

GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT



The Honorable Judge Khadija Babb
Criminal Court Division V
Davidson County, Tennessee

July - September 2026

Rev. Alisha Smith Haddock, Foreperson

Final Report of the Davidson County Grand Jury July Term 2026

July 2026 through September 2026

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Message from the Grand Jury

During our term, this Grand Jury encountered a disturbing number of cases involving the sexual abuse of children. The alleged conduct was devastating. Equally troubling was the age of some cases when they finally reached us. The oldest child sexual abuse case presented during our 2026 term dated to 2023, approximately three years earlier. By the time a delayed case reaches the Grand Jury, an accused person may have relocated, become difficult to locate, gained access to other children, or otherwise frustrated the timely administration of justice.

The passage of time is not neutral in a child sexual abuse case. Delay can weaken evidence, deepen trauma, leave families without answers, and erode confidence in the institutions responsible for protecting children. Delay also leaves an accused person under unresolved allegations for an extended period. A fair system must protect children, preserve due process, and move with accountable urgency.

We therefore call for a Child Protection Clock: a confidential case-tracking and public-accountability framework that measures the time from the first report of suspected sexual abuse through investigation, forensic testing, presentation to the Grand Jury, indictment, and arrest. Government cannot correct delays it does not measure, explain, or assign responsibility to resolve.

Children should not have to grow older waiting for the justice system to act on the harm done to them.

Executive Summary

The Grand Jury recommends immediate local action and statewide legislation to measure and reduce unnecessary delay in child sexual abuse cases. Davidson County should begin with a ninety-day inventory of pending cases that have not reached the Grand Jury within 180 days of the initial report. When a case experiences a substantial delay or a prolonged period without investigative activity, the reason should be entered in the case record and reviewed by an MNPD supervisor. Because the severity and investigative needs of each case vary, the review should be case-specific and should identify the next required action, the person or agency responsible, and any risk that the accused may flee or retain access to children.

The Tennessee General Assembly should require every judicial district to collect and publish anonymized timeliness data for child sexual abuse cases while preserving the strict confidentiality of children, families, witnesses, and investigative records. The law should establish aged-case review standards, regular status communication with families, and independent oversight of compliance.

The Grand Jury also records secondary concerns involving window-tint enforcement, traffic stops that appeared pretextual, and offenses closely connected to poverty. These matters sometimes met the legal standard for probable cause while raising questions about fairness, proportionality, discretion, and the public-safety value of prosecution. These observations warrant data review and policy examination by Metro Nashville and the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department.

Overview of the Term

The Davidson County Grand Jury convened during the July Term 2026 under the supervision of Criminal Court Division V. The panel met regularly to review evidence presented by law enforcement, prosecutors and direct witnesses to determine whether probable cause supported returning an indictment.

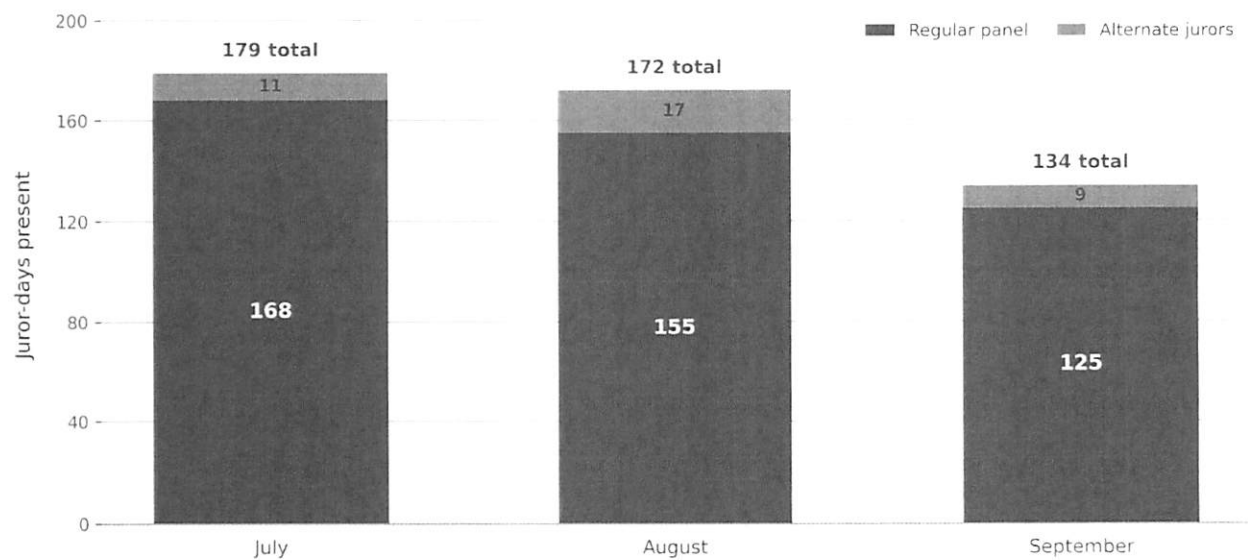
The Grand Jury approached each case with seriousness and independence. Jurors asked questions, sought clarification when evidence was incomplete, and considered both the elements of the alleged offense and the quality of the evidence presented. Our responsibility was limited but consequential: to determine whether sufficient evidence existed to require an accused person to answer a criminal charge in court.

