



# 2024 Annual Report

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

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December 30, 2024

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 2024 Annual Report.

This past year we were able to travel to communities across the state. Meeting with stakeholders and community providers remains a highlight of the Council's work.

From our small communities to the larger ones, common themes continue to emerge. First, the individuals and agencies dedicated to supporting and guiding our youth continue to face evolving challenges, yet their commitment and resourcefulness remain unwavering. As we move into the New Year, it is essential that these efforts continue to be prioritized and funded appropriately, ensuring the long-term well-being of Wyoming's future generations. We are proud of the tireless efforts being made by the agencies and professionals who are on the front lines working with young individuals, helping them build positive futures.

We urge you to continue prioritizing the needs of our young people by securing the necessary resources and funding for these essential services. Wyoming's future depends on the support we provide to its youth, and we must ensure that those dedicated to this important work have the tools and resources to continue making a positive impact. We remain committed to the youth of our State and look forward to continuing efforts to improve the system. Thank you for taking the time to review our report and our recommendations.

Respectfully,



Logan Christie, Chair

Wyoming State Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice

## Additional Executive Committee Members



Erica Wood, Vice Chair



Ruth Ogden



Stacy Becker



Abbey Kercher

### 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.

To coordinate the implementation of the recommendations.

To provide for the distribution of available funds for delinquency prevention, juvenile justice, and youth services.

## Council Members

SACJJ Coordinator: Brandon Schimelpfenig/Jacob Edwards

State Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice Members		
Name	District/City	Expiration
Abbey Kercher	1-Cheyenne	8/31/2027
Adrienne Freng	2-Laramie	8/31/2026
Alexandra Bammel	2-Laramie (Youth)	8/31/2026
Brittany Cangialosi	2-Larmie (Youth)	8/31/2025
Chris Jones	4-Sheridan	3/1/2026
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
Hattie Calvert	9-Riverton	8/31/2027
Jennifer Palser	4-Sheridan	8/31/2027
Kassidy Thomas	2-Laramie (Youth)	8/31/2026
Lila Konecky	2-Laramie (Youth)	8/31/2025
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
Sophia Gomelsky	2-Laramie (Youth)	8/31/2027
Stacy Becker	1-Cheyenne	8/31/2025
Stacy Nelson	7-Casper	8/31/2027

Ex-Officio Members	
Name	Represents
Christina McCabe	WY Attorney General's Office
Dustin Brown	WY Dept. of Education
Salli Perryman	Dept. of Education
Jacob Edwards	WY Dept. of Family Services
Jen Davis	Governor's Office
Shawn Sitzman	Attorney General's Office: Division of Victim Services
Maureen Clifton	WY Interstate Compact for Juveniles - Commissioner
Hon. James "Mike" Causey	WY Judicial Branch - Interstate Compact for Juveniles
Senator Lynn Hutchings	WY State Legislature - Interstate Compact for Juveniles
Representative Rachel Rodriguez-Williams	WY State Legislature - Interstate Compact for Juveniles

## 2024 SACJJ Activities

### January 2024

- Meeting location - Cheyenne, WY
- Elections were held and the following members were elected/or retained roles: Logan Christie- Chair, Erica Wood - Vice-Chair, Ruth Ogden, Abbey Kercher and Stacey Becker - At-Large members of the Executive Committee. Logan Christie discussed the 14-day requirement with the SACJJ. This requirement concerns the requirement for juvenile citations to be filed with the local court within 14 days otherwise the citation is dismissed. Jacob Edwards wanted to discuss updates regarding the data system currently being implemented by the Department of Family Services (DFS) called the Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS). DFS spoke regarding Medicaid eligibility for juveniles that age out while in detention settings.
- The SACJJ discussed the 2023 Annual Report recommendations. The recommendations were as follows: Funding for mental health access, Staffing and Workforce shortages, Continued funding for Community Juvenile Services Boards (CJSB), Data collection, juvenile justice remaining a priority for the Joint Judiciary Committee, remaining a non-participating state with OJJDP and collaboration with advisory groups.
- Community Participation: The SACJJ heard from Laramie County Department of Family Services (DFS) and the Laramie County Community Juvenile Services Joint Powers Board. DFS expressed that within the past few years, cases involving juveniles and weapons have been steadily rising, as well as fentanyl use.

