WYOMING STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON JUVENILE JUSTICE
Meeting Minutes
September 17-18, 2026: Pinedale, WY

Agenda:

Thursday, September 17, 2026
- Call to Order
- Approval of Minutes
- New Business
- Ongoing Business
- Committee Reports

Friday, September 18, 2026
- DFS Update/Report
- Community Participation
- Announcements
- County Highlights
- Adjournment

Present:
Aaron Whitten
Adrienne Freng
Ally Spiess
Brittany Cangialosi
Brittany Thorpe
D'Andrea Chichester
Damon DeBernardi
Erica Wood
Hattie Calvert
Jessica Sayers
Logan Christie
Melinda Cox
Nicole Hauser
Ruth Ogden
Sierra Hernandez
Stacy Nelson

Ex-Officio Present:
Theresa Cain
Christina McCabe
Maggie Laing
Curtis Biggs
Shawn Sitzman
Jacob Edwards
Allen Thompson
Joe Belcher

Via Proxy:
Felice Acosta
Jennifer Palser
Nathaniel Williams

Others Present:
Brandon Schimelpfenig (DFS)
Wendy Leach (WYSAC-NPS)
Steve Jett (WYSAC-NPS)
Laurel Wimbish (WYSAC)
Brooke Benson (WYSAC)
Bri Montoya (CJP)
Korin Schmidt (DFS)
Debra Hibbard (DFS)
Jen Neely (DFS)
Desirae Saathoff (DFS)

Absent:
Dale Weber
Erika Sanchez
Kassidy Thomas
Sophia Gomelsky
Tyler Sullivan

Call to Order

I. Call to Order: Thursday, September 17, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.
a) Roll Call/Introductions
b) Declaration of Quorum; a quorum was established with 19 members present.

II. Approval of Minutes:
April 16-17, 2026 meeting held in Powell, WY and June 18-19, 2026 meeting held in Rawlins, WY. Nicole Hauser motioned to approve both draft minutes; Damon DeBernardi seconded the motion; all in favor; motion carried.

III. New Business:

a) OJJDP Update – FY25 Title II Funding Update

Brandon Schimelpfenig presented an official letter from OJJDP notifying DFS Director Korin Schmidt that Wyoming would not be receiving the FY25 Title II grant of $30,000. This denial occurred because Wyoming remains a non-participating state under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) and has no intention of becoming a Participating State or plan to achieve JJDPA compliance. Those Title II funds would instead be awarded to the recipient of the FY25 Non-Participating State (NPS) grant allocation. Wyoming retains $39,011.35 in FY23 ($9,011.35) and FY24 ($30,000) Title II balances, which should provide operational funding for the Council through calendar year 2027. Council members discussed potential options to stretch available funds, including transitioning select future sessions to dual or hybrid virtual formats. Wendy Leach and Steve Jett noted that achieving full JJDPA compliance would require comprehensive statutory reform and legislative mandates backed by centralized data tracking.

b) Children's Justice Project (CJP) – Bri Montoya

Bri Montoya presented on the Children's Justice Project, which serves as Wyoming's Court Improvement Program under the Wyoming Supreme Court. CJP is federally funded under the Children's Bureau specifically to improve court processes in child abuse and neglect cases. Although CJP cannot fund purely juvenile justice projects, Bri expressed a strong desire to collaborate with SACJJ on overlapping Children in Need of Supervision (CHINS) cases and multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs). CJP is preparing to issue a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) to contract for an objective statewide child welfare needs and gap assessment from a judicial perspective. Council members noted that CHINS cases often exist in a gray area between child welfare and delinquency, making cross-system alignment essential. Bri offered to share summaries from past judicial district community support forums to enhance ongoing data sharing with SACJJ.

c) Open Topic Discussion from Members

Jacob Edwards reported an outreach from Sheriff Mark Overman of Scottsbluff, Nebraska, regarding a proposal to re-establish a regional juvenile detention facility. Initial informal discussions gauged potential interest among Wyoming border counties that frequently experience acute shortages of local juvenile detention beds. Counties such as Fremont and Goshen expressed strong initial interest in utilizing out-of-state placement beds if the facility were to become operational. Conversely, Natrona County officials in Casper indicated they would not utilize the Nebraska facility due to their existing local arrangements. Council members raised important questions regarding transport logistics, border crossing policies, and the daily cost-per-bed compared to in-state facilities. Jacob agreed to follow up with Sheriff Overman to obtain further details as his proposal and cost-benefit analysis progress.

d) Public Comment Period
No topics brought forward from the public.

