draft Title II application documents (narrative, membership roster, and the Council's budget). Brandon also noted the transition of community outreach communications when quarterly meetings occur. This would include the SACJJ reaching out to the local DFS office, County Attorney's office, local school district, and the local Community Juvenile Services Board (CJSB) if applicable. Brandon clarified that under the new arrangement, he would still handle drafting of the meeting minutes, financial reimbursements to members for their official travels, membership requirement tracking, and distribution of prior meeting minutes and proposed meeting agendas.

Council members raised concerns regarding this proposal. Several members emphasized that the SACJJ is a volunteer, Governor-appointed board. More critically, members raised fiscal concerns as DFS is the official grantee and holds the financial liability for the federal funding, members warned that transferring federal grant management duties to a volunteer council is highly problematic. As a result, **no final decisions were made**. The Executive Committee plans to hold an independent meeting to carefully review the request and possible compromises. In the meantime, Brandon will reach out to the Governor's office to research how other governor-appointed boards operate to determine if this type of fiduciary transition is standard practice.

IV. On-Going Business – Updates From:

a) Governor's Meeting and Recommendation

Erica noted this was a reiteration of the Executive Committee meeting in January 2026 in Cheyenne and noted the Governor encouraged the SACJJ to continue the great work that is being done. Members were asked to keep potential future recommendations for the Governor when the 2026 Annual Report is being drafted.

b) Governor's Office

Curtis Biggs joined the meeting and provided several key updates and insights. He started by noting that he attended the Volunteers of America (VOA) Camp POSTCARD on behalf of the Governor and praised the program. He highlighted

that the camp gives youth positive exposure to law enforcement in a safe, positive environment while building leadership, teamwork, and civic engagement. He suggested that this successful model could potentially be replicated in other local communities. He also attended the Cathedral Home's "Place at the Table" brunch in Laramie, commending the facility's impact and the strength of the Council's network across the state. He proactively addressed recent news articles regarding ongoing litigation at the Wyoming Boys' School. While he could not discuss details due to the active legal situation, he assured the Council that the Governor and DFS are fully aware and take the health and safety of the state's youth very seriously. He recommended that the Council begin planning their annual meeting with the Governor earlier this year—potentially starting in late summer—to ensure it is on the calendar before the end of the year. He also announced that the Wyoming Department of Health, in conjunction with the Governor's office, is launching a \$50 million project to support rural healthcare. This funding could potentially exceed \$1 billion over five years depending on performance. He encouraged Council members and their community partners to review the program and apply when the Requests for Proposals (RFPs) open.

c) Council Membership

Brandon introduced several new members; Aaron Whitten, D'Andrea Chichester, and Tyler Sullivan and confirmed the SACJJ is currently meeting its youth representation requirement (at least one-fifth) and its government employee limit (under 50%).

d) CJSB Update

Brandon reported that the upcoming biennium contracts for the CJSBs are currently undergoing quality control checks and administrative approvals before final execution. He explained that grant funding allocations were determined by averaging application scores, and while many CJSBs received higher amounts than in the past, a few counties did not apply this cycle. He also announced plans to implement quarterly virtual meetings for all CJSB programs to better collaborate on best practices and improve the tracking of specific contract goals. It was shared that one county determined at a later time the communication had been routed to their spam email folder in error. The issue was remedied with the individual county.

e) Budget Report/Grant Update

Brandon stated that Title II 2023 has \$12,164.80 remaining. Title II 2024 also has the full \$30,000.00 remaining. The 2025 application was submitted by Brandon prior to the May 4, 2026 deadline. Brandon also noted that the Council overspent its biennial state budgetary authority to fund recent meetings and travel. DFS had to request an extension of budgetary authority from the state budget office to cover these expenses.

f) Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ)

Brandon updated the SACJJ on an upcoming national ICJ conference in Maine that he and Wyoming ICJ Commissioner Maureen Clifton will be attending.

g) WYSAC – Laurel Wimbish/Brooke Benson

Laurel noted that the FY25 Non-Participating State (NPS) Grant application was submitted to OJJDP on behalf of WYSAC. She also noted that they received positive feedback during a recent monitoring visit from OJJDP. Laurel noted that after polling applicants for the FY25 NPS Grant, WYSAC decided to divide the grant's subawards equally among the applicants. For the first year of the grant, the primary focus will be on providing education for state decision-makers, such as Wyoming Legislators and juvenile justice stakeholder administrators.