### April 2024

- Meeting location - Torrington, WY
- Discussion surrounding the February meeting with Governor Gordon and SACJJ members was led by Logan. Erica Wood discussed an opportunity presented by the Council for State Governments (CSG), ultimately the SACJJ turned down the opportunity at this time. Vaping concerns were discussed and a discussion about mental health issues and how local schools are dealing with vaping followed. A discussion about how local detention centers determine if they accept out-of-county juveniles was a concern as issues of staffing and bed space often results in a lack of juvenile detention centers. DFS discussed out-of-home service providers as well as the new WYOSAFE case management system.
- Community Participation: Goshen County DFS, Goshen County Attorney's Office. Goshen presenters shared a concern of vaping and a need for the county is to acquire some sort of crisis shelter or juvenile detention center.

### June 2024

- Meeting location - Sheridan, WY

- The SACJJ discussed a new outpatient program being offered by the Wyoming Behavioral Institute as well as the continued pattern of counties being frustrated at the lack of JDC's. DFS gave updates regarding the Wyoming foster care system, and the recently completed the Child and Family Services Review. An additional WYOSAFE update was given.
- Community Participation Sheridan County DFS, Sheridan County Attorney, Sheridan CJSB, Sheridan School District Representative. Key points included wanting to see an inpatient substance abuse treatment program for juveniles in Sheridan County, a transition program started in Sheridan County for a stepdown from the Wyoming Girls School back to their respective home, and wanting to see secure facility in Sheridan County for those juveniles needing a secure placement.

## September 2024

- Meeting location - Cody
- Topics that were discussed included a CSJ follow-up. The creation of a committee to assist in trainings regarding statewide juvenile justice items. The Wyoming Grant Assistance Program was discussed as well as current crime trends SACJJ members were seeing in their counties. DFS updated the results of their CFSSR and their Program Improvement Plan. The Interagency Children's Collaborative regarding issues placing youth with severe mental health and violent behaviors were discussed. The SACJJ also discussed temporary changes internally, which resulted in a temporary SACJJ coordinator being appointed.
- Community Participation: Park County DFS, Park County Attorney's Office. DFS provided statistics from Single Point of Entry, as well as expressed a positive opinion on the amount of counseling resources for juveniles in Park County. Other highlights included their diversion program having a high success rate, and a desire to give youth multiple chances. DFS and the County Attorney discussed JDC options, both within and outside of Park County.

## November 2024

- Meeting location - Lander
- Topics: WYGAP (Wyoming Grant Assistance Program) provided information of how to access their services regarding juvenile justice and other grant opportunities as well as diversification of funding streams and to work toward sustainability of programming. SACJJ was updated on about the Non-Participating Award and reminded communities of the deadline approaching to be considered as a possible grantee. The WYAC (Wyoming Youth Advisory Council) informed the SACJJ of all their efforts and current projects. It was also discussed the Washington trip for the ODJJP training opportunity that will transpire in late November. After the meeting concluded, some SACJJ members were provided a tour of the Wyoming Life Resource Center.

- Community Participation: Fremont County DFS, a Tribal Representative, Fremont County Attorney's Office, and Treatment Court representative attended the meeting. Fremont is a unique community as they have nine (9) school districts and four (4) DFS offices to coordinate. Guests provided statistics from Single Point of Entry, as well as expressing some changes they were making for what formerly was referred to as delayed sentencing processes. Fremont County is working toward a Teen Court Program. Presenters shared that the tolerance and the blood alcohol content they see in juveniles is a huge concern, so they are working toward determining alternatives toward additional preventative actions. Some concern that was shared was that they often have a full-group home, and that the wait for juveniles to get into an open bed for a PRTF or other treatment needs has been extensive, sometimes upwards of 2-6 weeks. Highlights in Fremont included the ability to get assessments completed quickly for juveniles, however the results have shown an increased treatment need and so once that has occurred, they often work together to determine what residential opportunities are available for such complex needs. Fremont has had good collaboration between agencies even when they have differing opinions. It was echoed that they feel the juvenile really is the priority. Fremont has shared they feel many of their programs are showing success.

