

Idaho Criminal Justice Commission
Regular Meeting
November 14, 2025

Location: Hybrid – Idaho Supreme Court Building – [Zoom Link](#)

Time: 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Idaho Criminal Justice Commission Members Present:

Ashley Dowell, Chair, IDJC
Kieran Donahue, Vice Chair, ISA
Joe Alfieri, House Jud, Rules & Admin
Monty Prow, Health & Welfare
Melissa Wintrow, Senate Judiciary & Rules
Bill Gardiner, Idaho State Police
Russ Wheatley Sr., Public Member
Erik Lehtinen, SAPD
Thomas Sullivan, Judge, Magistrate Court*
Darren Simpson, Judge, District Court*Zoom

Bruce Skaug, House Jud & Rules Admin
Carson Tester, Office of the Governor
Denton Darrington, Public Member
Christine Starr, Comm of Pardons & Parole
Bree Derrick, Department of Correction
Bernadette LaSarte, Public Member
Grant Loebs, Prosecuting Attorneys Assoc.
Seth Grigg, Idaho Association of Counties
Jonathon Brody, Judge, District Court*

Comprising a quorum of Idaho Criminal Justice Commission (Commission)

*Non-voting members

Idaho Criminal Justice Commission Members Absent:

Tracy Basterrechea, Chiefs of Police Association	Ross Edmunds, Office of Drug Policy
Todd Lakey, Senate Judiciary & Rules Chairman	Eric Fredericksen, State Public Defender
Bart Davis, U.S. Attorney, District of Idaho*	Sara Omundson, Idaho Supreme Court*
Jeff Nye, Idaho Attorney General's Office	Greg Wilson, Department of Education

Others Present:

Justin Whatcott, U.S. Attorney's Office for Bart Davis
Jen Rupe, AG's Office for Jeff Nye
Jason Spillman, AOC for Sara Omundson
Casey Petti, OPE
Ryan Langrill, OPE
Doug Hart, Canyon County
Danielle Chandler, IDoc
Wendi Secrist, Idaho Workforce Development Council
Whitney Brian, reporter
Lorraine Drapper

Agenda Who's Responsible		Meeting Outcomes/Decisions Reached
9:00 am	Call to Order— <i>Chair Ashley Dowell</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome and Roll Call— <i>Chair Ashley Dowell</i> • Review Commission's Vision and Mission Statement and Values—<i>Commission Members</i> 	
Commission Management		
	Action Item – Approve July 25, 2025, Minutes	<i>Kieran Donahue made a motion to approve the minutes from July 25, 2025; Bree Derrick seconded. Motion carried.</i>
Promote Well-Informed Policy Decisions		
	Cadence and Agenda of 2026 Meetings	There was a suggestion to have meetings every other month. This gives subcommittees time to do their work. Next meeting will be in January.
	Canyon County Staffing and Public Safety Workforce Presentation - Chief Deputy Doug Hart, CCSO and Wendi Secrist, Workforce Development Council	Public Safety Positions subcommittee Understanding & reducing turnover in public safety. It was emphasized that the high rate of turnover in public safety is a significant issue, impacting first responders nationwide. In Idaho alone, there are between 500 and 600 public safety agencies, employing 20,000 to 25,000 people, and staffing shortages severely hinder their ability to perform their duties and respond to crises promptly. This problem is defined as financial, operational, and organizational, with the true cost of replacing a public safety employee estimated nationally at one and a half to two times their salary. The financial price tag of high turnover includes real dollars lost when highly-invested employees leave for better-paying agencies. Canyon County Sheriff's Office estimates the cost to replace an entry-level jail deputy at \$150,000, mid-level at \$180,000, and senior level at \$215,000, while Ada County estimates a cost of around \$380,000 to replace an experienced deputy.

