

**INTERSTATE COMMISSION FOR JUVENILES**

*East Region Meeting Minutes*

November 7, 2024

11:00 a.m. ET

Via Zoom



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**Preliminary Business**

**Call to Order**

Regional Representative T. Casanova (VT) called the meeting to order at 11:01 a.m. ET.

**Roll Call**

Director Underwood called the roll, and a quorum was established.

**Voting Commissioners/Designees in Attendance:**

1. Trissie Casanova (VT), Designee, Regional Representative
2. A. Roy Curtis (ME), Commissioner, Alternate Regional Representative
3. Tasha Hunt (CT), Commissioner
4. Francis "Mike" Casey (DE), Commissioner
5. Becki Moore (MA), Commissioner
6. Caitlyn Bickford (NH), Commissioner
7. James Maloney (NY)
8. Wendy Lautsbaugh (PA), Commissioner

**Compact Staff in Attendance:**

1. Nordia Napier (CT)
2. Cecily Rexach (CT)
3. Erin Breitigan (DE)
4. Donna Reed (MA)
5. Bob Lemieux (MA)
6. Shyra Bland (NJ)

**Voting Commissioners/Designees Not in Attendance:**

1. Christine Norris (DE), Designee
2. Jennifer LeBaron (NJ), Commissioner
3. Edwin Lee, Jr. (NJ), Designee
4. Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden (NY), Commissioner
5. Jessica Nash (RI), Commissioner
6. William Dolan (RI), Designee
7. Eavey Monique-James (VI), Commissioner

**National Office Staff in Attendance:**

1. MaryLee Underwood, Executive Director
2. Amanee Cabbagestalk, Training and Administrative Specialist
3. Jenny Adkins, Operations and Policies Specialist
4. Kirsten Wade, Logistics and Administrative Specialist
5. Joe Johnson, System Project Manager

**Agenda**

T. Hunt (CT) made a motion to approve the meeting agenda as corrected. R. Curtis (ME) seconded the motion. Representative T. Casanova (VT) approved the agenda by unanimous consent without objection.

## Minutes

C. Bickford (NH) made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting on September 24, 2024. M. Casey (DE) seconded the motion. Representative T. Casanova (VT) approved the minutes by unanimous consent without objection.

## Check-ins

- Representative T. Casanova (VT) initiated a check-in activity for the region members to share updates from their state.
  - Representative T. Casanova (VT) shared that Vermont reopened a secure facility, which may provide an option for housing for youth. However, it was full at the time. She also mentioned that there would be discussions about raising the age in the upcoming legislative session.
  - W. Lautsbaugh (PA) shared that Pennsylvania is facing a bed shortage at detention facilities and that each county was coming up with its own plan.

## Unfinished Business

### **Discuss how to ensure safety during the home evaluation process, when background checks are required**

- C. Bickford (NH) shared a summary of the discussion from the East Region meeting in September about measures that should be taken during the home evaluation process to ensure the safety of juveniles. She noted that neither child abuse registration checks nor criminal background checks are required. These could be especially important when a juvenile is being relocated to live with relatives in another state.
- Representative T. Casanova (VT) stated there are no clear guidelines within the Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ) to use during home evaluations process to determine what is “safe enough” for a juvenile. She agreed that background checks should be conducted to vet the appropriateness of the placement and help ensure the youth is in a safe home.
- M. Casey (DE) shared that conducting background checks can be a lengthy process, sometimes exceeding 45 days. He stated there are additional consent forms are required to conduct background checks for all adults in the proposed residence.
- Representative T. Casanova (VT) asked C. Bickford (NH) whether she was referring to fingerprint background checks or local criminal background checks.
- C. Bickford (NH) stated she did not have a specific type of background check in mind but was curious to hear what other states were doing during the home evaluation process to ensure the juvenile’s safety during supervision.
- T. Casanova (VT) asked members whether the East Region should pursue a change in the Form VIII, Home Evaluation Report, or a rule proposal.
- Director Underwood stated that the forms are based on the rules, therefore adding a requirement to a form would require a change to the rules.
- N. Napier (CT) shared that Connecticut's ICJ office is not connected to a child welfare agency. Therefore, additional time would be required to gather child protection information. She shared it would be a challenge to get that information back within 45 days allowed for completion of the home evaluation process.
- T. Casanova (VT) acknowledged the systemic challenges.
- N. Napier (CT) shared that the Training Committee previously developed a best practice training on the home evaluation process. She suggested recirculating the training to states.
- R. Curtis (ME) shared that Maine’s ICJ office inquires with the child welfare agencies regarding whether any calls were made to the proposed home.