## November 2024

- OJJDP National Conference
- Several individuals from SACJJ and CJSB's around the state attended the national conference on youth justice for the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention in Washington DC. The theme "Shaping the Next 50 Years" focused on the Continuum of Care framework using 90 sessions over 3 days. Representing Wyoming's Juvenile Justice System included Becky Burt (Natrona County CJSB), Megan Sheets (Carbon County CJSB), Gus Bloomfield (Uinta County CJSB), Wendy DePina (Crook County CJSB), Kyle Borger (Niobrara County CJSB), Jacob Edwards (DFS Ex-Officio for SACJJ), Logan Christie (Chair for SACJJ), Erica Wood (Vice Chair for SACJJ), Stacy Becker (SACJJ), and Cassidy Thomas (Youth Member for SACJJ).



## Recommendations

### 2024 SACJJ Recommendations

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

- **Amended Rule 3.1 of the Wyoming Rules of Criminal Procedure.** The 14-day filing citation rules in Wyoming pose particular challenges in cases involving juveniles, especially those requiring review by Single Point of Entry (SPOE) teams. These regulations force an expedited timeline for filing citations, which can hinder the thorough assessment of juvenile cases that demand careful consideration and collaboration among various stakeholders. SPOE teams, tasked with evaluating the needs and risks of youth, may find it difficult to gather essential information and coordinate responses within the limited 14-day period. This rush can lead to incomplete evaluations, potentially overlooking critical factors that affect a juvenile's circumstances and wellbeing. Moreover, the tight timeframe often restricts community members, including families and support services, from obtaining the necessary information to understand and engage in the case effectively, as well as placing hardships on exploring the least restrictive environments for children. As a result, important insights may be lost, compromising the ability of the system to provide the most appropriate interventions and support for at-risk youth. If Rule 3.1 was amended to exclude juveniles, this would benefit communities and allow for more pre-adjudicatory decisions to be made.
- **Juvenile Justice should remain a topic for the Joint Judiciary Committee and Joint Education Committee.** Juvenile justice issues and reform should be a priority for the state. Investing in effective juvenile justice systems safeguards the wellbeing of young individuals and fosters safer communities by addressing root causes of delinquency. Additionally, having a uniform system of suspension and expulsion for school districts in Wyoming is necessary to ensure consistent and equitable disciplinary practices across the state. This standardization helps to protect students' rights, mitigate disparities in how disciplinary actions are applied, and provide clear guidelines for educators.
- **Continued Support of the Grants Office.** 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.

- **Funding to Community Juvenile Services Boards Needs to be continued.** While the funding for community justice service boards has remained steady, it is crucial to explore opportunities for increased financial support. As more communities participate in these vital programs, the demand for resources grows, leading to higher participation costs. Expanding funding will not only enable existing boards to enhance their services but also support the integration of new communities seeking to develop effective justice initiatives. Ensuring adequate funding is essential for maintaining and improving the collaborative efforts that benefit the entire community and foster a more equitable justice system.
- **Data Collection within the Juvenile Justice System.** With the introduction of new data collection systems statewide, it is imperative that not only legacy data be pulled from previous systems, but that systematic collection of new data take place statewide. By analyzing up-to-date information, policymakers and practitioners can better understand the needs of youth, evaluate the effectiveness of programs, and tailor interventions accordingly. A data-driven approach enables stakeholders to make evidence-based decisions that enhance outcomes for juveniles and promote a more effective justice system.
- **Wyoming remains a Non-Participating State with OJJDP.** WYSAC (Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center) and the SACJJ work together to distribute funds to communities pertaining to juveniles. It is imperative to continue to support the Grants Office and entities such as WYSAC to explore additional funding opportunities for Wyoming communities. Helping communities meet the standards of the OJJDP as effective juvenile justice is a continued goal of the SACJJ.
- **Funding for mental health access.** According to feedback from various communities, there has been a noticeable increase in mental health issues and substance use, highlighting the urgent need for expanded capacity within existing services in Wyoming. These capacity challenges are largely attributed to a lack of sufficient staffing and resources, which limits the ability of service providers to address the rising demand effectively. As community members seek support, the current system struggles to meet their needs, underscoring the importance of investing in additional resources and personnel to strengthen service delivery and improve outcomes for individuals facing these critical challenges.
- **Collaboration of advisory groups.** To ensure maximum understanding and access to state resources, we recommend that on an annual basis executive committees of all state advisory groups meet to share information and resources.