Grand Jury Attendance and Service

The Grand Jury’s strong attendance record contributed directly to the quality, consistency, and effectiveness of our service. Regular participation allowed jurors to develop a shared understanding of the evidence, legal standards, and solemn responsibilities entrusted to us. It also preserved continuity from one presentation to the next and enabled us to deliberate with greater care, confidence, and collective insight.

Over the course of the term, we grew into a cohesive and dependable body. Jurors listened respectfully, asked thoughtful questions, considered differing perspectives, and worked together to reach decisions grounded in the evidence and the law. Alternate jurors also provided essential support, ensuring that the work could continue when regular jurors were unavailable.

Our attendance reflects physical presence, and more importantly it demonstrates the seriousness with which members approached public service and our shared commitment to fairness, accountability, and the administration of justice. The trust, cooperation, and mutual respect developed among jurors strengthened our ability to carry out this demanding responsibility with diligence and integrity.



85% regular-panel attendance • 5 members with perfect attendance • 37 alternate days of service

One juror-day represents one juror attending one scheduled service day.

Totals reflect recorded attendance across 33 service days. Alternates were scheduled on a rotating basis.

Case Information

- Total cases presented: 950
- True Bills returned: 844
- No True Bills returned: 24
- Sealed True Bills returned: 79
- Sealed No True Bills returned: 3

Child Sexual Abuse Cases: Complaint-to-Presentation Time

- Child sexual abuse cases presented: 20
- Within one year: 15 (75%)
- One to two years: 4 (20%)
- More than two years: 1 (5%)
- Oldest child sexual abuse complaint: 2023
- Oldest complaint among all cases: 2020

Educational Presentations and Facility Tour

The Grand Jury sought a fuller understanding of the criminal legal system than case presentations alone could provide. Justice is shaped by prosecution, public defense, law enforcement, oversight, advocacy, and the experiences of people directly affected by the system. The following speakers helped the panel examine those distinct responsibilities and perspectives.

- **District Attorney General Glenn Funk**, Office of the District Attorney General
- **Jill Fitchard**, Executive Director, Nashville Community Review Board
- **Dr. Sekou Franklin**, Executive Director, John Lewis Center for Social Justice
- **Judith Clerjeune**, Executive Director, Healthy and Free Tennessee
- **Cyrus Wilson**, Executive Director, Nashville Community Bail Fund
- **Jason Gichner**, Executive Director, Tennessee Innocence Project
- **Dawn Harrington**, Executive Director, Free Hearts
- **Chief Public Defender Martesha Johnson Moore**, Metropolitan Public Defender's Office
- **Detective Christian Martin**, Metropolitan Nashville Police Department

Davidson County Downtown Detention Center Tour

The Grand Jury toured the Davidson County Downtown Detention Center, located at 200 James Robertson Parkway in Nashville. The facility is operated by the Davidson County Sheriff's Office. The tour gave jurors a direct view of the detention environment and a fuller understanding of the Sheriff's Office's responsibilities within Davidson County's criminal legal system.