IV. On-Going Business – Updates From:

a) Governor's Meeting and Recommendation
No updates to provide.

b) Governor's Office
Senior Policy Advisor Curtis Biggs detailed ongoing communication between the Governor's Office and DFS regarding SACJJ capacity and statutory mandates. He advised the Council to deliver concise, consistent quarterly updates highlighting 3 to 5 key action items rather than lengthy yearly reports. Curtis emphasized that any formal recommendation to pursue full JJDPA compliance would require a comprehensive legislative, operational, and fiscal plan. He assured members that executive leadership within the Governor's Office values the Council's work and remains committed to supporting sustainable operations despite the loss of Title II grant funds. Curtis encouraged the SACJJ to evaluate its internal workflow and meeting cadence to optimize capacity under current budget constraints. Curtis reiterated his availability for ongoing discussions with SACJJ leadership ahead of gubernatorial transition planning sessions.

Erica Wood asked Curtis for guidance on the most effective format to submit recommendations to the Governor and the incoming administration (e.g., narrative reports vs. visual charts). Curtis advised the SACJJ on two primary communication approaches: 1) Annual In-Person Meeting: Continue scheduling an annual in-person meeting with the Governor to deliver SACJJ recommendations; 2) Quarterly "3-5 Big Ideas": Rather than relying solely on one annual report, which can sometimes get delayed due to tight executive scheduling, the SACJJ can submit short, consistent quarterly updates containing 3 to 5 key action items or big ideas. The Executive Committee reported that it is scheduling dedicated strategy sessions in October to narrow down the Council's primary juvenile justice recommendations ahead of the upcoming gubernatorial transition. Council members agreed that shifting toward concise, action-oriented policy briefs will make their data and recommendations more digestible and actionable for the Governor's office.

c) Council Membership
Brandon formally introduced new SACJJ member Jessica Sayers, who represents Judicial District 1 out of Cheyenne. The SACJJ currently maintains 24 members and successfully satisfies all statutory composition mandates under state and federal guidelines. Current membership includes six youth representatives against a minimum requirement of five, ensuring robust youth voice in proceedings. Nine members are full-time government employees, keeping the Council well within the statutory limit that caps government representation at 50%. The Council retains required representation for locally elected officials through Melinda Cox and includes three tribal representatives. Logan noted that outreach to college

department heads continues to build a strong pipeline for future youth appointments to the SACJJ.

d) CJSB Update
Brandon Schimelpfenig reported that all 12 active CJSBs successfully executed their contracts for the current biennium; July 1, 2026-June 30, 2028. Unallocated funds from non-participating counties were reallocated directly to participating boards, resulting in increased local contract awards across the state. DFS will be initiating quarterly knowledge-sharing calls via Google Meet starting September 21, 2026, to foster cross-county collaboration and best practices. A review of statewide Reroute data from July 2025 through June 2026 revealed that 55 percent of reported youth entries were missing final disposition records. DFS issued a firm deadline of November 1, 2026, for counties to update missing diversion, dismissal, or court outcome data. Brandon explained that complete disposition reporting is essential to demonstrate program efficacy when requesting future legislative funding increases for CJSBs.

e) Budget Report/Grant Update
Brandon stated that Title II 2023 has $9,011.35 remaining. Title II 2024 has the full $30,000.00 remaining.

f) Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ)
Brandon noted that he and Maureen Clifton completed a comprehensive field training covering ICJ Travel Permits, Transfer Packets, and Juvenile Return protocols for local caseworkers across Wyoming. He also reported an increase in non-delinquent runaways and human trafficking cases along the Interstate 80 and Interstate 25 corridors. Federal JJDPA amendments embedded in the FY27 National Defense Act draft propose capping all runaway returns at 15 calendar days. The ICJ National Office is actively lobbying Senate leadership to preserve existing compact exemptions that allow 90 days for complex requisition hearings. Wyoming achieved a 100 percent compliance rating in a recent national ICJ performance review evaluating timely home evaluation submissions. The SACJJ expressed gratitude to Brandon Schimelpfenig for the accomplished work he has completed in these efforts to receive this score.