Because of delays in getting the initial subawards distributed, Laurel announced that they have requested a one-year extension for the FY22/23 NPS grants. She noted this will give communities adequate time to spend their remaining funding and fully implement their proposed programs. For the FY25 NPS grant, WYSAC also partnered with Natrona County, Fremont County, and the tribal districts to conduct focus groups with youth, caregivers, and service providers to evaluate how the juvenile justice system is working in their areas. Early feedback from these groups indicated a critical need for navigators to help guide youth and their caregivers through the complex court process and help them better understand their rights.

h) NPS Presentation – Wendy Leach/Steve Jett

Wendy reported that she recently attended the Wyoming Joint Symposium for Children and Youth in Casper, WY and gave a presentation focusing on how positive adult connections and targeted intervention methods can lead to better outcomes for justice-involved youth. They also highlighted a significant confidentiality issue, noting that sensitive juvenile cases—including mental health and family details—are frequently discussed in open adult district, circuit, and municipal courts. To help address this, they are assisting former Judge Ron Jeffrey with drafting city ordinances starting in Cheyenne to ensure juvenile matters are called separately.

Steve and Wendy also announced that they have drafted a new, simplified Juvenile Detention Risk Assessment (JDRA). They are currently gathering feedback from local jurisdictions and working with the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police (WASCOP) Executive Director Allen Thompson to gain final approval from state sheriffs. This new assessment is designed to function as a true risk assessment and will yield more accurate data regarding youth access to juvenile detention centers. They are also continuing to compile a statewide inventory of juvenile programs, placements, and services. The deadline for counties to submit their information was extended to **July 15**, and this data will eventually feed into the Council's planned interactive services website map.

i) Ex-Officio Members

Jacob Edwards with DFS provided several key updates regarding the Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS). He highlighted that the state successfully utilized JJIS data to collaborate with the National Center for Juvenile Justice on their annual archive project, marking the state's first major research project of this kind. Jacob also announced that the JJIS user rollout is underway, having granted system access to their first non-DFS user in Campbell County, and they are progressively onboarding internal DFS probation workers. Additionally, Jacob shared that the state has begun responding to individual records requests from individuals seeking to view their own files in the system. Looking ahead, he noted ongoing efforts to merge DFS juvenile probation data with JJIS data in the state's child welfare and adult protection case management system, WYOSAFE, and suggested that diversion data from the state's Reroute system could potentially be included in the national archive project next year.

V. Committee Reports

a) Executive Committee – Logan Christie

Logan was not available for an update however Erica noted that the committee met and they discussed multiple priority items. She noted they discussed updates to the Council's website. The committee debated whether managing website updates should be the direct responsibility of the Executive Committee or if it should fall under the Outreach Committee, as outlined in their strategic plan. They are currently asking members to bring forward ideas and suggestions for what needs to be updated on the site. Erica also noted that the committee had discussed ongoing legislative matters.

b) Grants Committee – Logan Christie

No updates provided by committee members.

c) Data Committee – Adrienne Freng

Adrienne reported that the committee had followed through on a previous task to develop a standardized list of specific data points to ask local stakeholders during the council's community visits. The committee's goal is to fill out a spreadsheet for the counties the council visits in-person and to distribute a survey of the counties they do not visit, which will ensure consistent information is gathered across the state. The specific data questions formulated by the committee cover a wide range of local issues, including:

- Available juvenile programs and services, their funding sources, and their overall capacity, strengths, and weaknesses.
- The number of juveniles participating in these programs and any identified trends regarding juvenile offenses.
- How the community operates its Single Point of Entry process and handles status offenses or technical violations.
- Local approaches to juvenile detention, demographic disparities, and school disciplinary actions like suspensions, expulsions, and alternative educational opportunities.

The committee has translated these narrative questions into a tangible spreadsheet format and plans to review the document together at their next meeting.

d) Best Practices Committee – Stacy Nelson

Aaron Whitten noted he would like to join the Best Practices committee. Stacy was not present to provide an update however Brittany Cangialosi provided an update in her absence. Brittany reported she has finished developing a Qualtrics survey designed to identify and gather information on the various juvenile programs and services available across all Wyoming counties. Due to scheduling, the deadline for counties to submit their survey responses was extended from June to July. The committee plans to hold their next meeting in August to review the collected data. The ultimate goal of gathering this survey data is to build a statewide interactive map. This tool will help connect neighboring jurisdictions by displaying available local resources, such as group homes, detention centers, and specific programming (like tobacco diversion classes). The committee is also actively discussing how to define "best practices" in the state. They recognize that some counties achieve positive youth outcomes using unconventional or unorthodox methods, and they hope to use the committee's work to share these creative, successful approaches across communities to improve statewide networking.