These presentations and the facility tour gave jurors context for the decisions placed before us and reinforced the importance of examining the criminal legal system from more than one institutional vantage point. We thank each speaker and host for contributing time, knowledge, and perspective to our service.

The Child Protection Clock

When Delay Becomes a Public Safety Failure

The volume of child sexual abuse cases presented during this term demanded attention. The age of some of those cases demanded action. The oldest child sexual abuse case presented to this Grand Jury dated to 2023, approximately three years before it reached a 2026 Grand Jury. In cases involving children, unexplained or unmanaged delay creates risks that extend beyond administrative inconvenience.

- An accused person may leave the jurisdiction, relocate, or become difficult to locate before an indictment can be enforced.
- A person accused of abusing a child may retain access to children while a case remains unresolved.
- Memories may fade, witnesses may become unavailable, and physical or digital evidence may deteriorate or become harder to obtain.
- Children and families may endure prolonged uncertainty without meaningful information about the status of a case.
- The accused may remain under unresolved allegations without a timely judicial determination.
- Public confidence declines when agencies cannot explain where a case is, why it has stalled, or what action will move it forward.

These investigations are complex. Trauma may affect the timing and manner of a child's disclosure. Investigators must protect the integrity of forensic interviews, digital evidence can take time to obtain and analyze, laboratories face capacity constraints, and prosecutors must make careful charging decisions. The Grand Jury does not recommend a rigid indictment deadline that could rush an investigation or weaken a prosecution. Complexity, however, cannot excuse a system with no visible clock, no mandatory review point, and no accountable owner for the next action.

Why These Investigations Can Take Time

Detective Christian Martin's presentation helped the Grand Jury understand that delay can arise at several stages of a child sexual abuse investigation. The leading causes described to the panel included the following.

- Coordination among MNPd, the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, child advocacy professionals, medical providers, prosecutors, and other jurisdictions, including delays caused by turnover or unclear responsibility between agencies.
- The need to conduct a careful forensic interview and to give a child, family member, or witness time to process trauma without compromising the integrity of the investigation.
- The time required to locate and interview witnesses and suspects, examine background information, connect related people or events, and obtain medical, physical, video, or other corroborating evidence.
- Preservation requests, subpoenas, legal process, collection, and technical analysis for phones, online accounts, video, and other digital evidence, compounded by limited staffing in specialized investigative and digital-evidence units.
- The need for qualified interpretation and culturally and linguistically appropriate services, which may require additional coordination and resources.
- Specialized investigative needs when a child is very young, nonverbal, autistic, or otherwise unable to participate in a conventional interview, sometimes requiring expert assistance and greater reliance on physical or corroborating evidence.

These explanations matter. They show why case age alone cannot determine whether an investigation has been handled properly and why a rigid deadline could be harmful. They do not eliminate the need for accountability. When delay occurs, the reason should be documented, a supervisor should review whether the delay is necessary and proportional to the case, and the file should identify the next action and review date. Necessary investigative time should be distinguishable from delay caused by inattention, excessive caseloads, staffing shortages, or a case becoming stalled between agencies.

What the System Must Measure

The Child Protection Clock should record the dates of major case events without making confidential records public. At minimum, the responsible agencies should track the following milestones.

1. Initial report to law enforcement or the Tennessee Department of Children's Services
2. Referral to the Child Protective Investigative Team
3. Child forensic interview
4. Assignment to an investigator and prosecutor
5. Submission and completion of forensic, medical, laboratory, or digital evidence
6. Identification of a suspect
7. Charging decision, arrest warrant, or sealed presentment when legally appropriate
8. Presentation to the Grand Jury
9. Return of a True Bill and service of the resulting capias or warrant

Public reporting should disclose only aggregate, anonymized information. It should include the median case-processing time, the longest pending time, the percentage of cases pending more than 90, 180, 365, and 730 days, the number of accused persons who could not be located after charging, the principal causes of delay, staffing and evidence-processing capacity, and the frequency of status updates to families.

Recommendations for Davidson County

Complete an Aged Case Inventory

The Davidson County Child Protective Investigative Team (CPIT), including representatives from the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, the District Attorney General's Office, the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department, Juvenile Court, and Nashville Children's Alliance, should coordinate with the MNPd Crime Laboratory to complete, within ninety days, an inventory of every unindicted child sexual abuse case older than 180 days.