- B. Moore (MA) shared concerns about how background checks could be interpreted and when a determination about the youth’s safety would be made. She recommended that the region continue the discussion on the topic.
- N. Napier (CT) asked if background checks in a home evaluation is for cases where the youth is not living with their guardian.
- T. Casanova (VT) stated further discussion is needed about the focus, and suggested it should be on non-parent home evaluations.
- S. Bland (NJ) asked what would ICJ offices could or would do if the background check revealed issues of concern.
- T. Hunt (CT) stated she agreed with B. Moore (MA), and that there needs to be a better understanding of the varying degrees of safety.
- C. Bickford (NH) recommended continued discussion and getting information from states in other regions about their best practices. She noted the initial discussion focused on youths who are not able to live with their legal guardian in the sending state and request a transfer of supervision to live with a relative in another state.
- Director Underwood noted the issue could be referred the Training Committee.
- T. Casanova (VT) stated the discussion would be continued at the next meeting as unfinished business. She suggested getting a smaller group together prior to the next meeting to develop recommendations.
- B. Moore (MA) shared that she is on the Training Committee and would serve as a liaison to represent the discussion for the East Region.
- Director Underwood stated that, procedurally, the East Region would need to make a recommendation to the Executive Committee to refer the discussion to the Training Committee.
- **C. Bickford (NH) made a motion to refer the matter of ensuring safety during the home evaluation process to the Executive Committee, to determine if it is appropriate to refer to the Training Committee. R. Curtis (ME) seconded. The motion passed.**

## New Business

### Rule Amendment Proposals

- Rule 1-101
  - Representative T. Casanova (VT) presented a rule amendment proposal to add a definition of “Human Trafficking” to Rule 1-101, as it considered a form of child abuse and should be considered when discussing non-delinquent runaways.
  - The proposed definition was “Human Trafficking: Human Trafficking is a crime that involves the exploitation of a person through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of forced labor or commercial sex. As minors cannot consent to commercial sex acts the elements of force, fraud, or coercion are not needed.”
  - N. Napier (CT) asked where the definition of “Human Trafficking” was from.
  - T. Casanova (VT) answered that the proposed definition was based on the federal definition of human trafficking.
  - Director Underwood observed the proposed definition was not an exact quote and suggested the second sentence should be clarified.
  - S. Bland (NJ) suggested specifying that the definition applies to anyone under the age of 18, as they cannot consent to commercial sex.
  - The proposal was edited to say, “Anyone under the age of 18 cannot consent to commercial sex acts; therefore, the elements of force, fraud or coercion are not needed.”