g) WYSAC – Laurel Wimbish/Brooke Benson
Laurel noted that WYSAC successfully secured a one-year extension on the 2022–2023 Non-Participating State (NPS) grant. This extension provides local community organizations extra time to expend their award funds, as spending varies significantly—some communities have completed their spending, while others still have most of their awarded dollars remaining. Laurel noted the primary driver behind delayed spending is OJJDP's strict determination of suitability requirement for personnel working with youth. While the Wyoming Attorney General's Office: Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) fingerprint background checks move relatively quickly, obtaining Central Registry background checks for staff members who lived in another state within the past

five years has created severe administrative bottlenecks. Other state central registries frequently take weeks or months (sometimes up to six months) to respond, charge additional fees, or refuse to release records to non-childcare entities entirely.

h) NPS Presentation – Wendy Leach/Steve Jett
Steve Jett and Wendy Leach presented a revised Juvenile Detention Risk Assessment (JDRA) tool designed to simplify law enforcement completion during arrests. The draft tool includes dedicated tracking fields to record which detention centers turn youth away due to bed unavailability. It also formally captures prosecutor overrides, allowing county attorneys to document specific aggravating circumstances or family factors influencing detention decisions. A snapshot population survey at the Laramie County Juvenile Services Center (JSC) revealed that 11 out of 14 detained youth faced weapon or firearm charges, mostly involving guns stolen from unlocked vehicles. Wendy emphasized the urgent need for public firearm safety education and expanding structured, rehabilitative programming within local detention facilities.

i) Ex-Officio Members
Allen Thompson represented the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police (WASCOP) regarding the draft Juvenile Detention Risk Assessment (JDRA) tool. He explained that the JDRA draft was created for county sheriffs to review and aimed to gather hard data on the unavailability of adequate juvenile detention beds across the state. Allen noted he would share suggested language changes at the upcoming WACO conference in Laramie while pointing out that a third of Wyoming's sheriffs will be newly elected in January 2027. Representatives from the Attorney General's Office, including Christina McCabe and Maggie Lang, analyzed the legal authority surrounding prosecutor overrides on juvenile placement. They clarified that while Wyoming statute requires law enforcement to contact the district attorney whenever a child is taken into custody, but state code lacks explicit statutory language referencing an "override". Lastly, the SACJJ highlighted the importance of ongoing collaboration among ex-officio members, including legal advisors and state agency partners, to align multi-agency juvenile justice policies.

j) Wyoming Youth Advisory Council – Nathaniel Williams
Nathaniel was not present for the update; however, DFS Program Manager Debra Hibbard provided an update on his behalf. She noted WYAC currently consists of approximately 25 active youth members who meet on a monthly basis and the youth are leading an initiative to secure statutory or policy rights allowing siblings in foster care or facility placements to visit one another. Members shared emotional personal testimonies about being placed in separate group homes and denied visits or contact with their siblings. WYAC is actively collaborating with DFS foster care staff to advance these changes. Youth members are working with foster care coordinators to recruit more foster homes across Wyoming, aiming to keep children in family settings rather than relying heavily on crisis beds, group

homes, or residential treatment centers (RTCs). WYAC is prioritizing peer mental health and suicide prevention. After meeting with state Behavioral Health Division representatives, the group is working to appoint youth representatives directly onto the statewide Suicide Prevention Task Force. Debra also noted WYAC is preparing for a formal strategic planning retreat in late winter 2026 or early spring 2027 and collaborating with Jessica Sayers with the Citizen's Review Panel to review and update the WYAC organizational charter.

V. Committee Reports

a) Executive Committee – Logan Christie
The Executive Committee reviewed recent meeting expenditures to map out long-term fiscal strategies for extending remaining Title II dollars through 2027 and into 2028. Members discussed balancing virtual sessions with essential in-person meetings to preserve networking benefits while lessening travel expenses. Logan discussed coordinating with the Governor's Office to schedule dedicated strategy meetings ahead of the state administration change with a new Governor and incoming cabinet members. SACJJ members emphasized the importance of maintaining clear fiscal oversight as administrative roles transition between DFS and council leadership.

b) Grants Committee – Logan Christie
It was noted the Grants Committee did not hold an interim meeting however Erica outlined an area of focus with looking further into partnering with WYSAC as a funding stream through NPS funding.

c) Data Committee – Adrienne Freng
Adrienne noted the Data Committee worked alongside DFS program analyst Jacob Edwards to establish standardized metrics for capturing community presentation data during meetings. A new standardized data spreadsheet was successfully piloted during local community presentations in Park and Carbon counties. The spreadsheet captures consistent indicators across local case volumes, diversion options, detention utilization, and community gaps. Committee members reviewed long-term trends in statewide detention entries and probation tracking system integration. The gathered metrics will build a persistent historical database to assist incoming SACJJ members in evaluating regional service evolution. The committee plans to present consolidated presentation metrics and data insights during regular 2027 SACJJ meetings.