The inventory should identify the age of each case, its current stage, the reason it remains unresolved, the next action required, the agency and position responsible for that action, and the date by which the action should occur. Results reported publicly must be aggregated and anonymized.

Document Delays and Require Supervisory Review

MNPd should adopt a written policy requiring investigators to document the reason for any substantial delay or prolonged period without investigative activity in a child sexual abuse case. An MNPd supervisor should review the case, taking account of its severity, complexity, the child's circumstances, the evidence still needed, staffing demands, and any safety or flight risk. The review should identify the next action, the person responsible, and a date for follow-up. Supervisory review should

support sound investigative judgment, not substitute an arbitrary deadline for the needs of the case.

Every unresolved case that has not reached a charging decision within 180 days should also receive a documented multidisciplinary review through the existing child-protection team. That review should determine whether the delay is investigative, forensic, prosecutorial, administrative, interagency, or caused by an external legal barrier and should continue at regular intervals until the identified barrier is resolved.

Assess Flight Risk and Continued Access to Children

When investigators identify a credible suspect, the multidisciplinary team should assess whether that person may leave the jurisdiction, contact or intimidate the child or witnesses, or retain access to children. Prosecutors must preserve their independent legal judgment. A documented risk should nevertheless prompt immediate consideration of all lawful protective and charging options, including an expedited review, warrant, protective conditions, or sealed presentment when appropriate.

Create a Case Expediting Coordinator

Metro should fund a coordinator dedicated to tracking aging child sexual abuse cases across participating agencies. The coordinator should not control investigations or prosecutorial decisions. The role should ensure that cases do not become invisible between agencies, that overdue tasks are escalated, and that aggregate timeliness data are accurate.

Increase Specialized Staffing and Digital Evidence Capacity

Metro Nashville should recruit, carefully select, train, and retain additional personnel who have the aptitude and sustained commitment required for crimes-against-children investigations. Staffing decisions should be based on measured caseloads, case age, investigative hours, and evidence backlogs. Priority should be given to MNPd's digital-evidence capacity and to the specialized investigators responsible for collecting, preserving, reviewing, and explaining digital material. Hiring alone is not enough; personnel must receive appropriate training, manageable workloads, supervision, and the tools needed to perform this work well.

Protect the Workforce from Secondary Trauma and Burnout

Repeated exposure to child sexual abuse investigations can produce secondary traumatic stress and burnout. MNPd and partner agencies should adopt trauma-informed workforce policies that include regular training for supervisors and employees, confidential counseling and wellness resources, protected

opportunities for debriefing and recovery, reasonable caseload monitoring, and procedures for recognizing when an employee needs additional support. These protections are necessary both for employee well-being and for consistent, careful casework.

Build Citywide Prevention and Reporting Education

Metro Nashville Public Schools, public charter schools, private and parochial schools, the Mayor's Office, MNPd, child-advocacy organizations, the Family Safety Center, and culturally specific community partners should collaborate on an age-appropriate, trauma-informed education initiative concerning child sexual abuse and inappropriate touching. The initiative should teach body safety, boundaries, how to recognize concerning conduct, how and where to report suspected abuse, and how adults should respond when a child discloses abuse. It should reach students, families, faith communities, youth-serving organizations, and neighborhoods throughout Davidson County.

The initiative should be available in the principal languages used across the county and should address differences in language, custom, and community understanding without suggesting that culture excuses abuse. The protection of children is a shared legal and civic responsibility. Trusted community messengers and qualified interpreters should help ensure that every family understands both the law and the resources available for prevention, reporting, counseling, transportation, and legal assistance.

Provide Regular Family Communication

Families should receive a meaningful case-status update at least every ninety days unless a documented legal or safety concern prevents communication. An update need not disclose confidential evidence or investigative strategy. It should confirm whether the matter remains active, identify a point of contact, and explain the next stage when that information can lawfully be shared.

Publish Crime Laboratory Benchmarks

The MNPd Crime Laboratory should publish aggregate turnaround times and aged-case benchmarks for evidence affecting crimes against children. Metro Council and the Mayor's Office should align staffing and funding decisions with measurable backlog-reduction targets and should report progress to future Grand Juries.

