

Minutes

STATE ADVISORY GROUP ON JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION MEETING

July 11, 2025
Office of Juvenile Affairs
MC Connor Building
2501 North Lincoln Blvd, Ste 500
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

Mr. Les Thomas Sr., Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.

Present: Demetrius Bell, Dr. Jaime Burns, David Grewe, Maureen Guerrero (10:12), David Hall (10:17), Erin Jones-Slatev, Dr. Greg Parks, Jake Roberts, Les Thomas and Brian Wahnee.

Absent: James Edwards, Chad Gragg, Pray'eon Jackson, and Jamie Sherman.

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Brian Wahnee and seconded by David Grewe to approve the minutes from the May 13, 2025, meeting. Demetrius Bell, Dr. Jaime Burns, David Grewe, Erin Jones-Slatev, Les Thomas and Brian Wahnee voted yes. Dr. Greg Parks and Jake Roberts abstained. The motion carried.

III. Introduction & Announcements

Several announcements were made by Mr. Les Thomas. James Hayes Robinson has resigned from the SAG as he has an opportunity to attend Stanford University. Senator Paul Rosino also resigned from the SAG.

There are several nominations for the SAG awaiting approval from the Governor. The legislative position previously held by Senator Rosino will be filled by Rep. Emily Gise from District 90. The position filled by James Hayes Robinson was the “under 28 years old” category and it will be filled by Baruc Lara, who is currently serving in a Governor-appointed position.

Two additional positions will be filled by Jessica Teszlewicz, a former teacher who travels from schools to prisons teaching financial literacy and mentoring, and Marquees Dennis, CEO and founder of Birthright.

Mr. Thomas reminded the SAG that while the Membership Committee consisted of David Grewe and himself, any member was welcome to join and to make nominations.

IV. Delinquency Prevention Back-to-School Grant Applications

A big part of what the SAG does is dispersing federal funds and Mr. Les Thomas, Chair, gave a huge thanks to members who stepped up to score the grant applications for the Delinquency Prevention Back-to-School grants in the amount of up to \$50,000. After approving this round of grants, the SAG will have approved more funding in the last 6 months than in the last 6 years.

A handout was given to the SAG with a breakdown of each application which includes project summary, score, amount requested and reviewer comments. Funds must be spent by the end of September 2025. Money not awarded will have to be returned to the federal government.

Muscogee (Creek) Nation – The Muscogee (Creek) Nation (MN) TJJ Program has selected the Botvin LifeSkills Training Program for Middle School (grades 6-9), High School (grades 9-10) and Transitional (ages 16+) and will integrate this program into a hybrid format, as the youth being served cover an area that includes 11 counties. The program I offered in both workbook and online formations. Students will also receive a backpack with necessary school supplies. Score: 93/120. Amount requested: \$23,723.

The reviews felt this application was very good. They clearly demonstrate the community they will serve while providing data to support their needs. Clear details were provided on the program as well as the justification for the program and solutions to foreseeable barriers. The program clearly and strongly outlines youth involvement. The goals of the program are specific, measurable and within specific times. They will use funds to purchase materials by the end of September and use for ongoing programs in the future.

A motion was made by David Hall to approve the proposed award to Muscogee (Creek) Nation up to \$50,000. All present voted yes, and the motion carried.

Youth and Family Resource Center, Inc. – Shawnee – Partners in Caring (PIC), led by Youth and Family Resources (YFRC), aims to strengthen the impact of existing programming through a new delinquency prevention program aimed at supporting identified at-risk youth transition back into school. YFRC will host back-to-school readiness modules, host parent engagement nights, and provide increased case management in the early weeks of the new school year to provide additional support for both parents and children. They will implement the OJJDP model, KEEP, which is a trauma-informed and evidence-based support and skill enhancement education program for foster and kinship parents of children. Score: 110/120. Amount requested: \$50,000.

This was the highest scored program. Reviewers noted that YFRC has a 10-year history of working in the area and uses data to support their needs. They have strong partnerships with a variety of community organizers. They clearly outline youth involvement with a feasible and culturally relevant design. The applicant provided information on partnerships that will be meaningful to the project.

Demetrius Bell made the motion to approve the proposed award to Youth and Family Resource Center – Shawnee in the amount of \$50,000. The second was made by Brian Wahnee. All present voted yes, and the motion carried.

Peppers Ranch Inc. (Foster Community) – Peppers Ranch is a nationally recognized foster care community that has provided safe, stable, and nurturing homes for children and teens for more than 25 years. Their mission is to break the cycle of abuse and neglect by surrounding youth with a community of healing, belonging, and purpose. Pathways Back will take place at Peppers Ranch with core program components of life skills, school readiness, personal growth, relationship-based and trauma-informed approach. Score 86/120. Amount requested: \$50,000.