- Director Underwood expressed concerns about the definition including the word "crime," which could imply there must have been a determination that a crime was committed in order for the definition to be applicable.
  - C. Bickford (NH) suggested removing the word "crime" and focusing on the exploitation of a person. The definition was changed to "Human trafficking: exploitation of a person through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of forced labor or commercial sex. Anyone under the age of 18 cannot consent to commercial sex acts; therefore, the elements of force, fraud or coercion are not needed. "
  - Director Underwood noted that the "Justification" section of the rule amendment proposal needs to be completed to describe the problem the proposed amendment would address.
  - T. Casanova (VT) stated the justification is to highlight concerns regarding the release of non-delinquent runaways and concerns of human trafficking and exploitation. She stated it is important for there to be a concise definition stated in the ICJ Rules.
- Rule 6-101: Release of Non-Delinquent Runaways
    - Representative T. Casanova (VT) advised that the East Region Subcommittee on Non-delinquent Runaways, which was formed the previous fiscal year, proposed amending Rule 6-101: Release of Non-Delinquent Runaways to be more specific.
      - The proposed addition to Section 1 would state, "If child abuse/neglect (including human trafficking which includes both commercial sex and forced labor) is suspected the child must be held under the Compact and cannot be released."
      - A second paragraph would be added to include, "If the legal guardian/custodial agency is unable to get the child/youth within 24 hours then the holding state must hold the child/youth under the Compact."
    - C. Bickford (NH) expressed concern that the proposed amendment could lead to confusion and prevent the return of juveniles to protective parents or guardians who were not involved in any alleged trafficking.
    - S. Bland (NJ) shared concerns about the phrase "the child must be held under the Compact," because child welfare agencies become involved when there are concerns of abuse and neglect.
    - T. Casanova (VT) asked members if there is a word other than "held" that might work better.
    - M. Casey (DE) said the term "child abuse and neglect" only applies if the someone in the residence or the legal guardian is involved, whereas "human trafficking" might occur without wrongdoing by those parties. He agreed that holding a juvenile when the parents are not implicated would be problematic.
    - Representative T. Casanova (VT) clarified that the proposed amendment was intended to prevent return only when abuse or neglect involves the legal guardian or custodial agency, which could include human trafficking.
    - R. Curtis (ME) stated the justification for this proposal was to clarify that youth cannot be released back to their parent or legal guardian when there are suspicions of abuse or by such person(s), until the investigation is completed.
    - N. Napier (CT) asked whether the proposal referred to suspected abuse or neglect by legal guardians or parents.
    - R. Curtis (ME) confirmed that it is referring to whomever the youth would be released to within the 24-hour time frame. The proposal was intended to clarify that if the youth has disclosed abuse or neglect by their guardians, the child must be held and the abuse is reported to the home state.

- C. Bickford (NH) added sometimes there is a lack of information about the conditions or circumstances in which the youth was located. If the parent is not the perpetrator, then the youth should be released back to them within 24-hours.
- T. Hunt (CT) stated there could be implications for agencies that do not release a child to a parent or legal guardian who is not the subject of investigation.
- R. Curtis (ME) suggested changing the proposed amendment to Rule 6-101(1) to: “If the legal guardian/custodial agency is unable to get the child/youth within 24 hours then the holding state must not release the youth.”
- R. Curtis (ME) observed that Rule 6-102 states, “Once an out of state juvenile is found and detained, the following procedures apply” and suggested editing the proposed amendment to make the Rule 6-101 consistent with Rule 6-102. The proposed edit would say, “If the legal guardian/custodial agency is unable to get the child/youth within 24 hours then the holding state must detain the youth.”
- T. Casanova (VT) stated that the term “detain” had a different connotation, which is why the group chose to use the term “hold” instead.
- T. Casanova (VT) recommended the East Region’s Subcommittee on Non-delinquent Runaways meet to review and update the proposed rule amendments. The East Region will meet again in December to discuss the Rule Proposals.

### Hot Topics from the “ICJ Updates”

- **Hot Topics from “ICJ Updates”** (Region Representative)
  - [Fact Sheet on ICJ Returns and Non-Delinquent Runaways](#)
    - Director Underwood encouraged members to review the new Fact Sheet, which was released before the Annual Business Meeting (ABM). Minor edits were made by the Executive Committee at the ABM.
  - [2024 Annual Report](#) distribution to state stakeholders
    - Representative T. Casanova (VT) shared that the Annual Report is on the Commission’s website.
  - Wednesday Workshop Live Training Session
    - The National Runaway Safeline presented a session on October 30, 2024.
      - Amanee Cabbagestalk (National Office) shared that a recording of the session is available on TalentLMS. Additional resources would be shared in the newsletter the following week.
    - The series will resume in January 2025.

### Next Steps

- Director Underwood thanked members who signed up to be on a committee. If anyone in the East Region would like to join the Finance Committee, please reach out to Director Underwood or to Chair H. Wykes (AZ). East Region members volunteered to serve on each of the other standing committees.
- R. Curtis (ME) shared a reminder that on December 1, 2024, UNITY users will be required to accept the revised UNITY Privacy Policy upon login to UNITY and to the UNITY training site.

### Adjourn

**Regional Representative T. Casanova (VT) adjourned the meeting by acclamation without objection at 12:23 p.m. ET.**