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	<p>Operationally, it was noted that increased liability risk and erosion of community trust due to declines in service quality and response times are significant issues, while organizationally, the loss of institutional knowledge and experience creates a substantial burden as agencies are constantly in a training cycle.</p> <p>Organizational: loss of institutional knowledge and history, loss of vital experience, which leads to morale and continuity issues. There are mandated minimum staff levels that need to be met.</p> <p>Locally, departments like the Meridian Police Department are losing officers to Boise over benefits, and the Ada County Sheriff's Office is seeking wage increases to remain competitive. Efforts to fund public safety through levies have mixed results, as seen with Meridian passing a \$5 million levy to retain 13 firefighter positions and increase police wages, while Canyon County's ambulance district eventually passed a temporary levy after two failures. The Middleton Star fire levies failing for the fourth time, leaving new stations empty because impact fees pay for building construction but cannot be used for salaries, further complicated by House Bill 389 capping property tax revenue growth at 8% annually, far below the city's 20-22% growth rate.</p> <p>ISP reported significant staff loss, with 40 current openings out of approximately 150 marked patrol trooper positions. ISP is losing people to counties because of pay differences, noting that cities and counties are paying \$12 to \$15 an hour more. The problem is compounded by how state employees' cost of living increases (CEC) is calculated only on the general fund portion of their salary, resulting in troopers being significantly behind in pay over 20 years.</p> <p>The ISP Colonel stated that the hard and soft cost of training a trooper until they are off probation is over a million dollars. Recruitment has declined sharply, with only about 75 applicants for the last academy, compared to 700 or 800</p>

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	<p>previously, and two of the ten current recruits have already indicated they plan to leave after their committed two years.</p> <p>IDOC representative shared that their vacancy rate has been sustained at 5-6% for about two years, an improvement from 25%, but they expressed concern over the sustainability of these solutions.</p> <p>At the Canyon County Sheriff's Office, the voluntary turnover rate was 28%, or over 40% including terminations and retirements. Kelli Brassfield utilized a data-driven solution, conservatively estimating the cost of turnover over two years at \$3.4 million, to justify a new wage scale costing \$900,000 annually. This strategy, heavily frontloaded to retain employees through their first five years, resulted in the turnover rate dropping to about 3%, as long as the county commissioners continue to support and sustain the new wage scale.</p> <p>Executive Director of the Workforce Development Council (WDC), explained that their role is to increase public awareness of career education and training, improve the effectiveness of programs, and ensure the efficient use of workforce resources. The WDC is governed by a 37-member council, with 51% representation from the private sector, and its mission is informed by the jobs that Idaho employers are creating.</p> <p>It was highlighted that every industry in Idaho faces staffing problems due to the state's rapid growth and substantial job creation, projecting 103,000 new jobs per year over the next decade, with the number of people entering the labor force not matching those exiting. Focusing only on pay is unsustainable, emphasizing the need to "grow the pie bigger" by increasing the number of people entering public safety professions.</p> <p>There are several assets designed to support public safety workforce development, including CTE programs in high schools for law enforcement, firefighting, and EMTs. They stressed the need for better career pathways, especially for students in high school CTE programs who are not yet 21 and need options like corrections officer until they can become patrol officers. The</p>

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		<p>WDC uses a Talent Pipeline Management framework, which applies supply chain methodology to workforce development by creating employer collaboratives to align training programs with employer needs.</p> <p>There are grants through the Workforce Development Training Fund, generated by a portion of employer unemployment insurance taxes, to invest in scaling programs like pre-apprenticeships and career exploration. There is great value of apprenticeships as a work-based learning model to help employees grow in place, rather than disconnecting them for schooling. Key state programs include Advanced Opportunities, which provides \$4,625 per student for dual credit and certifications, Idaho Launch, offering \$8,000 for high school seniors for training in in-demand careers, and the Idaho Opportunity Scholarship.</p> <p>There was an inquiry about the impact of the Public Retirement System of Idaho (PERSI) on law enforcement recruitment and retention. WFD stated that for younger workers, retirement benefits are often not a tangible benefit that drives initial job decisions, particularly when compared to higher hourly wages. The ISP Colonel added that the rule of 80 being taken away from investigators significantly impacts their ability to recruit experienced people who do not want to lose those benefits.</p>
	<p>Coroner System Presentation</p> <p>- Torey Danner, Bannock County Coroner; Casey Petti, OPE; Senator Melissa Wintrow</p>	<p>Torey Danner, the coroner from Banick County, explained that Idaho's coroner is an elected county-level position with minimal requirements (must be 18 and an Idaho resident), which makes mandatory, approved training especially important.</p> <p>Torey Danner detailed the critical duties of coroners, which include determining the cause and manner of death and safeguarding the community through medical-legal death investigations. Their investigations expose ongoing threats like carbon monoxide leaks, communicable diseases, and unrecognized homicides, contributing to public safety and health surveillance by collecting data on disease trends and emerging health threats, including monitoring mental health crises like teen suicides. Additionally, coroners partner with law</p>