This is the first time Peppers Ranch has submitted a grant application with us. While the reviewers felt the applicant demonstrated community partnership, they were disappointed with the lack of specifics of the program. Ms. Constanzia Nizza will reach out to Peppers Ranch regarding some of the issues raised by the SAG.

The motion was made to approve the proposed award to Peppers Ranch, Inc. in the amount of \$50,000 contingent upon getting additional information and approved by the Chairman was made by David Hall and seconded by Erin Jones-Slatev. All present voted yes, and the motion carried.

Teaching and Saving Kids (TASK) – TASK At-risk Youth Mentoring program will offer mentoring, literacy programs, job training and job placement for youth. Classes/workshops on violence control and behavior training are available for participants. Community events will also be offered such as speak outs, gang prevention rallies, and intervention events throughout the school year. Score: 14/120. Amount Requested: Did not submit a budget.

Some of the reviews chose not to give a score because the application was incomplete. It was missing sufficient detail, no data was provided, and a budget was not submitted. Ms. Constanzia Nizza did reach out to the applicant but did not hear back from them.

No motion was made to approve this award.

Heroes in Waiting – Heroes in Waiting have created a research-based, multi-dimensional, anti-bullying, and peace-making curriculum integrating Social Emotion Learning for use with students in 6th through 12th grades. It involves leveraging community collaboration, school-wide engagement, and individual motivation. Score: 92/120. Amount requested: \$59,650.

Reviewers noted that this organization identifies the target community specifically focusing on students affected by bullying, suicide, and mental health issues. They demonstrated an understanding of who their key partners should be and why those partners are meaningful. This program has feasible design moving with beta testing, being school based, staff with experience, and expansion goals. The cultural design is Oklahoma based with peer involvement and those with lived experience. The SAG can only award funding

up to \$50,000 and Ms. Kim Gray would work with the applicant getting an approved budget submitted.

Dr. Greg Parks made the motion and Erin Jones-Slatev made the second to approve the proposed award to Heroes in Waiting in the amount of \$50,000 contingent upon filing an approved budget prior to contract. Dr. Jaime Burns, David Grawe, Maureen Guerrero, David Hall, Erin Jones-Slatev, Dr. Greg Parks, Jake Roberts and Brian Wahnee voted yes. Demetruis Bell and Les Thomas abstained. The motion carried.

Poetry and Chill – Poetry and Chil is an on-site and hands on program providing students with weekly opportunities to express their feelings through written and spoken word. They will connect with literacy through a culturally relevant and engaging performance-based art form to which reading, writing, and vocabulary skill development are critical. The program operates as a weekly writing workshop. Score: 43/120. Amount requested: \$60,000.

The reviewers indicated that this application lacked specific data to support their claims, lacked additional details on the make-up of the community and supporting data was missing. Details were missing on how the program would be implemented and did not address the administrative capability of the program.

No motion was made to approve this award.

NOBLE and Mindful Resolutions #1 – This program will engage youth ages 13-18 referred by the Muskogee Court System. The program will be facilitated by trained law enforcement officers who will serve as “credible messengers” and mentors. Youth will participate in 12 structured sessions focused on de-escalation, mindfulness, communication and emotional regulation. Mindful Resolutions will provide facilitator training, ongoing consultation, fidelity checks, and post-program evaluation. The program is designed to support youth reentry, prevent recidivism, and strengthen protective factors during the critical transition into the new school year. Score: 102/120. Amount requested: \$50,000.

Reviewers noted that this applicant provided a clear understanding of the community they serve and provided evidence of the need and how they will address that need. Their goals and objectives were clear. They have meaningful partnerships.

Two RFPs were open—one for Native American funding and one for Delinquency Prevention funding. OJA Staff noted that they believe one of the NOBLE and Mindful Resolution applications was submitted in an incorrect category but only one of the two applications can be awarded under Delinquency Prevention. The only difference between the two programs in one is for court-involved youth and the other is for schools.

A motion was made to approve the proposed award to NOBLE and Mindful Resolution #1 in the amount of \$50,000 contingent upon the decline of application #2 by Erin Jones-Slatev and seconded by Demetruis Bell. All present voted yes, and the motion carried.

NOBLE and Mindful Resolutions #2 – This second project will target students at Muskogee Public Schools’ (MPS) Rougher Alternative Academy, many of whom face disciplinary barriers, chronic absenteeism, or behavioral challenges. While the curriculum and structure remain the same, this implementation will be directly facilitated by Mindful Resolution staff, allowing for evaluation of the program’s effectiveness when led by a community-based provider rather than law enforcement. MPS has expressed full support for this effort, which integrates trauma-informed SEL into an educational setting as a proactive diversion and re-engagement strategy. Score: 104/120. Amount requested: \$50,000.