Recommendations for Tennessee

The Tennessee General Assembly should enact a Child Sexual Abuse Case Accountability Act. The purpose would be to establish statewide timeliness standards and transparency without compromising investigations, identifying children, or interfering with prosecutorial discretion.

- Require every judicial district to measure the principal milestones from initial report through indictment and arrest.
- Require documented multidisciplinary review of unresolved cases at 180 days and at regular intervals thereafter.
- Require law-enforcement agencies to document substantial delays and establish case-specific supervisory review standards for crimes against children.
- Require a documented assessment of flight risk and continued access to children once a credible suspect has been identified.
- Require periodic, lawful status communication with children and their families.
- Require an anonymized annual report showing case age, delay causes, laboratory capacity, and corrective action by judicial district.
- Assign the Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts, the Comptroller of the Treasury, or another appropriate independent body to review compliance and statewide disparities.
- Protect the confidentiality requirements governing child sexual abuse records and prohibit publication of information that could identify a child, family, witness, or specific investigation.

Responsibility for Action

Responsible Body	Recommended Action
CPIT, District Attorney General and MNPD/Crime Lab	Complete the ninety-day aged-case inventory; document substantial delays; and establish written supervisory and 180-day review protocols.
Child Protective Investigative Team	Conduct recurring multidisciplinary reviews and document the next action, responsible agency, risk assessment, and follow-up date.
Mayor and Metro Council	Fund specialized investigators, digital-evidence personnel, prosecutors, victim advocates, trauma supports, prevention education, and a case-expediting coordinator based on measured need.
MNPD Leadership	Set case-specific supervisory review standards, monitor caseloads, and provide trauma-informed training, confidential wellness resources, and burnout-prevention support.
MNPD Digital Evidence and Crime Laboratory	Increase capacity and publish aggregate turnaround times and measurable backlog-reduction benchmarks for evidence affecting crimes against children.
MNPS and Community Partners	Deliver age-appropriate, multilingual, and culturally informed education on body safety, inappropriate touching, reporting, and available services.
Criminal Court Leadership	Provide future Grand Juries with aggregate case-age data and a report on responses to prior recommendations.
Tennessee General Assembly	Establish statewide case-timeliness measurement, review requirements, family communication standards, and annual public reporting.
Independent State Oversight Body	Review compliance, identify regional disparities, and report whether corrective actions reduced delay.

Probable Cause Does Not Exist in a Vacuum

The Grand Jury faithfully carried out its duty to determine whether probable cause supported each charge. That legal question was often presented within a larger human and institutional context. During our term, cases arising from window-tint violations, traffic stops that appeared pretextual and conduct closely connected to poverty required the Grand Jury to distinguish between the narrow legal sufficiency of a charge and broader questions about fairness, proportionality, discretion, and public safety.

Window Tint Violations

In some matters, a window-tint or other minor equipment violation became the entry point for a stop, search, arrest, and charges unrelated to the original traffic-safety concern. The Grand Jury recognizes that a later court, after a developed record and legal argument, determines whether a stop or search was constitutional. Our task was to evaluate the evidence presented for probable cause. Even so, the recurring pattern raised legitimate questions about how minor violations are selected for enforcement and whether that enforcement falls unevenly across Nashville's communities.

Metro Nashville and MNPd should review and publicly report aggregate data on equipment-based traffic stops, including the stated reason for the stop, demographic information, whether a search occurred, whether contraband was found, whether an arrest followed, and the final disposition of resulting charges. The review should examine whether enforcement is connected to roadway safety and whether discretionary practices create avoidable disparities.

Pretextual Traffic Stops

The Grand Jury also encountered stops in which a minor traffic or equipment violation appeared to serve as the legal basis for investigating unrelated suspected conduct. A stop may satisfy the governing legal standard and still raise policy concerns about selective enforcement and community trust. MNPd should establish clear supervisory review and public reporting for stops that expand from a minor violation into a search or unrelated criminal investigation.

Crimes of Poverty

Several cases reflected the role of financial instability, homelessness, untreated substance-use disorders, unmet mental-health needs, transportation barriers, or an inability to satisfy court-related obligations. Poverty does not excuse harmful conduct, erase the experiences of victims, or remove personal responsibility. It can, however, shape the conduct that brings a person into the criminal legal system and the barriers that keep that person there.