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		<p>enforcement by providing crucial evidence in criminal cases and are key in mass disaster preparedness.</p> <p>Torey Danner noted that coroners use varied methods for data collection and storage, requiring a move toward standardized practices for better data management and consistency. Furthermore, there are varying levels of education and experience across the state, and a commitment exists to bridge these gaps to uphold national best practices in death investigation.</p> <p>Casey Petty, Principal Evaluator at OPE, reported that Idaho's coroner system is fractured, diffused, and relies on code dating back to 1864 territorial laws. A significant finding was that the level of service for death investigations varies depending on where an individual dies. Senate Bill 1101, passed during the most recent session, addressed many concerns by expanding the types of deaths reportable to a coroner (Idaho previously ranked 41st nationally) and clarifying that the decedent falls under the coroner's jurisdiction, preventing scene alteration before notification. The bill also provided clearer definitions, such as for an "unintended death," which helped resolve prior ambiguities in the system.</p> <p>Idaho is one of only eight states with coroners that does not provide any state-level oversight, which leads to varying fidelity of investigation practices county by county due to a lack of accountability. Although training is required, only 41% of elected coroners completed the required 24 hours of continuing education in 2023, and Idaho is one of three coroner states with zero oversight to ensure compliance, unlike other states that impose consequences like misdemeanors or removal from office for failure to complete training.</p> <p>Idaho code lacks provisions prohibiting coroners from publicly sharing information during active death investigations, unlike law enforcement, citing a high-profile murder case where a county coroner described details on national news. Furthermore, many coroners use informal, handwritten notes or store sensitive investigation data at home, despite an available online tool (MDI log) provided by Ada County. There are also inconsistencies in sharing data with bodies like the Child Fatality Review Team and in submitting data to databases</p>

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		<p>like OD Maps for tracking drug overdoses, with no regulation on how long death investigation data should be stored.</p> <p>There are significant resource issues, noting that many coroners lack basic offices and essential equipment like computers, cameras, and, critically, vehicles or coolers for transporting and storing decedents. They reported that the median salary for elected coroners in 2022 was \$17,969, less than half of the next closest county official (county commissioners). This low pay is a major barrier to recruiting and retaining qualified deputy coroners; the median salary for deputies in the 38 smallest counties was only \$4,000 annually, making it difficult to staff this 24/7 role.</p> <p>Idaho has zero deaths legally required to be autopsied, leaving the decision to the coroner or county prosecutor. Idaho's autopsy rate for all deaths between 2018 and 2022 was 3.9%, ranking 49th nationally, compared to the national average of 7.8%. The state ranked last in autopsying child deaths from external or unknown causes (49% compared to 79% nationally) and autopsied only 92% of known homicides, the lowest in the country. Barriers to increasing autopsy rates include a lack of forensic pathologists in the state, high costs for counties (estimated \$6,000–\$7,000 per autopsy for rural counties), and long distances to current autopsy centers, especially in eastern Idaho.</p> <p>Senator Winrow discussed that the working group is pursuing incremental changes through a strategic plan, acknowledging that a complete overhaul, such as a constitutional amendment or substantial budget, would be overwhelming. They proposed creating an advisory group, similar to the POST academy board, made up of stakeholders like coroners and commissioners to provide guidance and accountability statewide, which could govern resources distributed to counties that lack the necessary funds. A potential solution for initial funding involves increasing the existing \$1 fee on death certificates, which currently yields \$80,000–\$90,000 annually; this sustainable funding could potentially be matched by the legislature.</p>