Again, they clearly demonstrated an understanding of the issues in the community, provided clear data to support the need for the program, and provided details on who the program will serve.

A motion was made to approve the proposed award to NOBLE and Mindful Resolution #2 in the amount of \$50,000 contingent upon the decline of application #1 by Maureen Guererro and seconded by David Hall. All present voted yes, and the motion carried.

V. SAG Retreat Planning

The SAG Retreat will be August 6th, 7th, and 8th at Lake Murray Lodge in Ardmore, Oklahoma. Check-in will be between 3pm and 4pm on Wednesday, August 6th. There will be team-building activities and games that evening.

Thursday we will have team-building activities as well along with presentations from various groups. OJA will be partnering with OU who will be helping build part of the curriculum for Title II funding. They will be working with Ms. Kim Gray and will be it together and will explain some of the “Dos and Don’ts” of awarding funding. In addition, Joshua Holder will be presenting on Compliance.

Friday will be a wrap-up of presentation, work groups presenting their plans for the upcoming year and ending with the SAG board meeting to approve any necessary items. All new board members will attend as well, even if they have not been officially confirmed by the time of the retreat. The retreat will be a “SAG 101” to help new members learn about what the SAG does.

VI. Work Group Assignments

Work groups have been created to help the SAG fulfil its main vision and mission.

By-Laws. Group Members include Erin Jones-Slatev, James Edwards and Maureen Guerrero. They want to work on language in the by-laws around membership as well as adding specifics about the annual retreat.

Grants/Title II. Group Members include Constanzia Nizza, Jamie Sherman, Dr. Greg Parks and Pray’eon Jackson. They also have a member from the OJA Board, Josh Trimble, working with them. Their most recent meeting was to work on getting the current RFPs up, scored and voted on and will continue to work on grants awarded.

Tribal. Group Members include Alison Humphrey, Jake Roberts, Brian Wahnee and Chad Gragg. Additional members include OJA's Education Director, Melissa White, and OJA Board Member, Judge Gail Blaylock. The work the SAG is doing in this area could help the OJA Charter School meet the requirements it has—so the work done by the committee not only help SAG but system wide. Data is being collected regarding all the tribes within the state and their locations, as well as what tribal youth that OJA is having contact with so that partnerships can be established with those tribal nations.

Membership. Group Members include Les Thomas and David Grewe. Their work has included getting the most recent nominations for board members approved. Instead of just the committee making nominations, The Chair would like to have all SAG members participate in the process and make nominations then vote on them as a body.

VII. Reports

- OJA's OJJDP Finances – Kimberlee Gray, Comptroller**

Ms. Kimberlee Gray provided the monthly financial report as of June 30, 2025. The Finance Report is attached along with a report on the Back-to-School 2025 Awards.

- Title II – Constanzia Nizza**

Ms. Constanzia Nizza gave the Title II funding update to the SAG. The results of the recent DOJ audit were received on June 6, 2025. Both the R/ED and Compliance Monitoring update reports were submitted on July 8, 2025. Ms. Nizza also spoke about the status of FLUXX testing.

All the funding for Summer Youth Programs approved by the SAG in the May 13, 2025, meeting was also approved by the OJA Board approves, and contracts have been signed.

Some success stories from programs that the SAG funded were shared by Ms. Nizza. She shared feedback that has been received from parents, youth and staff. Real differences in kid's lives are being made by funding approved by this board.

- Youth Emerging Leaders (YEL) – Pray'eon Jackson**

Mr. Les Thomas gave an update on behalf of Mr. Pray'eon Jackson. YEL recently hosted Hoopfest in partnership with the Oklahoma City Police Department. It provided a safe place for the youth to enjoy a safe place with fun, food, and basketball and to connect with the community.

- Compliance – Joshua Holder**

The Compliance report was given by Mr. Josh Holder. He has made great progress since the last SAG meeting in clearing up the backlog on compliance visits. All that remains to be visited are specialized facilities like detention and correctional centers, work centers, etc. He expects to be completely caught up by the end of next week.

Once the backlog is complete, Mr. Holder will be rebuilding the process. His main goal will be efficiency and building better relationships with the police departments. Getting more resources for them is a priority.

- **R/ED – William White**

Mr. William White updated the SAG on the creation of a program to replace the Effective Interactions with Police (EPIY) training. EPIY has 4 modules, and the new training will have 5 modules. One module will include both pieces of Racial and Ethnic Disparities (R/ED) and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES). Another module will talk about implicit bias.

It will also have a unit on Trauma Informed Policing. The director has asked that he also include the Science of Hope in the training.

Mr. White is working with both Janelle Bretten and Samie Harley on getting it standardized. He hopes to have it up and running after the retreat.

VIII. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:43 a.m.