

INTERSTATE COMMISSION FOR JUVENILES

Work Group on Returning Non-Delinquent Youth Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2026

2:00 pm EST

Via Zoom



Preliminary Business

Call to Order

Chair R. Curtis (ME) called the meeting to order at 2:03 pm EST.

Roll Call

Director Underwood called the roll and a quorum was established.

Commissioners/Designees in Attendance:

1. A. Roy Curtis (ME), Commissioner, Chair
2. Caitlyn Bickford (NH), Commissioner, Vice Chair
3. Francis "Mike" Casey (DE), Commissioner
4. Jean Hall (FL), Commissioner
5. Sherry Jones (MD), Commissioner
6. Jessica Wald (ND), Designee
7. Stephen Horton (NC), Commissioner
8. Corrie Copeland (TN), Commissioner

Additional State ICJ Personnel, Ex Officio Members, and Partners in Attendance:

1. Liz Wilson (KS)
2. Jessica Stefenack (VA)
3. Megan Riker-Rheinschild, ICJ Victims Representative
4. Kathleen Quigley, Ex Officio Member, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
5. Chris Newlin, Ex Officio Member, National Children's Advocacy Center (NCAC)
6. Juan Sepulveda, Ex Officio Member, National Partnership for Juvenile Services (NPJS)
7. Amanda Whitlock, Ex Officio Member, National Runaway Safeline (NRS)
8. Melissa Snow, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)
9. Jill Ward, Maine Law, Youth Justice Clinic, Professor

Commissioners/Designees Not in Attendance:

1. Christine Norris (DE), Designee
2. Lisa Bjergaard (ND), Commissioner
3. Trissie Casanova (VT), Designee

Guests in Attendance:

1. Glenn Tapia, Alliance for Community and Justice Innovation (ACJI)
2. Julie Hawkins (MO), Commissioner, Rules Committee Chair

National Office Staff in Attendance:

1. MaryLee Underwood, Executive Director
2. Jenny Adkins, Operations and Policy Specialist
3. Kirsten Wade, Logistics and Administrative Specialist

Agenda

C. Bickford (NH) made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion passed.

Minutes

S. Jones (MD) made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting on December 11, 2025, as presented. The motion passed by unanimous consent.

Chair Report

- Chair R. Curtis (ME) shared that the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) would be presenting a *Wednesday Workshop* on January 28, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. EST.
- Chair R. Curtis (ME) shared that this would be the final meeting facilitated by G. Tapia (ACJI) and thanked him for his service.

Unfinished Business

Continuation of the Appreciative Inquiry (AI5D Process) – *Glenn Tapia*

- Glenn Tapia (ACJI) led a discussion on using appreciative inquiry to envision a system of care rooted in collaboration, trust, and shared purpose.
- Work Group members reviewed previous ideas, including the use of cross-state multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs), new definitions for runaways, and improved information flow processes.
- Members identified old habits or barriers that they would like to eliminate in the future.
 - Barriers between ICJ staff and child welfare agencies.
 - Laws, policies, and practices that prevent child welfare agencies from opening investigations if the youth is not in the state.
 - Lack of tools/requirements that could improve responses (and resistance to using them)
 - No standardized intake information packet to provide judicial officers.
 - No requirement for collecting and communicating information about abuse, neglect, human trafficking, or other reasons for running away
 - No requirement to use abuse and human trafficking fields in UNITY
 - Interpreting ICJ Rules in ways that unnecessarily interfere with parental rights
 - Detaining a child over a weekend “just in case” they are wanted by another state
 - Over-relying on the 24-hour response time, especially in emergency cases.
 - Prolonged detention stays
 - Ignoring science related to juvenile justice reform, adolescent development, particularly regarding adverse impacts of detention
 - Assuming that the youth will be safe if returned home
 - Not exploring, responding to, or communicating the reasons the child ran away, e.g. abuse, neglect, trafficking, online solicitation or intimidation, etc.
 - Assuming professionals know what is best for the youth’s safety and well-being
 - Barriers to communications and understanding
 - Avoiding direct communication and phone calls

- Needing to text or email colleagues to get a response to voice mail
 - Over relying on text and email which leads to miscommunication
 - Professionals working in silos and assuming we understand each other's role.
 - Extending grace to some and not to all professionals.
- Bias and discrimination based on race, culture, gender Identify or other factors
- Members identified the following actions as starting points and/or non-negotiables:
 - Develop uniformity in national processes, rather than state level processes.
 - Ensure the safety and well-being of the child is considered through screening tools that identify potential concerns and provide youths with opportunities to share their experiences and preferences.
 - Create a checklist for a point person/navigator/MDT with information to gather and how to communicate with the other state before the hearing.
 - Advance practices that include child's and family's voices in decision making and planning for reunification.
 - Develop practices and rules that ensure courts have the information needed for good decision making, particularly at Form III (Voluntary Consent to Return) hearings
 - Ensure information regarding why the youth ran away is collected, considered, and made known to the court.
 - Develop information flow processes to help courts to reduce prolonged containment.
 - Clarify who is responsible for determining the "best interest of the child," through ICJ Rules, training, or other means.
 - Improve processes for communication between courts prior to returns
 - Stop assuming that "secure facility" means detention facility
 - Develop alternative means to house or otherwise contain the child.
 - Develop broader terminology. Replace "runaway" with "missing child" or something that neutralizes feelings of blame against the child.
 - Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) and collaborations
 - Actively seek opportunities to partner with new stakeholders and build relationships outside of day-to-day case management tasks.
 - Use cross-state (home/holding state) multi-disciplinary teams with representatives from all stakeholder groups, especially in challenging cases where there is prolonged detention.
 - Promote more communication and dialogue by standing up and training an MDT to response issues within 14 days (maximum).
 - Develop a formal process to keep information contained and flowing within the MDT or decision-making group.
 - Identify a team to meet monthly to get to know each other, debrief cases, and improve process using family-centered approach similar to an after-action review on successful cases. Review what was supposed to happen, what did happen, what can we learn.

- Use a singular contact (and/or MDT) to have access within 24 hours to address the situation.
 - Develop a navigator (or MDT) to analyze the situation and help states decide how to handle the case and make sure all voices are heard.
- Develop means to cross-train and co-train people from multiple stakeholder groups.
- Do succession planning and procedural training to build capacity for appropriate responses when the primary contact person is not accessible.
- Develop formal feedback loops to monitor efficacy of new process and do continuous quality improvement.
- Develop a matrix (or alternative structured tool) that guides decision making for field staff and identifies specific contacts for each state to follow up with the case in each state.
- When each group was asked to identify its top action item, the following actions were identified:
 - Mandatory use of human trafficking and abuse fields in UNITY.
 - Developing MDTs or Immediate Response Teams to have intentional planning and a singular contact as part of that team.
 - Developing a matrix (or an alternative structured tool) in UNITY for runaways that guides decision-making and identifies specific contacts in each state to follow up on the case.
 - Security should not be defined as a detention facility and an alternate means to house or otherwise contain the youth should be developed.
- G. Tapia (ACJI) shared that he has enjoyed working with the Work Group and will send a final report to the National Office for distribution.

Next Steps

- The next Work Group meeting was scheduled for February 18, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. EST.

Adjourn

Chair R. Curtis (ME) adjourned the meeting by acclamation without objection at 3:33 p.m. EST.