

MINUTES

SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGING, CHILDREN AND YOUTH, AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS Meeting Jointly

Monday, August 24, 2026

1:00 PM

Room A, MAC

Little Rock, Arkansas

Committee members present: Senators Alan Clark, and Dan Sullivan; Representatives Mary Bentley, Vice Chair; Glenn Barnes, Lincoln Barnett, Keith Brooks, Nick Burkes, Joey L. Carr, Paul Childress, Hope Duke, James Eaton, Tony Furman, Diana Gonzales Worthen, Dolly Henley, Rick McClure, Jessie McGruder, Shad Pearce, Joy Springer, and Randy Torres

Other members present: Senators Jim Dotson, Stephanie Flowers, Fredrick Love, and Jamie Scott; Representatives Cameron Cooper, Denise Ennett, Jon Eubanks, Kenneth Ferguson, Denise Garner, Steve Hollowell, Jack Ladyman, Tippi McCullough, Aaron Pilkington, Jay Richardson, Tara Shephard, Tracy Steele, Steven Walker, and Jeff Wardlaw

Representative Bentley called the meeting to order.

Consideration to Approve June 3, 2026, Meeting Minutes [Exhibit B]

Representative Furman made a motion to approve the meeting minutes, seconded by Representative Springer, and the motion carried.

Discussion of Private Entities Working with Families [Exhibits C1 - C6]

Christen Butler, Executive Director, The Call, presented an overview of their non-profit organization, which engages local churches to support children and youth in foster care. The organization supplies clothing, meals, emergency provisions, and other essential resources to help families provide care for these children.

Dr. Derek Brown, Executive Director, Arkansas Baptist Children and Families Ministries, expressed that his program, established approximately 130 years ago as an orphanage, now has evolved to provide communication and transportation services for children seeking permanent families.

Tiffany Wright, Director, Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS); Ashley Ryan, Social Services Specialist, Conway County; Chellsey Blanchard, Social Services Specialist, Cleburne County; and Carveyeta Walker-Bridges, Social Services Supervisor, Ashley County; announced an initiation of a statewide hiring campaign at DCFS to address existing vacancies. Additionally, they provided an overview of their roles within their respective communities and outlined their contributions to supporting DCFS operations.

Review of Department of Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Family Preservation Services Report SFY 2026 [Exhibit D]

Tiffany Wright, Director, DCFS, delivered an assessment of recent DCFS performance and outcomes, detailing the number of child maltreatment reports that were accepted for investigation.

Review of Arkansas State Police, Crimes Against Children Division (CACD), Quarterly Oversight Report, January – March 2026 [Exhibit E]

Major Jeff Drew, Commander, CACD, reviewed the Quarterly Oversight Report, January – March 2026, detailing the types of child abuse calls that were received as well as the number which were substantiated.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

DRAFT