e) Outreach/Youth Committee – Erica Wood, Brittany Cangialosi

Brittany Cangialosi noted that the committee recently distributed a retention survey which she said had already received about seven (7) responses containing valuable feedback. She also noted that they are actively updating their outreach repository spreadsheet. The committee is working on updating the criteria for the Neal Madson Excellence in Juvenile Justice Award, which recognizes communities that are doing exceptional work in the juvenile justice field. The committee is also continuing to develop a regular newsletter to distribute to Council members and they are currently assigning specific individuals within the committee to specific areas of the project to keep positive momentum.

f) Legislative Committee – Nicole Hauser

Nicole highlighted several topics currently being reviewed by interim legislative committees, with a primary focus on a highly debated school discipline bill: **2026 HB 65**. The bill intends to protect teachers by giving them the sole authority to remove a student from their classroom and determine when that student is allowed to return. However, school administrators testified that this circumvents established multi-layered disciplinary processes—such as school board reviews for expulsions—and argued that discipline should be managed at the local district level rather than through state legislation. Child advocates also raised alarms over the bill's vague language, which could potentially allow any staff member to physically remove a student. Aside from school discipline, the Legislative Education committee is also exploring how to manage artificial intelligence and cell phone usage within schools. Lastly, the committee noted that the Labor,

Health, and Social Services committee is investigating statewide mental health professional vacancies. Part of this discussion involves addressing the delays caused by the mental health professional licensing board, which creates unnecessary hurdles for individuals wanting to provide counseling services to youth.

g) Ad-Hoc Committee – Brittany Cangialosi

Erica Wood shared that she wanted elaborate on the committee's core objectives, explaining that because Wyoming is so rural, the Ad-Hoc Committee is focused on developing and organizing a state-level training program. The committee has already begun outlining specific subject and topic areas and is currently working on identifying key stakeholders and prospective members to invite. Moving forward, the committee will focus on identifying high-quality presenters to benefit local communities, which could potentially include offering educational training on how communities can better formulate their local grant applications.

Friday, June 19, 2026

VI. DFS Update

Kristie Gordy, Senior Administrator for the Social Services Division with DFS, announced the official rollout of the Sun Bucks program, which was successfully secured after the legislative session. The program provides \$120 per eligible child on an EBT card to cover school meals during the summer months. She explained that the cards function similarly to SNAP benefits, carrying the same food purchasing restrictions, and that some children will be automatically certified if they already participate in free or reduced school lunch programs. Ms. Gordy provided an update on legislative developments regarding guardianships, noting that DFS recently received exception funding to support vulnerable adult services and guardianships.

Additionally, a new guardianship task force has been established—comprising DFS, the Department of Health, and private attorneys—to review existing guardianship statutes and recommend potential legislative changes. She highlighted that this task force is specifically focused on vulnerable adults, a population that importantly includes older youth aged 19 to 21. To emphasize DFS's renewed focus on juvenile justice, Gordy shared current statewide data. She reported that there are currently 537 active juvenile justice cases statewide (including tribal districts), which accounts for approximately 27% of the department's total caseload. Ms. Gordy provided a breakdown of these cases, revealing that 73% are delinquency cases, 17% are CHINS (Children in Need of Supervision), and only 10% fall under diversion or prevention categories. She also noted that 206 of these youth are currently in placements, primarily detention centers or congregate care facilities like group homes and residential treatment centers. Sharing this data sparked a significant discussion among the Council members regarding the low percentage of diversion cases. Gordy emphasized the need to shift the system's focus from delinquency placements to front-end diversion to keep youth out of the formal justice system whenever possible.

This led to a collaborative conversation about the ongoing challenges of securing buy-in from local county attorneys for diversion programs and the difficulty of accurately tracking successful, informal pre-diversion data across the state.