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		<p>The group is investigating options to address the facility gap for autopsies, particularly in eastern and northern Idaho. They are looking at possibilities to partner with a hospital or add space at the State Police forensic center, which would decrease the cost of building entirely new facilities. Furthermore, there is exciting progress on the workforce issue, as several forensic pathologists in training have expressed interest in settling in Idaho, necessitating immediate efforts to secure funding and facilities to support them.</p> <p>There is drafted legislation to protect the confidentiality of decedent photos, acknowledging the complexity of balancing the decedent's dignity with the needs of law enforcement and requests from next of kin for closure. This legislation, currently being vetted by stakeholders, would amend the public records exemption to cover photos held by both the coroner and law enforcement, applying to active or inactive cases, and aims to prevent the release of potentially traumatic images to the public or family members.</p> <p>There were comments about coroner buy-in, expressing concern that reform efforts might be perceived as personal attacks by those invested in the current system. Coroners are generally seeking to improve and raise the bar to national best practices and standards, which requires more consistent training and stepping up methods to better serve communities. It was added that there is a growing momentum for change, driven partly by public awareness, which is guiding motivation for improvements in public safety.</p>
	<p>Subcommittee Administration and Forms</p> <p>– Kelli Brassfield, IAC</p>	<p>Subcommittees have incomplete member information on the website. Kelli requested complete subcommittee lists. Agendas and minutes need to be sent to them seven days before posting to allow adequate time, standardizing the process through them for consistency.</p> <p>Virtual meetings should be streamed like ICJC meetings rather than allowing public participants to join, due to the risk of "zoombombing" with inappropriate content.</p>

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	<p>-Danielle Chandler, IDJC</p>	<p>The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) approved earlier in the year is awaiting one final signature before being distributed, and invoices for the FY26 year would be sent out soon.</p> <p>Danielle presented a short charter form designed for subcommittees to track their progress, suggesting it be user-friendly with an abstract, three to five objectives, and milestones with deadlines. It was also proposed that the form, which also lists work group members, should be updated after each subcommittee meeting or at least every two months, to serve as a record of achievements and be a resource for stakeholders.</p>
	<p>Subcommittee Updates:</p> <p>1. Human Trafficking - David Neth, ISP and Jen Rupe, OAG</p> <p>2. Sex Crimes - Tracy Basterrechea, ICOPA and Erik Lehtinen, SAPD</p>	<p>Jen provided an update on the human trafficking subcommittee, noting that its trajectory is influenced by a report currently being processed due to recommendations in HP494. The formal full launch of the subcommittee is anticipated for the end of Q1 or early Q2. Jen and Major Pattis are meeting regularly to discuss human trafficking and define the subcommittee's scope, including referencing how other states operate their subcommittees.</p> <p>Jen reported that Major Pattis attended a training in San Diego to increase their knowledge, making valuable contacts to help define the subcommittee's scope. ISP completed four two-day trainings for all troopers on human trafficking, which is hoped to increase identification since initial encounters often happen during patrol stops. Jen also mentioned that ISP investigations are responsible for three of the six currently pending human trafficking cases at the state level.</p> <p>Erik provided a brief update on the sex crime prevention subcommittee, stating that progress has been slow due dealing with a new subject matter and the</p>

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	<p>3. Neurocognitive Holds and Placements - Judge Sullivan, ISC and Jared Larsen, DHW</p> <p>4. Support for Victims - Christine Starr, COPP and Bernie LaSarte</p> <p>5. Riders - Bree Derrick, IDOC and Judge Simpson, ISC</p>	<p>resulting learning curve. Eric indicated that they need to schedule another meeting to formulate the subcommittee and get the work started.</p> <p>Judge Sullivan reported that their seven-member committee had its first meeting, discussing problems related to the new crisis hold statute. The major concern is the "neurocognitive holes" when individuals experiencing a crisis, often with neurocognitive issues, are released from care without a long-term solution or community support, putting strain on law enforcement and hospitals.</p> <p>Christine provided an update on their subcommittee's progress, focusing on creating a statewide victim registry which may require legislation. The group is looking at smaller, direct impacts, such as whether advocate staff for PSIs should put victim information into atlas, while navigating issues like non-charged crimes. Lauren and Britney are sending new letters to post-conviction individuals. Work is continuing on a letter bank at IDOC.</p> <p>Bree reported that the rider subcommittee has not met since its first meeting but has been working via email to develop a survey for judges, then prosecutors and public defenders. Sandy Jones from the court is assisting with project management to finalize and distribute the survey, and a meeting is scheduled for December. IDOC's team is currently analyzing data to better understand the rider program's effectiveness and trends, with initial slides prepared for review at the upcoming meeting.</p>
	Other Commission Business	
12:00 pm	Adjourn	The meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm MT.

Regularly scheduled meeting to be held in Boise, Friday, December 12, 2025

“Collaborating for a Safer Idaho”