Metro and justice-system partners should expand diversion, treatment, transportation assistance, housing support, restorative practices, and other non-carceral responses when they can address the underlying conduct without compromising victim or community safety. Decision-makers should also review whether fines, fees, missed-court consequences, and repeated low-level enforcement create cycles that deepen poverty without improving safety.

The Grand Jury could not disregard the law. The justice system should not disregard the context in which the law is enforced.

Grand Jury Process Recommendations

Include Case Age in Presentations

For crimes against children, case presenters should provide the Grand Jury with a nonconfidential timeline identifying the date of the initial report, major investigative milestones, the date the case was submitted for charging review, and the reason for any substantial delay. This information is relevant to witness availability, evidence preservation, flight risk, and the Grand Jury's understanding of the case.

Preserve the Independence of the Grand Jury

Case presenters should be prepared to answer factual questions material to probable cause. When the presenting officer is not the investigating officer, that presenter should review the case thoroughly and have access to the information needed to answer foreseeable questions. Available photographs, video, body-worn camera footage, diagrams, and other visual evidence should be presented when doing so is lawful and practical.

Report Responses to Future Grand Juries

The court should provide each new Grand Jury with the prior four final reports and a written summary of actions taken in response to their recommendations. Repetition without a recorded response allows serious concerns to disappear between terms. Future panels should be able to determine whether a recommendation was implemented, rejected, funded, delayed, or left unanswered.

Requested Follow Up

This report asks each responsible office or body to provide a written public response within 120 days of publication. The response should identify the recommendations accepted, the actions completed or planned, the person or office responsible, anticipated completion dates, and any legal or financial barriers. Criminal Court leadership should make those responses available to the next Davidson County Grand Jury.

Conclusion

The cases heard during this term revealed dedicated professionals, serious public-safety threats, and significant gaps in how the system measures delay and exercises discretion. Our strongest concern is the time children and families wait while sexual abuse cases move through investigation and charging. When years pass before a case reaches the Grand Jury, the system increases the risk that evidence will weaken, children will remain exposed to harm, and an accused person will be unavailable when an indictment is returned.

Davidson County does not need to wait for statewide legislation to begin measuring case age, reviewing stalled cases, assessing risk, and communicating with families. Tennessee should then make those protections consistent across every judicial district. Accountability begins with a clock, an identified next action, and a public record showing whether government acted.

We submit this report with respect for the responsibilities carried by every institution involved and with a clear expectation that the concerns documented here will receive a response. Children should not bear the cost of institutional delay.

Acknowledgments

The Grand Jury expresses its sincere gratitude to Judge Khadija Babb and the staff of Criminal Court Division V for their guidance and support throughout the term.

We offer special appreciation to April Lee and Attorney Derrick Scretchen of the Office of Judge Khadija Babb; Assistant District Attorney Jay Martin; Sergeant Michael Spencer of the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department; Lori Hooberry of the Office of the District Attorney General; and Viranda Smith of the Davidson County Sheriff's Office. Their sustained support, responsiveness, and practical assistance helped the Grand Jury fulfill its responsibilities with care and independence.

We also thank the attorneys, public servants, community leaders, and presenters who shared their knowledge and assisted the panel in carrying out its duties.

Finally, we thank every regular and alternate juror for the time, care, and independent judgment devoted to this public service. We extend particular appreciation to Olivia Sepulveda and William "Nick" Green for their exceptional commitment, preparation, and dependability. Olivia carried out her responsibilities as secretary with care and consistency, while Nick remained ready to provide dependable support whenever needed. Their readiness to assume additional responsibilities helped ensure continuity and allowed the Grand Jury's work to proceed without interruption.

Selected Authorities and Public Sources

Davidson County Grand Jury Reports. Prior reports provide the local reporting structure and document recurring concerns involving case presentation, investigative delays, and forensic backlogs.

April through June 2026 Davidson County Grand Jury Report. This report documents earlier concerns about Crime Laboratory delays and recommends measurable public accountability.

Tennessee Code Annotated § 37-1-607. This statute establishes the framework, required membership, investigative responsibilities, coordination, and reporting requirements for county child protective teams.

