



PROTECTION AND VICTIM SERVICES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, May 13, 2026
Roughrider Room, State Capitol
Bismarck, North Dakota

Representative Bernie Satrom, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

Members present: Representatives Bernie Satrom, Jason Dockter, Lawrence R. Klemin, Mary Schneider, Lori VanWinkle; Senators Keith Boehm, Ryan Braunberger, David A. Clemens, Dick Dever, Diane Larson

Member absent: Representative TJ Brown

Others present: Abby Oase,* Killdeer; Cassidy Halseth, Bureau of Criminal Investigation; Jaakan Williams,* Williams County; Travis W. Finck,* Commission on Legal Counsel for Indigents; Stacy Schaffer, 31:8 Project

See [Appendix A](#) for additional persons present.

**Attended remotely*

It was moved by Senator Dever, seconded by Senator Braunberger, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the December 16, 2025, meeting be approved as distributed.

CRIMINAL CONDUCT AGAINST CHILDREN STUDY

Dr. Ramona Danielson, Assistant Professor, Public Health Department, North Dakota State University, provided information ([Appendix B](#)) regarding the economic impacts of adverse childhood experiences in the state. She noted:

- High adverse childhood experience exposure results in increased health care utilization, greater interaction with child welfare systems, higher involvement with justice systems, and decreased workforce participation and productivity.
- The economic impact of adverse childhood experiences is difficult to quantify because outcomes and interacting influences occur at different times and durations throughout the course of an individual's life.
- Quality of life, family stability, the ability to develop and sustain relationships, the community, and societal values are impacted by childhood adversity.

Ms. Allison Mahoney, Home Visiting Project Coordinator, Families Flourish ND; Ms. Missi Baranko, Executive Director, UspireND; and Ms. Abby Oase, Killdeer, provided information ([Appendix C](#)) regarding the federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program. They noted:

- Early investment in children and families reduces the need for more costly future intervention in child welfare, health care, education, and the justice system and provides long-term benefits to communities.
- Home visiting is an evidence-based form of intervention providing private and voluntary support to a family during pregnancy and early childhood by establishing a long-term relationship between a family and a trained professional.

- A referral for home visiting may come from a hospital at birth, pregnancy navigator, Women, Infants, and Children Program office, human service zone, or an individual.
- Four federal, evidence-based home visiting models are available in the state with differing enrollment ages, enrollment criteria, and program length, operated by 12 organizations in all 53 counties.

Ms. Victoria Christian, Counsel, Legislative Council, presented a memorandum entitled [Artificial Intelligence and Sexual Exploitation](#).

Mr. Cassidy Halseth, Special Agent and Commander, North Dakota Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, Bureau of Criminal Investigation, provided information ([Appendix D](#)) regarding Internet crimes related to artificial intelligence (AI) and child exploitation. He noted:

- AI is changing child exploitation, making it faster and easier to commit and harder for agents to detect.
- Offenders often minimize their behavior and there is a general lack of understanding by the public regarding how harmful AI-generated or manipulated child sexual abuse material is to victims and their families.
- AI technology is exacerbating the prevalence and accessibility of child sexual abuse material.

In response to questions from committee members, Mr. Halseth noted geofencing technology is not particularly effective in deterring bad actors attempting to create child sexual abuse material because technology aids in masking and hiding the bad actor's location. He noted funding for technology to modernize investigations, the expansion of victim services personnel, and additional education would be beneficial for fighting Internet crimes against children.

Ms. Christian presented a bill draft [[27.0102.01000](#)] related to updating references to child sexual abuse material.

The committee requested the Legislative Council staff prepare a bill draft requiring continuing education on the victim impact of AI associated crimes for attorney bar licensure renewal.

The committee requested the Legislative Council staff prepare a bill draft requiring the state to provide matching funds to receive federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program funds.

Ms. Christian presented a memorandum entitled [Criminalization of Child Sexual Grooming and Child Sex Dolls](#).

Mr. Jaakan Williams, State's Attorney, Williams County, provided information regarding the criminalization of grooming from a criminal prosecution perspective.

Mr. Travis Finck, Executive Director, Commission on Legal Counsel for Indigents, provided information regarding the criminalization of grooming from a criminal defense perspective. He also provided information on criminal record expungement for human trafficking victims who commit a crime and emphasized the impact of minimum mandatory sentences and not looking at each individual's circumstances.

Mr. Greg Kasowski, Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Centers of North Dakota, provided information ([Appendix E](#)) regarding child sexual abuse prevention education in schools. He noted:

- Based on the number of individuals served at the centers, more than 2,000 children likely were victims of sexual abuse in 2025, in light of statistics indicating 55 to 69 percent of adults who were victims of child sexual abuse did not disclose the abuse during childhood.
- Child sexual abuse prevention education is required by law in 29 states, encouraged in 8 states, and not addressed by 12 states, including North Dakota. Items considered when developing a

child sexual abuse education framework include minimum standards, local implementation, funding, and support for children who disclose sexual abuse.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Stacy Schaffer, Founder and Executive Director, 31:8 Project, and Ms. Anita Bohner, Director of Operations for Western North Dakota, Youthworks, provided information ([Appendix F](#)) regarding the implementation of human trafficking education. They noted:

- The 31:8 Project and Youthworks were awarded a grant to develop the human trafficking education curriculum mandated for all 6th, 10th, and 12th graders under North Dakota Century Code Section 15.1-09-61.
- Three grade-specific curricula were piloted in 38 schools in the spring of 2026, and the curricula are pending approval by the Attorney General's Human Trafficking Commission.
- Each curriculum is developed intentionally with age-appropriate depictions of human trafficking content in a manner that is emotionally manageable for the intended student demographic.
- Following disclosure of suspected trafficking by four students during the pilot curricula, the 31:8 Project and Youthworks intend to develop a consistent response protocol and provide information related to available victim services.

Ms. Schaffer provided information ([Appendix G](#)) regarding human trafficking policy considerations. She noted:

- Increasing the penalty for hiring an individual to engage in sexual activity from a class B misdemeanor to a class A misdemeanor may better align the offense with other criminal offenses of the same nature.
- Opportunities exist to expand education and awareness related to human trafficking in the hospitality industry, labor industry, and other professional disciplines.
- A more robust data reporting system is needed to identify state trends, service barriers, resource gaps, and individuals served using state funds.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

The committee requested the Legislative Council staff prepare a bill draft related to the criminalization of child sex dolls and a bill draft related to the criminalization of grooming.

No further business appearing, Chairman Satrom adjourned the meeting at 4:23 p.m.

Victoria Christian
Counsel

ATTACH:7