d) Best Practices Committee – Stacy Nelson
Stacy Nelson reported on behalf of the Best Practices Committee regarding the statewide inventory of youth programs, services, and placements. Brittany Cangialosi initially created an online survey to collect program data across all Wyoming counties, but initial completion rates were low. After re-distributing the survey, the committee successfully gathered responses from approximately one-third of the state's counties. To streamline data collection, Stacy created simplified paper forms to gather essential service details directly from meeting participants

and regional agency contacts. Her objective is to achieve 100% county participation through upcoming multi-agency meetings and direct phone outreach before handing the dataset to Wendy Leach prior to the November 2026 meeting in Laramie. Once compiled, the baseline data will be published as an interactive map on the SACJJ website and cross-listed on the 211 Wyoming site for widespread community access.

e) Outreach/Youth Committee – Erica Wood, Brittany Cangialosi
The committee reissued its council retention survey to boost member response rates beyond the initial 11 submitted forms. Outreach efforts expanded to college department heads and professors across Wyoming to actively recruit eligible youth candidates. The committee reviewed criteria for the Neil Madsen Excellence in Juvenile Justice Award to eliminate outdated references to federal compliance dependencies. Proposed revisions aim to open award eligibility to all proactive community organizations regardless of state CJSB program participation. Reissued surveys and updated award guidelines will be presented for formal approval at the upcoming November 2026 meeting.

f) Legislative Committee – Nicole Hauser
The committee highlighted the successful amendment of procedural Rule 3.1, extending the Single Point of Entry review timeframe from 14 days to 45 days. Officially effective September 14, 2026, this rule change grants county attorneys necessary time to evaluate pre-adjudication diversion options without rushing court filings. The committee discussed monitoring municipal court systems and law enforcement agencies as they adapt scheduling timelines to the 45-day window. Committee members also reviewed emerging state legislation regarding kratom restrictions and parental accountability laws. The committee will continue tracking interim legislative topics affecting juvenile justice practices leading into the 2027 legislative session.

g) Ad-Hoc Committee – Brittany Cangialosi
Brittany noted that she has sent out a communication to schedule a meeting for the Ad-Hoc committee prior to the November 2026 meeting in Laramie and will present a formal update to the full SACJJ at that time.

Friday, September 18, 2026

VI. DFS Update

Director Korin Schmidt addressed the council to discuss the evolving administrative support model between the Department of Family Services (DFS) and SACJJ as federal Title II funding comes to an end. She explained that while DFS historically funded a dedicated full-time staff member for council administration, that level of support is no longer sustainable. Applying a "good fences make good neighbors" approach, Korin emphasized the need to formally separate DFS's fiscal duties from SACJJ's direct operational responsibilities. Under this transition, DFS program analysts Brandon

Schimelpfenig and Jacob Edwards must shift their time toward agency-level policy analysis and deeper data analytics. Because of this shift, Brandon will no longer spend a majority of his working time managing secretarial tasks, travel logistics, and meeting preparation for the council. DFS will continue serving as the official fiscal agent and grant manager to handle lodging invoices and travel reimbursements. In turn, SACJJ members must take direct ownership of operational duties, including selecting meeting venues, securing lodging blocks, contacting local partners, and building meeting agendas. Lastly, Director Schmidt requested that SACJJ submit a calendar year budget outlining how the council plans to spend its remaining Title II funds across quarterly meetings through 2028.

Following Director Schmidt's presentation, Ruth Ogden cited the SACJJ Wyoming Statute 14-10-101 to highlight that SACJJ is statutorily established within the Governor's Office as an advisory council. She stressed that uncompensated volunteer members cannot assume legal grant management or fiscal accounting duties, which must remain under DFS oversight. Nicole Hauser questioned how shifting administrative tasks to volunteers would truly free up DFS staff bandwidth if technical fiscal management stays within the department. She suggested that secretarial tasks like taking meeting minutes could easily be streamlined using technology rather than reallocating volunteer labor. Adrienne Freng pointed out that routine travel logistics—such as securing tax-exempt lodging blocks and direct billing—require DFS's official authority. Melinda Cox sought further details on how DFS intends to pivot staff analysts Brandon Schimelpfenig and Jacob Edwards toward internal policy and data analysis. Erica Wood agreed that SACJJ can take direct ownership of setting meeting locations, picking agenda topics, and establishing a calendar-year budget. However, Erica maintained that DFS must continue executing the processing for travel reimbursements and lodging invoice payments. Council members also noted that because federal Title II funding must be spent by September 30, 2028, the state should eventually provide state general fund support for SACJJ's statutorily mandated work. Senior Policy Advisor Curtis Biggs reassured members that DFS is not abandoning the council and committed to briefing Governor Gordon on these structural discussions.