Tennessee Code Annotated § 37-1-612. This statute governs the confidentiality of child sexual abuse records and reports, access to those records, and protection of identifying information.

Tennessee Code Annotated § 9-4-213. This statute establishes requirements for state-supported child advocacy centers, including multidisciplinary agreements, coordinated case review, case tracking, service referrals, data collection, and compliance with national accreditation standards.

Tennessee Attorney General Opinion No. 11-021. This opinion explains the confidentiality protections governing records and testimony arising from child sexual abuse investigations under Tennessee Code Annotated § 37-1-612.

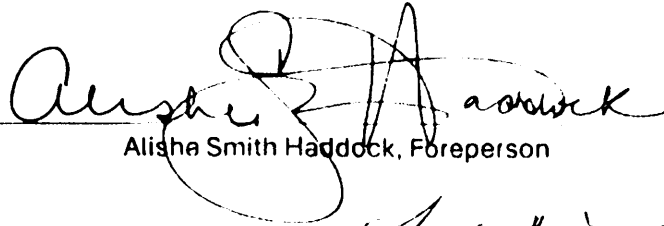
National Children's Alliance, National Standards of Accreditation. These standards provide nationally recognized guidance for multidisciplinary child-abuse investigations, forensic interviews, victim advocacy, case review, case tracking, organizational capacity, and coordinated services for children and families.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, About Child Sexual Abuse. This resource describes the serious and lasting effects of child sexual abuse and emphasizes prevention, surveillance, data collection, and evidence-based community strategies.

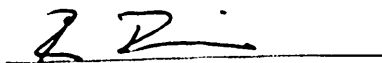
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Essentials for Childhood Framework. This framework supports coordinated community action, public education, shared responsibility, and the creation of safe, stable, and nurturing environments for children.

Office for Victims of Crime, Vicarious Trauma Toolkit. This federal resource addresses secondary and vicarious trauma among law-enforcement personnel, victim-service providers, and allied professionals and provides guidance for building trauma-informed organizations.

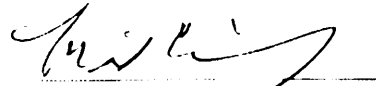
Respectfully submitted on September 23, 2026, by the Davidson County Grand Jury,
July 2026 Term



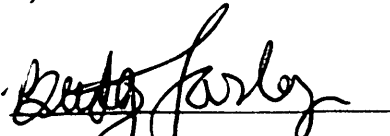
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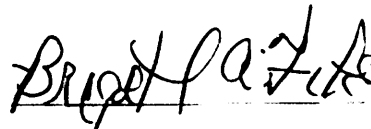
Ryan Barwise



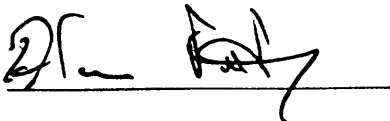
Michael Cunningham



Bridget Farley



Brigett Fite



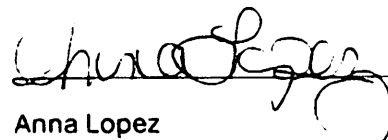
Alan Foster



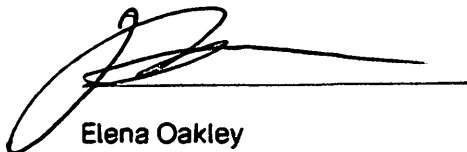
William Nick Green



Veronica Hampton



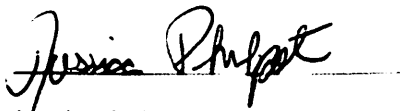
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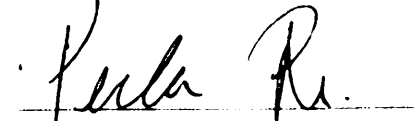
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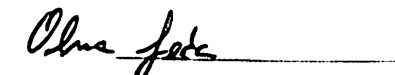
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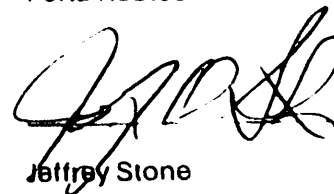
Jessica Philpot



Perla Robles



Olivia Sepulveda, Secretary



Jeffrey Stone



Alex Thompson