VII. Community Participation

a) Carbon County DFS

Megan Sheets, Carbon County DFS Supervisor, was present to discuss trends the local office is seeing regarding juvenile justice and services in the area. She noted that because the county is situated along Interstate 80, the local DFS office processes a high volume of runaway youth and juvenile human trafficking cases, which sometimes includes intercepting out-of-state youth with active felony warrants. Expanding on the county's new collaborative "attendance diversion" program, Megan explained that traditional DFS interventions for truancy were backfiring. She described a frustrating trend where parents would abruptly withdraw their children from the school system to homeschool them simply to avoid a DFS investigation. She highlighted the logistical difficulties of supervising youth in a massive, rural county. Unlike urban areas, they cannot mandate daily drug testing or check-ins because some juveniles live up to an hour and a half away from the local DFS office, do not have driver's licenses, and have parents who are unavailable due to work; requiring DFS to be creative with how they monitor youth.

Megan praised the local Stepping Stones crisis shelter and group home as a positive and noted it is heavily utilized for law enforcement placements and keeping runaways safe. She emphasized that DFS consistently aims for the lowest level of care possible, actively avoiding placing youth in detention centers unless the offenses involve significant violence or a DUI (Driving Under the Influence), where they are held briefly so they cannot immediately drive away.

Lastly, she detailed the community's severe lack of in-person mental health providers and child psychiatrists. To bridge the gap, DFS relies heavily on virtual telehealth options like Charlie's Health and Seattle Children's Hospital for psychiatric evaluations. However, Megan expressed concern that virtual therapy does not work for every youth. She also noted they try hard to avoid placing youth on Title 25 mental health holds, as the lack of local facilities means those kids end up in a standard hospital room.

b) Carbon County Attorney's Office

Carbon County Attorney Sarah Harkins shared that her office conducts weekly Single Point of Entry (SPOE) meetings with local stakeholders to collaboratively review recent juvenile citations and determine the appropriate level of intervention. For common minor offenses like vaping or traffic violations, School Resource Officers frequently utilize a 6-to-8-hour interactive online Life Skills class as an informal pre-diversion tool to get citations dismissed. When cases require more structured oversight, youth are placed on formal diversion contracts lasting three to six months, which are customized with specific requirements such

as community service, substance abuse evaluations, or maintaining good grades. Lastly, Ms. Harkins noted the recent launch of an "attendance diversion" program designed to intervene in truancy cases early without initiating formal DFS educational neglect investigations, which had historically discouraged parents into abruptly withdrawing their children to be homeschooled.

Ms. Harkins shared that Ashley Davis, Carbon County Deputy County Attorney, currently serves as the chair of the local Community Juvenile Services Board. She explained that Ms. Davis works alongside the county's diversion officer (Mary Wood) to track local juvenile justice data and submit all required CJSB reports to DFS.

Mary Wood, Carbon County Diversion Officer, noted that **vaping** remains a constant issue among local youth, while sexting citations have notably decreased compared to the previous year. Formal diversion contracts require juveniles to remain drug and nicotine-free, stay on campus during lunch, complete community service, and engage in pro-social activities. Depending on decisions made during the weekly Single Point of Entry (SPOE) meetings, youth may also be required to undergo substance abuse evaluations or extra counseling. Youth are typically placed on diversion for three to six months for a first offense. However, the program incentivizes positive behavior; juveniles can shorten their diversion timeframe if they maintain good grades in school and complete all of their required conditions early. Responding to questions about how to best contact juveniles, Mary shared that traditional emails and phone calls are largely ineffective, instead, she uses a Google number on a county-issued work phone to text the juveniles directly, which she has found to be the easiest and most successful way to keep in touch with them.

For minor infractions, such as a first-time vaping or traffic citations, youth are assigned a 6-to-8-hour interactive online "Life Skills" class rather than formal diversion. However, Mary explained that a major current struggle for the county is the recent loss of funding for the "Alive at 25" driving program. Without access to local, in-person driver education classes, she is required to assign the general Life Skills class for driving citations and actively asked the SACJJ for alternative driving program recommendations. Mary briefly commented on the local school district's sports "buyback program," which allows student-athletes with citations to earn their way back onto their teams. She noted that kids consider the buyback program to be significantly harder and more intense than the standard diversion life skills classes.

VIII. County Highlights

The SACJJ briefly highlighted key areas from the meeting.

- The ability to work collaboratively as a community and continuously evolve its services to meet local needs, rather than remaining stuck in rigid ways of operating.

- Local DFS has adopted a positive, strength-based, and family-supported approach, particularly regarding their new efforts to address school attendance issues collaboratively.

IX. Announcements

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 17-18, 2026, in Pinedale, WY.

X. Adjournment

Adrienne Freng motioned to adjourn the meeting; Felice Acosta seconded the motion; all in favor; motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.