VII. Community Participation

a) Sublette County DFS

Sublette County DFS caseworker Desirae Saathoff reported that the office is currently managing eight active juvenile justice cases—comprising seven delinquencies and one diversion—which accounted for 42% of their open caseload. She noted that overall annual workload consisted of 66% child protective services (CPS), 15% juvenile justice, and 19% adult protective services, with several CPS cases functioning as voluntary prevention for struggling parents. Recent local juvenile offenses included property destruction, burglary, minor-in-possession of alcohol or THC, DUIs, traffic violations, and occasional sexual misconduct. Sublette County maintains strong local partnerships with schools, law enforcement, public health, the county attorney's office, and local food baskets. Due to a lack of local specialty facilities, the office relies heavily on virtual

programs, including online intensive outpatient therapy through Charlie Health or Modern Recovery Services, and proctored courses like Stay Free Forever. In-house interventions feature Botvin Life Skills and an American Lung Association smoking cessation course supported by rapid nicotine test strips supplied by DFS. Significant regional barriers include severe winter road conditions, high counselor waitlists, a lack of local crisis shelters, and long travel distances to Rock Springs for court-ordered in-person treatment or juvenile detention beds. Diversion cases originate from Single Point of Entry meetings with prosecutors and focus on individualized case plans with voluntary parental consent for drug screenings rather than formal court filings. DFS District Manager Jennifer Neely commended the Pinedale staff for their proactive home visits, flexible scheduling, and strong family engagement throughout Sublette County.

b) Sublette County Attorney's Office

- Deputy County Attorney and SACJJ member Damon DeBernardi presented on behalf of the Sublette County Attorney's Office, highlighting the local legal practices and community dynamics surrounding juvenile cases. Unlike larger jurisdictions, Sublette County utilizes Single Point of Entry meetings specifically for offenses rising to the level of a crime or DUI rather than low-level traffic matters. Because Sublette County lacks a local juvenile detention facility, prosecutors must coordinate in advance with Sweetwater County to secure beds, which encourages the frequent use of community-based alternatives. For crisis situations, the county relies on group home placements in Jackson, though winter travel across 70 to 77 miles of hazardous roads creates logistical hurdles. The vast majority of juvenile matters are handled through informal, unsupervised diversions requiring 90 days of good behavior, community service, grade maintenance, and law compliance. Formal court filings remain low in Sublette County, with only two Child in Need of Supervision (CHINS) cases and three child welfare cases initiated over the past three years. Damon noted a troubling recent surge in groups of youth breaking into unoccupied or abandoned buildings to vandalize property and steal items. Local youth substance offenses are predominantly confined to nicotine and THC, with no cases involving harder illegal drugs like methamphetamine occurring over the last three years. Serious crimes committed by 17-year-olds, such as felony sexual battery, are prosecuted directly in adult court due to limited juvenile jurisdiction timelines. Lastly, local school districts and school resource officers exercise discretion to resolve minor disciplinary issues internally before cases reach Single Point of Entry meetings. Council members asked if Sublette County experiences educational neglect cases similar to those previously reported in Rawlins, where families switch to homeschooling once an educational neglect petition or investigation is initiated. Damon confirmed they had one DFS case that followed that exact scenario, where no actual schooling was occurring. He added that in another instance, the school district reached out early so local agencies could resolve attendance issues before it escalated to formal court action.

VIII. County Highlights

The SACJJ briefly highlighted key areas from the meeting.

- Sublette County maximizes local community partnerships, virtual counseling, and multi-agency Single Point of Entry reviews to manage cases without a local detention facility.

IX. Announcements

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 19-20, 2026, in Laramie, WY.

X. Adjournment

Adrienne Freng motioned to adjourn the meeting; Damon DeBernardi seconded the motion; all in favor; motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 10:47 a.m.